

## News Release

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### ***Healthy Futures Program*** **Teaches Abstinence in Boston-Area Schools**

Boston – When *Healthy Futures* arrives in a health class for a presentation, students discover it is not the typical sex ed program. “Safe sex” has a whole new meaning: saving it for marriage.

Guiding adolescents into healthy sex and relationship choices is the purpose of *Healthy Futures*, a federally-funded, school-based program now offered throughout Greater Boston and Lowell that encourages teens to be abstinent until they are in a faithful, lifelong relationship.

*Healthy Futures* educates teens in grades 6-12 in the areas of sexuality, healthy relationships, and self-respect through medically-accurate information and interactive skits and demonstrations. The program empowers teens to avoid the social, psychological and health risks associated with early sexual activity and provides the skills necessary to attain abstinence before marriage. The program has been active since 2002 and has been conducted in more than 100 classroom settings throughout Greater Boston and Lowell.

The *Healthy Futures* curriculum has been developed as 50-minute classroom presentations delivered over five consecutive days – but can be tailored to accommodate a school’s schedule. Interested students are invited to participate in a weekly group at their school facilitated by *Healthy Futures* staff for eight weeks following the classroom program. In addition, other supplemental programs are offered, including an after-school program for Cambodian youth in Lowell, and a drama-based peer education program in Boston. Also available to schools inviting *Healthy Futures* to present is an evening program for parents that addresses how to talk to teens about sex and the reality of adolescent sexual health today.

(more)

Many school districts across the country now include abstinence-until-marriage coursework in their health, family, and biology curricula. *Healthy Futures* is the first-of-its-kind program to reach Massachusetts schools, receiving strong federal support and outstanding post-program evaluations from teachers and students alike.

“There is a growing awareness of the merit of teaching abstinence in Boston area schools,” said Rebecca Ray, Director, *Healthy Futures*. “Teachers are very interested in a program that offers such practical, meaningful guidance to students, in part because they see the impact that sexual activity has on their students play out in the classroom.”

“*Healthy Futures* is getting an excellent response, not only from teachers, but also from students – many of whom say the program has impacted them and their choices greatly,” Ms. Ray concluded.

“This is the best program I have ever seen,” said Jack O’Brien, a health teacher at Charlestown High School and head coach of the four-time back-to-back Massachusetts state basketball champions. “Our students responded in a positive manner, and they have continued to give me great feedback.”

“All students would benefit from *Healthy Futures*. With all the negative influences surrounding teenagers today, it is refreshing to see a program that presents students with healthy options. The educators really made them think,” Coach O’Brien added.

*Healthy Futures* recently received a federal grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services to expand its offerings.

“President Bush's initiative to educate teens and parents about the health risks associated with early sexual activity is obvious by today's formal announcement of HHS providing *Healthy Futures* with the needed resources they require to help local teens make responsible choices,” said Brian Cresta, Regional Director of HHS.

“This grant to *Healthy Futures* can help create an environment that supports teens in their decision to remain abstinent until marriage,” said HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson.

The *Healthy Futures* program is available upon request to any school district in Greater Boston or Lowell. For more information about *Healthy Futures* or to request a program in your school, visit [www.healthy-futures.org](http://www.healthy-futures.org).

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