

## **For the March 31, 2011 Editions of the Fort Bragg Advocate and Mendocino Beacon**

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### **Mendocino Coast Clinics celebrates its Teen Clinic**

Mendocino Coast Clinics (MCC) Teen Clinic is celebrating its first birthday this month, having seen 96 patients with 183 health care visits. The national and state initiatives to provide education, access to information and health care services, coupled with concerns about the high number of local teen pregnancies several years ago, initiated community dialog and collaboration to get this project launched.

Currently Katie Toler, a Community HealthCorps volunteer, is the primary staff person for the project. She teaches age appropriate reproductive health to young people, with the goal of reducing unplanned pregnancy and lowering rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI). She also builds relationships with teen peer volunteers by facilitating the Teen Advocacy Group (TAG) which is a part of the ASSETs after school program at Fort Bragg High School. TAG volunteers help out at the Thursday afternoon clinic and by learning medically accurate information to share with their peers. Katie communicates with teens through texting, a special teen clinic website and Facebook. These social media sites also have many links to helpful resources, as well as helping to access Teen Clinic services.

“Awesome, amazing and fabulous” are the words the TAG team used to describe the Teen Clinic. They thought it was cool it exists and the confidential aspect, in a small community, was of the highest value to them. When asked if they think reality television is glorifying teen parenthood, they said the impact is actually positive, it makes unplanned teen pregnancy appear less glamorous.

The future focus of the Teen Clinic @ MCC is to reach more Mendocino youth, as most patients have been from Fort Bragg since it is located in town and outreach has been targeted here. The other longer term goal is to reach more 18-21 year olds, who are also at risk and are included in teen pregnancy statistics. Another challenge is that Katie will be replaced by a new HealthCorps volunteer next fall, who will facilitate the program, requiring the building of new relationships and trust.

“A core piece of Teen Clinic @ MCC’s success is the integrated nature of the model,” said Stacy Pollina-Millen, who provides supervision for the program. “We have worked hard to create collaborative partnerships with other organizations to remove barriers to services and support teens in making healthy choices. Research demonstrates medically accurate, age appropriate and comprehensive reproductive health education reduces unplanned pregnancies and lowers both abortion and Sexually Transmitted Infection rates”, she added.

To contact Katie you can call or text 707-513-7575, access the website at [www.wix.com/coastclinics/teenclinic](http://www.wix.com/coastclinics/teenclinic) or Facebook at Teen Clinic @ MCC.