

## **Examining The Theory Of Corporate Social Responsibility To Support Expectant And Parenting Teens In Southwest Georgia Communities**

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**Abstract:** *The theory of corporate social responsibility has been used to examine the role of community and corporate organizations in supporting communities at multiple levels. Often the services or contributions of community and corporate organizations are altruistic in nature and extend beyond finances. This article examines the expanded goals of selected organizations in a southwest Georgia community to support expectant and parenting teens – in collaboration with the Stronger Together Grant Program. The Stronger Together Grant Program is housed in a southwest Georgia university through the support of the Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Population Affairs.*

**Keywords:** *Community Organizations, Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Organizations, Expectant and Parenting Teens.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In July 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Population Affairs (OPA) funded thirteen US organizations to support adolescent health. The main goals of the program were to promote optimal health and prevent teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections among key priority areas. Stronger Together: Community Partnerships for Health Innovations was one of the recipients – with a focus on expectant and parenting teens. Located in southwest Georgia, Stronger Together aimed to implement the OPA goals in eighteen neighboring counties. The initiative was planned with a tiered hub implementation process. Six hubs with three to four counties would be targeted over a three-year period. Hub 1 which included the year 2020 – 2021 time period included Dougherty, Lee, Sumter and Terrell Counties. Hub 2 and 3 for the 2021-2022 time period will include Quitman, Randolph, Clay, Calhoun, Early, Baker, Miller and Mitchell Counties. Remaining counties, Seminole, Decatur, Grady, Thomas, Worth and Colquitt will be served in the final year of the grant project.

Recent statistics have shown the national teen (15-19) birth rate as 16.7 per 1,000, in 2019. [1] In Georgia, the teen birth rate was 20.6 per 1,000 in 2018.[2] For the Hub 1 southwest Georgia region, the teen birth rate per 1,000 ranged from 16.6 (Lee County) to 29.2 (Dougherty County) for all teens 15-19 years old in 2020. The birth rates were even more grim for African American teens 15 – 19 in 2020 – 32.8 Dougherty County; 35.9 Lee County, 32.8 Terrell County and 24.7 per 1,000 in Sumter County.[3] With such disproportionate rates in regional Hub 1, emphasis has been placed on addressing supporting expectant and parenting teens in collaboration with selected community organizations.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review applies the theory of corporate social responsibility to support expectant and parenting teens – using original and modified goals for service delivery. Background literature shows that corporate responsibility relates closely to philanthropy yet focuses on the actions of the business itself rather than merely donations of money and time.[4] Fernando (2021) further described corporate social responsibility as a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable. With corporate citizenship, companies can be aware of their impact on all aspects of society – economic, social and environmental.[5]

According to Edmondson, 2021, some examples of corporate social responsibility include:

- Giving to nonprofit groups, such as local food banks, by supplying volunteers or through monetary donations.
- Offering job-training programs for those in need.
- Pledging to ensure diversity in the workforce.
- Focusing on shrinking the company's carbon footprint through improved supply chain efficiency.[6]

Juneja (2021) explained the evolution of the practice of Corporate Social Responsibility as a paradigm that stretched from a slogan to a 21<sup>st</sup> century business requirement to be socially responsible. Businesses now realize the need to support a vast variety of societal causes / problems – beyond just profits. From writings in the 1950's to present day, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has become more readily embraced with an express interest in the environment and society as a whole.[7]

## III. RESULTS – FEATURED ORGANIZATIONS

To further illuminate the role of corporate social responsibility in community organizations, selected southwest Georgia organizations have been highlighted. The examples that follow show how the organizations' basic goals have been modified to support Expectant and Parenting Teens achieve optimal health / wellness and prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

**A Better Ways Grocers** is a mobile grocery store that provides a solution to food deserts by providing fresh, healthy foods.[8] The grocers' mission is to drive food into communities for better health - as a part of an effort to address food insecurity for low-income communities in southwest Georgia.[9]

Modified Goals - **A Better Way Grocers** is a mobile grocery store with the mission of expanding access to high quality nutrition and foods in underserved areas. The mobile grocers developed an intervention to target Expectant and Parenting Teens and their babies called Healthy Influential Parents (HIP). HIP was designed to promote and build healthy eating habits, by encouraging behaviors to bring better nutrition to the parent and child. HIP was also designed to empower Expectant and Parenting Teens to make healthier food choices to combat low birth weight, malnutrition, and non-communicable diseases. Services will be offered onsite at participants' homes or at hosting organizations. HIP will offer groceries, meal planning, cooking classes, and cook-offs. Participants will receive education and experience onsite and take home groceries, as well as prepared meals and infant foods.

**Alpha Pregnancy Center** serves with care and competence by providing medical services for pregnancy diagnosis and medical confirmation. Evidenced based education on pregnancy and sexual health related topics is also provided. Services are confidential as allowable by the state of Georgia.[10]

Modified Goals - **Alpha Pregnancy Center** will host drive-through events for Expectant and Parenting Teens in Dougherty, Worth, Terrell, Seminole, and Mitchell counties with nurses on hand to answer questions, provide referrals, and enroll participants in the Earn While You Learn Program (EWYL). EWYL provides education classes on pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, parenting, fatherhood, family planning, healthcare, and life skills. Participants can earn points to 'buy' supplies in the baby store which includes formula, diapers, bottles, clothing, and other baby items.

**Boys and Girls Club of Albany** is open to all young people between the ages of 6-18. The Club inspires young people to become productive responsible and caring citizens each and every day.[11]

Modified Goals - **Boys and Girls Club of Albany** will offer free membership to Expectant and Parenting Teens. Expectant and Parenting Teens will also receive targeted support and education on exploring future careers, learning about higher education options, understanding how to achieve financial success, building relationships with peers, and having fun in a supportive environment. Enrichment activities and experiential educational opportunities offered by the club will include Diplomas2Degrees(d2D) to help

Expectant and Parenting Teens prepare for post- secondary education, Career Lunch (a job readiness and career preparation program for Expectant and Parenting Teens), and My Future (a mobile web platform that offers science and leadership programs for teen mothers).

**Communities in Schools – Georgia - Albany/ Dougherty County** is a part of the state’s leading organization providing drop-out prevention, connecting the most vulnerable students to the support they need in the classroom and beyond. Services are provided to impoverished and COVID-19 stressed communities.[12]

Modified Goals – **Communities in Schools, Teen Journeys** will serve Expectant and Parenting Teens in the Dougherty County School System, their partners, family, and friends to provide information, support, and encouragement as well as targeted, comprehensive wraparound services (educational supports, tutoring, mentoring, referrals to mental health services, and referrals and supports for basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter). Teen Journeys will assist Expectant and Parenting Teens in the Dougherty County School System to complete high school by providing supportive programming and referral services while simultaneously strengthening their connection with their children, families, and community.

**The Family Literacy Connection Collaborative** serves as a local decision-making body, bringing community partners together to develop, implement and evaluate plans that address the challenges facing children and families in Dougherty County.[13]

Modified Goals - **Family Literacy Connection Collaborative** will adapt the Parents as Teachers Model to meet the specific needs of Expectant and Parenting Teens, their partners, and those who support them so they can be self-sufficient, stable, and successful. Curriculum from the Institute for Healthcare Advancement on health during pregnancy and caring for a sick child will also be incorporated into the program. Family Literacy Connection Collaborative will propose a multi-generational approach as many Expectant and Parenting Teens live with parents, grandparents, and other family members who may have been teen or young parents. Services will be offered through porch visits, telecommunications, Facebook groups, Zoom meetings, and office visits.

**The Family Wellness Outreach Center of Georgia**, Albany, Georgia aims to build healthy families and communities through outreach and education.[14]

Modified Goals - **Family Wellness Outreach Center of Georgia** will develop an intervention to provide in person and virtual classes on healthy relationships, problem solving, communication, parenting skills, employability training, and other life skills to Expectant and Parenting Teens and their partners and friends in Dougherty, Stewart, Mitchell, Clay, Calhoun, Irwin, Turner, Terrell, and Randolph counties. Throughout the intervention, participants will create and share social media posts focusing on providing information and services for and about Expectant and Parenting Teens, their partners, family and friends. At the conclusion of the intervention, participants will develop, plan, and host a public summit/conference utilizing the skills they have learned.

**Faith Community Development Corporation** - The Faith Community Development Corporation is a ministerial support organization for families and community members of all ages. The organization aims to promote growth in personal and life skills.

Modified Goals - **Faith Community Development Corporation** will explore and develop an intervention to provide small group (face to face or virtual) classes - with a focus on improving financial literacy, general health, and nutritional habits of teens. Media and social media campaigns will also be developed to reach a wide audience. Specific goals will be to: decrease childhood obesity, hypertension, and type II diabetes; and to motivate teen parents to desire a better life for their children - culturally, academically, financially, spiritually, and emotionally.

**The Kinchafoonee Regional Library System (KRLS)** is a public library system serving the counties of Calhoun, Clay, Quitman, Randolph, Terrell, and Webster, in the state of Georgia. The headquarters of the library system is the Terrell County Public Library in Dawson, Georgia. KRLS is a member of PINES, a program of the Georgia Public Library Service that covers 53 library systems in 143 counties of Georgia. Any resident in a PINES supported library system has access to the system.[15]

Modified Goals - **The Kinchafoonee Library System**, with locations in Calhoun, Clay, Quitman, Randolph, and Terrell Counties will serve as an information clearinghouse by providing convenient, free, and open to the public locations for Expectant and Parenting Teens to seek information and materials. Materials will be available in pamphlets, books, and videos on pregnancy and parenting, sexually transmitted infection prevention, and other health education topics, as well as copies of Stronger Together resource directories.

**Liberty House** is a non-profit agency in Dougherty County that works to eliminate domestic violence in the community including a 17-county area of southwest Georgia. Liberty House provides emergency shelter, advocacy education, awareness and community resources and collaboration to ensure all victims are empowered to achieve self-sufficiency.[16]

Modified Goals - **Liberty House** will offer “take a stand for healthy relationships” to Expectant and Parenting Teens, their partners, and friends who support them. The sessions will be held in schools and other social and civic groups and organizations in the target southwest Georgia counties. The primary goals will be to improve youth knowledge of healthy relationships, emotional intelligence, and effective communication skills. The program consists of six one-hour sessions. A single session mini-program will also be available where 6-week sessions are not possible.

**The Lily Pad Center** is a 501 (c)3 charitable organization that provides services to victims of sexual assault and child abuse. The organization was founded in 2008.[17]

Modified Goals – **The Lily Pad Center** will develop educational sessions on sexual abuse, consent, and child abuse prevention for Expectant and Parenting Teens, youth, parents/caregivers, and community members. The sessions will be provided via Zoom and pre-recorded online training videos.

**The Network of Trust** is a national award-winning community program reaching out to pregnant teens and parenting teens in Albany, Georgia. The Network of Trust also supports a school-based teen parent and pregnancy support program.[18]

Modified Goals – **The Network of Trust** will adapt their innovative educational program to be offered electronically through pre-recorded, short educational videos on a variety of topics including maternal health and pregnancy, the birth experience, mental health and post-partum depression, infant health, car seats, safe sleeping for infants, infant and child CPR, and more.

**Open Arms, Incorporated**, began in 1991 in response to a Grand Jury’s recommendations to fight child abuse. The Bridge was opened as a shelter for confirmed cases of abuse and neglect or for runaway and homeless youth. It is the mission of Open Arms, Incorporated to bring healing, hope, and help to children, adults, and their families in need of support, intervention, and prevention as a result of child abuse and homelessness, in all its forms.[19]

Modified Goals - **Open Arms, Incorporated** will provide homeless Expectant and Parenting Teens with mental health education, services, awareness, and referrals. Open Arms, Inc. plans to educate Expectant and Parenting Teens, their partners, and those who support them on mental health issues and reducing stigma; the importance of addressing mental health and building support systems in families and the community; and developing a network that focuses on addressing the needs of Expectant and Parenting Teens and their families.

**Albany Second Chance** brings awareness, generates a support system and develops solutions to get those previously imprisoned back on track and integrated into the workforce, family unit, church and community.[20]

Modified Goals – **Albany Second Chance** will reach out to Expectant and Parenting Teens and their partners to assess their readiness for parenthood and their future. This exploration will inform the development of a program to assist Expectant and Parenting Teens in learning life skills (including how to be a good parent, how to care for a child and themselves) as well as practical skills such as computer literacy, coding, website development, and employability skills.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

While many of the organizations featured in this article provided some form of community

service, most did not focus on Expectant and Parenting Teens. However, all of the community agencies were willing to adjust or expand their organizational goals and missions to meet a societal need - to combat teenage pregnancy among Expectant and Parenting Teens. Many of the programs aimed to enhance life skills – including educational attainment / high school completion and overall wellness. While this grant project is slated for a three-year time frame, many of the skills that will be imparted will be lifelong. Ideally, additional mechanisms will be sought to sustain the interventions/ enhanced goals that are at various stages of implementation. Once explored, developed and implemented, additional intervention testing and refinement will be warranted.

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