Health Headlines

Uninformed Virginity Pledgers
A recent study found that teens who pledge to abstain before marriage are just as likely to have sex as those who do not, but less likely to use contraceptives. The government’s $200 million annual abstinence-only education program requires that curricula exclude contraceptive education. The Government Accountability Office also reported several scientific inaccuracies in current curricula. Read more about reproductive health promotion and STDs in youth. (Baltimore Sun, 1.16.09)

L.A.’s Smoking Ban
A proposal to outlaw smoking on outdoor patios of Los Angeles restaurants is awaiting approval by the City Council and could go into effect as early as this summer. While several bars and other venues would be exempt, the proposal still angers some smokers, who feel unfairly persecuted. Proponents of the measure argue that restaurant patrons need further protection from second-hand smoke in public places. Read more about second-hand smoke and smoke-free policies. (Los Angeles Times, 1.8.09)

Eye Tissue Group Encourages Donors
The Humanity Eye and Tissue Transplant Organization recently launched their “100 Lives From 1” campaign. The campaign explains that more than 100 lives can be enhanced from just one tissue donor. Eye and tissue donations help provide skin grafts for burn victims and supply replacement corneas for people with damaged vision. They are also used to correct congenital heart defects, repair ligament damage, reconstruct joints, and restore hearing. Read more about eye and tissue donation. (Phoenix Citizen Reporter, 12.2.08)

Funding Agency News

A Post-Hookup Surprise
The CDC recently recognized inSPOT, an internet-based sexual partner notification service. InSPOT allows users to send notification cards via e-mail to each partner exposed to an STD through sexual contact. E-cards come in several designs, may be sent anonymously, and provide basic information on how to get tested. The CDC offers their own e-cards that encourage healthy living, promote safe activities, and celebrate health- and safety-related events. Learn more about eHealth marketing.

Healthy Eating, Active Communities
The California Endowment’s Healthy Eating, Active Communities childhood obesity prevention program is changing food and fitness environments across the state. Last year, a group of youth leaders in Shasta County approached the local Wal-Mart and convinced the manager to add healthier snacks to the store’s checkout aisle. More recently, the collaborator has worked to bring parks, trails, and open space to the unincorporated areas of the county. Read the article here.

Inhalant Abuse Increases
A sobering new study reports that inhalant use among adolescents is increasing, while perceptions of inhalant dangers are the lowest they have been in over a decade. Products misused as inhalants are cheap, legal, and accessible. Inhalants can kill the user on the first, tenth, or hundredth attempt. Research shows that education is extremely effective in preventing inhalant abuse, leading several organizations to designate March 16-23 as National Inhalants & Poison Awareness Week. Read more about adolescent drug abuse.

Real People, Real Lives

Vaginally Removed Kidney
Surgeons at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine removed the kidney of Kimberly Johnson, 48, through her vagina so she could donate it to her 23-year-old niece, Jennifer Gilbert. Gilbert needed the transplant after suffering chronic rejection from her first transplant. In the past, transvaginal kidney removals have been performed to remove cancerous or nonfunctioning kidneys. Surgeons hope this procedure will encourage others to donate because it reduces pain, scarring and recovery time. Read more about organ donation. (The Seattle Times, 2.3.09)

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning
16-year-old Amanda Hansen attended a sleepover at her friend, Devon Sharvan’s home. The next morning, both girls were found unconscious and paramedics were unable to revive Amanda. Officials later discovered deadly levels of carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas, seeping from the basement boiler. The teen’s death is a stark reminder of the importance of having working carbon monoxide detectors in every home. Read about household dangers and carbon monoxide poisoning. (The Buffalo News, 1.18.09)

Dying Mothers in India
Manohar Kumbhakar and his family mourn the loss of his 25-year-old wife who died at home during childbirth. Kumbhakar’s wife is one of 78,000 mothers in India who die each year due to pregnancy or delivery complications. Two-thirds of Indian women still deliver babies at home without trained assistance. UNICEF asserts that social inequalities and shortages in healthcare facilities contribute to India’s maternal death rate. Read more about global maternal and child health. (Reuters, 1.25.09)