

The

HiTOPS Guardian

Helping adolescents make responsible decisions for brighter futures

Fall 2008

The Teenage Brain

“How many of you live with a teenager?” a HiTOPS educator asked while speaking at a conference of teachers, social workers and health care providers. A majority of the audience raised their hands – and those who had “been there and done that” shook their heads sympathetically and rolled their eyes; everybody laughed in understanding.

The educator said, “Describe them,” and the adjectives came easily: *Unpredictable, moody, sullen, irritable, know-it-all, hungry, angry, smart, funny, tired, lazy, secretive, creative, energetic, excitable, hard to please*. One teacher summed it up, “They’re all over the place.” This is not news; we have always been able to describe how teenagers behave but we have usually blamed it on hormones; however, according to recent brain research, hormones are just part of the picture.

Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health have been studying the adolescent brain by using MRI mapping to compare brain development over time. What they have learned is that the frontal cortex, which regulates emotion, rational decision-making and the ability to think ahead, has a huge growth spurt right before puberty and continues to grow into the early 20’s.

Understanding that teens are not being difficult on purpose, but are unable to plan ahead, focus

early in the morning and control their emotions, has implications for schools, parents and health care providers. Some states have delayed the start time for middle and high school with positive results.

At HiTOPS, we make every effort to incorporate what we know experientially and scientifically about adolescents. Our teen programs use multiple learning techniques including peer education and interactive lessons to keep students engaged. Our adult programs give parents support during these stressful years and help them communicate with their teens. In the health center, the staff takes into consideration teens’ desire for independence and their risk-taking tendencies by allowing plenty of time to discuss their concerns, and helps guide their decision-making with accurate health information, all while maintaining strict confidentiality.

Adolescents may look like adults and have an air of invulnerability, but they are struggling through another phase of child development and need all of our patience, understanding and support. ☼

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HiTOPS, Inc., Teen Health and Education Center

21 Wiggins Street, Princeton, NJ 08540

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See a copy of our annual report on our website, www.hitops.org, or call HiTOPS for a printed copy.

Parent Place

Supporting Your Gay Child

Q: Our 16-year-old daughter just shared with us that she is lesbian. As parents, we really want to be supportive of her, but we are also feeling like we could use some help ourselves. We love our daughter, but this was not news we were expecting and want to know some ways we can understand and accept what this means for our family.

A: Learning that one's son or daughter is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) can come as a shock. Many parents have preconceived expectations of who their child is or will become, and these expectations may have to be modified after learning that a child is not "straight."

Some parents actually go through a process similar to grief as they let go of their fantasy and come to accept their child's sexual orientation.

Children need to know they are loved unconditionally, especially by family members. Those children who are perceived as different and have experienced bias or harassment are especially vulnerable. Some research suggests that without this reassurance some LGBT teens may drop out of school, turn to drugs, self-mutilate, become isolated and have thoughts of suicide. We, as parents, need to find the strength and conviction to love our children through all of their struggles.

Joining with other parents who have children who are LGBT and receiving their support can be very helpful. Most communities have a PFLAG (Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays – www.pflag.org) chapter where people can get support and network with other local families. In Princeton, PFLAG meets the 2nd Monday of each month at Trinity Church, Mercer Street, George Thomas Room from 7:30-9pm. Contact Corrine O'Hara for more information corrine@hitops.org (609)683-5155, ext. 217. ☺

Teen Spot

Answered by HiTOPS Education Staff

Q: When my friends and I text each other, sometimes we send photos, which is fun! Last week, my friend sent a picture of his brother's girlfriend – and she was topless and appeared to be drunk. I was pretty offended by the picture and felt bad for the girl, since I am pretty sure she doesn't know he's been sending it around. Isn't that kinda wrong?

A: Good for you for asking the question! Not only is it "kinda wrong," sending nude photos of another person through texts, the Internet or even through the mail is illegal. The person who took and sent the photo originally, as well as every other person who passes the picture along, could be charged with distributing pornography (or child pornography if the person photographed is under 18). Law enforcement officials are becoming more vigilant about intercepting inappropriate text and web content and are prosecuting the individuals involved.

Any time you receive an obscene photo you need to delete it immediately from your phone or computer and let the person who sent it to you know that you do not wish to receive ANY future photos of that kind. You can also alert this person that what they are doing is illegal and inform the victim about what has happened. Your friend's girlfriend has a right to know that she is being exploited in this way.

The technology we have today can be lots of fun, but there are many ways to abuse it and many possible serious consequences. Not knowing that something you are doing is a crime is not a good defense, so it is best that your use of technology follows appropriate rules. ☺

Quit Smoking and Win an iPod

If you are 18-24 years old and have thought about quitting smoking, NOW is the time to do it! Learn how you can quit and win an iPod by going to www.iqitatitops.com or call today at 609-683-5155 ext. 211 to make an appointment with Ivy, our Smoking Cessation Specialist.

HiTOPS Happenings

The Fifth Annual New Jersey Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Forum is slated for Saturday, October 18, 2008, at Robbinsville High School. The statewide conference brings together students, advisors and supporters of student groups working to make schools safer and more inclusive for all. The Forum, co-sponsored by GLSEN Central New Jersey and

HiTOPS, offers large group community-building activities as well as numerous workshops and resources from state and national organizations. A special feature of this year's Forum is keynote speaker Malcolm Lazin, the Executive Director of Equality Forum, a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender organization which presents the largest annual interna-

tional civil rights forum.

This year's GSA Forum will begin at 12:30pm with registration and finish at 8pm. Robbinsville High School is located at 155 Robbinsville Edinburg Road, Robbinsville, NJ. All are welcome to attend. For more information or to register online, please visit www.njgsaforum.com or contact corrine@hitops.org.

Thank You to Our Volunteers

The world is hugged by the faithful arms of volunteers.
-Everett Mámor

Volunteers are the heart of an organization, and at HiTOPS it is no different. Our volunteers perform a range of tasks, all crucial to our sustainability. They serve on our Board of Directors, host special events, chair fundraisers—the list goes on and on.

One such volunteer is Jean Moses. Last year, after attending our First & Third support group for LGBTQ youth, she said, "I was so impressed by the First & Third program. Corrine [HiTOPS' LGBTQ Coordinator] runs a no-pressure, supportive group that lets everyone be who they are. Teenagers sometimes get a bad reputation these days, but this group...makes me very hopeful for the future." Since that first meeting, Jean has returned to the group, not only as an attendee, but as a role model and someone who is able to listen and offer advice to the LGBTQ youth of today. In addition to giving her time, Jean has donated to HiTOPS in support of general programming, and our LGBTQ services.

We are deeply appreciative of the time and hard work



HiTOPS volunteers (L-R): Emily Wolf, Katherine Fu, Olivia Sanders and Jenna Lichtenstein.

our volunteers put into ensuring we succeed in promoting adolescent health and well-being; we can't thank them enough. If you are interested in becoming a HiTOPS volunteer, we have a wide range of opportunities available so please give us a call at 609-683-5155 ext. 241.

TEEN HEALTH CENTER

Hours for appointments:

Mon/Wed: 10-Noon & 1-6pm

Tues/Fri: 9-Noon & 1-5pm

Thurs: 10-Noon & 1-7pm

Two Sats/month: 1-5pm

Tel: 609-683-5155 x 211

CENTRO DE SALUD

Horarios para las citas:

Lunes/Miercoles: 10am-12pm y
1pm- 6pm

Martes/Viernes: 9am-5pm cerrado
12-1pm

Jueves: 10am-7pm cerrado 12-1pm
Sabado- Dos por mes 1-5pm

Tel: 609-683-5155 ext. 211

Hablamos Español

A Call to former Teen Council Members!

If you are a former Teen Council member or know someone who is, please contact HiTOPS at 609-683-5155 ext. 216 to give us current contact information.

We'd love to hear from you!

Meet Our Staff

A Conversation with Steve Pitts

Steve Pitts, Manager of Teen PEP, began working at HiTOPS in January of 2007. We interviewed him in early August of this year.

Why did you want to work at HiTOPS?

I had known about this organization since the FamilyBorn days. When HiTOPS became focused on adolescent sexual health and education, I felt like they were moving in a bold and necessary direction. So I was interested for some time before I began working here.

How do you spend your time at HiTOPS?

A major part of my job is managing a grant from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services that funds our Teen PEP activities, including Teen Council. I also plan and implement classes for

middle and high school students and at male juvenile detention centers throughout New Jersey. In addition, I co-advise the Teen Council.

What do you like doing most at HiTOPS?

I enjoy being an advisor for Teen



Steve Pitts, Manager of Teen PEP

Council. It is very rewarding. When the year begins, Teen Council members still seem quite young. But by the end of their time on Teen Council, they are confident, knowledgeable, and outgoing. The growth is pretty impressive.

I also enjoy teaching males in juvenile detention centers. These teens are at a very formative time in their lives. I always tell them that if they remember 10 percent of what I teach them, they will know 90 percent more than most of their friends. They like that.

How is HiTOPS different from other places you have worked?

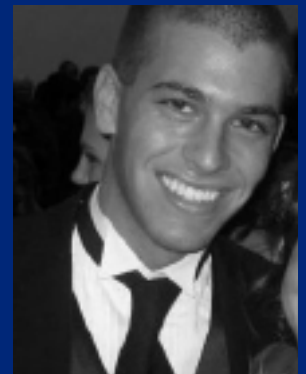
I am the only man working with 14 women.* That's sort of unusual. We always have food at staff meetings. 🌱

** In late August, HiTOPS welcomed Leonardo Galeano to our staff. For more information about Leonardo, see page 5.*

In My Own Words

Growing up as a gay teenager in a society that is, for the most part, anti-homosexual has proved itself a truly difficult feat. Nothing I have encountered thus far in my 18 years of life has proved to be as huge of an asset as HiTOPS. After becoming more involved with the organization as a Teen PEP member at South Brunswick High School, presenting at the Teen Council's homophobia reduction workshop Bridges of Respect, and interning this summer, it is apparent to me the amount of love and compassion that is hidden behind the workings of this truly amazing organization. It is with the help of HiTOPS that I was able to do things I never thought possible. The educators that I have

worked with this year have shown me a welcoming attitude I will most certainly not forget. I know that with the experiences I have encountered while working with HiTOPS, I am more prepared to handle my freshman year at college, and life from that point further, with a little more confidence.



— Daniel DeOliveira,
South Brunswick High School, Class of 2008

Support Youth Through HiTOPS

Workplace Giving

HiTOPS counts on our individual donors to ensure that we can provide vital services to our adolescent clients. These donations come in a variety of ways (securities, bequests, third party events). One of the easiest ways to donate to HiTOPS is through your company's workplace giving program. To do so, provide our United Way workplace number (022534) to your company and an amount of your choice can be deducted from each paycheck. In addition, many employers match employee donations to charitable organizations, which can multiply your donation to HiTOPS significantly. Check with your company to find out if they offer a workplace giving or a matching gift program. Every bit helps and assists us in promoting adolescent health and well-being.

If you have any questions, or want more information, please call us at 609-683-5155 ext. 216, or email

julie@hitops.org.

HiTOPS: Now accepting online donations!

You can now make an online donation by visiting www.hitops.org and clicking on the 'Support HiTOPS' tab. It's fast, it's easy and it's a great way to give to HiTOPS!

HiTOPS Wishlist

HiTOPS would greatly appreciate donations of the following items:

- Small white noise machine
- One year magazine subscriptions to *Yoga Journal* or *Cooking Light*
- Timeshares, airline miles, gift certificates to local restaurants, and



The 2008-2009 Teen Council with their advisors, Steve Pitts and Carolyn Santoro.

other unique items to be auctioned at our Guardian Award Gala.

In addition, we are always grateful for cash donations, gifts of stock, gifts to HiTOPS in honor or memory of loved ones, endowment campaign support, and legacy gifts. ☼



HiTOPS is pleased to welcome new staff member Leonardo Galeano as our Health Center Administrator, and Diana Miranda into her new position as the Latino Outreach Coordinator. We are thrilled to have them onboard!

HiTOPS Staff

Lori Heninger, PhD, *Executive Director*
Elizabeth M. Casparian, PhD.
Julie Davidson Meyers, MA
Lindsey C. Fraser
Leonardo Galeano
Anita Gooding
Christina Kent
Diana Miranda
Corrine O'Hara, RN
Ivy Pearlstein, RN, MS, APNC
Steve Pitts
Connie Poor, RN
Carolyn Santoro, CHES
Catharine M. Vaucher
Elizabeth Walters, CNM, MS
Sandra Zordan-Friedman, CNM, MSN

HiTOPS Board

Paul Knodel, *President*
Anne Skalka, CPA, *Treasurer*
Christina W. Strong, Esq.,
Secretary
Humberto Fernandez
Arthur J. Ferrara
Lesli Godfrey
Marc Kanoff
Andrew R. Koontz
Jim Levine
Nicole K. Martin, MPH, Esq.
Laurie Smaldone-Alsup, MD
Gary R. Snyder
Molly Vernon

Many thanks to Diana Quick for designing the newsletter. Thank you to Church & Dwight for their support of the newsletter.

Calendar

September 2008

- 26-28 New Jersey Ride Against AIDS. Ride begins at High Point State Park and ends in Cape May
- 27 Slammin' Super Saturday at John Witherspoon Middle School

October 2008

- 3 HiTOPS at the Library 3-5pm Princeton Public Library Community Rm.
- 5 Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Walk at Six Flags Great Adventure
- 15 Parent Workshop: Tips for raising boys. HiTOPS 7-9pm*
- 18 GSA Forum 12:30-8pm Robbinsville High School

November 2008

- 19 Parent Workshop: Dealing with bullying and harassment. HiTOPS 7-9pm*
- 27-28 HiTOPS closed

December 2008

- 3 Jackson Katz presentation 6:30-9pm BLC Theater, Rider University. Refreshments will be served. See box at right.
- 4 Jackson Katz presentation 6:30-9pm Princeton High School Performing Arts Center. (See box at right.) Refreshments will be served.
- 5 HiTOPS at the Library 3-5pm Princeton Public Library Community Rm.
- 25 HiTOPS closed
- 26 HiTOPS closed
- 31 HiTOPS closes at 3pm

January 2009

- 1 HiTOPS closed

* For more information on these and other HiTOPS programs, please call 609-683-5155 ext. 234 or email ecaspasian@hitops.org

WRESTLING WITH MANHOOD IN A VIOLENCE- DRIVEN MEDIA CULTURE

with Jackson Katz, ED.M.

A presentation for high school men and their fathers, teachers and coaches.

12/3/08 and 12/4/08 at 6:30pm

Jackson Katz is one of America's leading anti-sexist male activists. An educator, author and filmmaker, he is internationally recognized for his groundbreaking work in the field of gender violence prevention education with men and boys, particularly in the sports culture and the military.

Free and open to the public.

HiTOPS, Inc.
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