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**For Georgia Teens: Life is Not a Television Show**

“16 and Pregnant” is more than a reality television show for many teenagers in Georgia it is their life. Georgia has the 8<sup>th</sup> highest teen birth rate in the United States, with over 22,500 teen pregnancies in Georgia each year. To address this complex problem the Georgia Division of Public Health and the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians are working together to bring the community, medical professionals, faith based providers, educators and others who are involved in the lives of adolescents to the table to talk about the barriers and solutions to Georgia’s family planning problems.

In 2011, these organizations held a series of meetings across Georgia including meetings in Waycross and Albany. The most recent meeting was held in DeKalb County on May 26th. The Georgia Division of Public Health selected a cross-section of counties in the state, both rural and urban areas, with high teen pregnancy rates. DeKalb County has a teen pregnancy rate of 75.9 per 1,000 individuals compared to the national rate of 40.5 per 1,000. There are plans to hold five more community meetings across Georgia in 2011 and early 2012.

Harry Strothers, III, MD, President of the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians, says, “Thanks to our partners in public health and community organizations hard work for the last decade, we have public awareness of the teen pregnancy problem and that is a good first step. Bringing family physicians, obstetricians, and pediatricians together to talk about strategies to adapt in our communities is an important next step. “

The sobering reality of life not being a television show: less than 4 out of 10 teenage mothers ever complete high school and ultimately limit their earning potential. Over one-fourth of the teen pregnancies in Georgia are repeat pregnancies, thus challenging the teenage mothers and their families when additional children are born.

“This is a health issue, a quality of life problem, and an economic burden. Like many prevention activities if we work together, we can create more opportunities for Georgia’s teens and develop solutions that will ultimately save tax-payers money,” says Dr. Strothers.

For more information on teen pregnancy and current health promotion programs in Georgia please visit the Georgia Division of Public Health at:

<http://health.state.ga.us/programs/adolescent/>.

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*Established in 1947, the GAFP is a member chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians. GAFP strives to promote the specialty of family medicine through the education of and service to Family Physicians in Georgia. Boasting a membership of 2,500 family physicians, family medicine residents, and medical students, the organization supports those who aspire to achieve excellence and who are committed to delivering it. For more information, please visit us on the web at [www.gafp.org](http://www.gafp.org) or call (404) 321-7445.*