



Whose Kids?...Our Kids!

Newfound Area School District Teen Sexuality

Recently, the Newfound Area School District, UNH Cooperative Extension and community members joined together to learn more about the youth in our community by conducting the Teen Assessment Project (TAP).

Approximately 83% of Newfound students were surveyed from the Middle School and High School. In all, information from 579 surveys was used for this newsletter.

| | | Male | Female |
|-----|--------------|------|--------|
| 108 | 7th graders | 60 | 48 |
| 95 | 8th graders | 49 | 46 |
| 108 | 9th graders | 56 | 52 |
| 100 | 10th graders | 46 | 54 |
| 80 | 11th graders | 43 | 37 |
| 88 | 12th graders | 39 | 49 |

"Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" is a parent newsletter series of the Teen Assessment Project (TAP), a program of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. This project was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), through the Division for Children, Youth and Families, NH Department of Health and Human Services. The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) originated at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in the direction of Stephen A. Small, Ph.D. TAP in Grafton County is under the direction of Deborah Maes, UNH Cooperative Extension Family Development Educator in cooperation with Charlotte W. Cross, UNH Cooperative Extension, Youth Development Specialist. For more information about TAP call Charlotte W. Cross at (603) 862-2495 or e-mail at charlotte.cross@unh.edu.

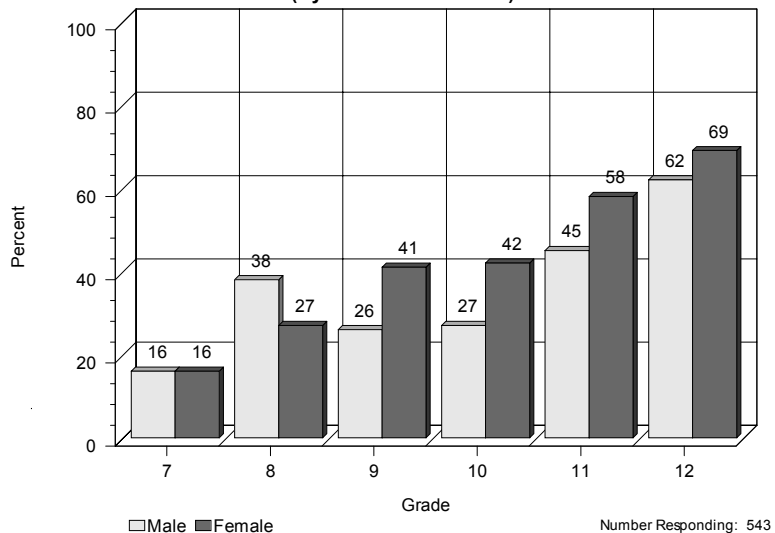
Our survey of local youth covered many areas of concern to adolescents and their parents. This issue of WHOSE KIDS?...OUR KIDS! looks at the topic of teen sexuality.

Sexual Activity Among Local Youth

A fear for many parents is that their children will become sexually active before they're ready. Parents fear an unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), emotional harm, date rape, and sexual abuse. Most parents feel early sexual experiences will harm their children.

As the following chart shows, about 1 in 4 teens (23%) in the 9th grade have had sexual intercourse. In the 12th grade, about two-thirds (66%) have had intercourse. The number of youth who have had sex generally increases with age. On the other hand, almost 9 out of 10 middle school youth *have never* had sexual intercourse (boys, 84%; girls, 93%). In the high school years, more than 1 out of 2 (54%) *have never* had sex (boys, 61%; girls, 48%).

Teens Who Have Ever Had Sexual Intercourse
(By Grade and Gender)



Communicating With Our Teens About Sex

Most parents feel nervous and unprepared to discuss sexuality with their teens. Here are some hints to help you talk to your child.

- Get the facts straight. There are many good books to help you learn about adolescent sexuality. Ask the town librarian for recommendations.
- Don't be afraid to admit to yourself and your teen that you are not comfortable with the topic.
- If you don't know an answer to a question your teen asks, say so. No one knows all the answers about sex.
- Listen to yourself as well as to your children. When you talk to your teen, are you telling him/her your values or what you think is most important about sexuality?
- You and your child may disagree. Try to talk about a topic, not argue.
- Try to convey to your teenager you care more about his/her health and happiness than what he/she did on last night's date.

Tips for Parents

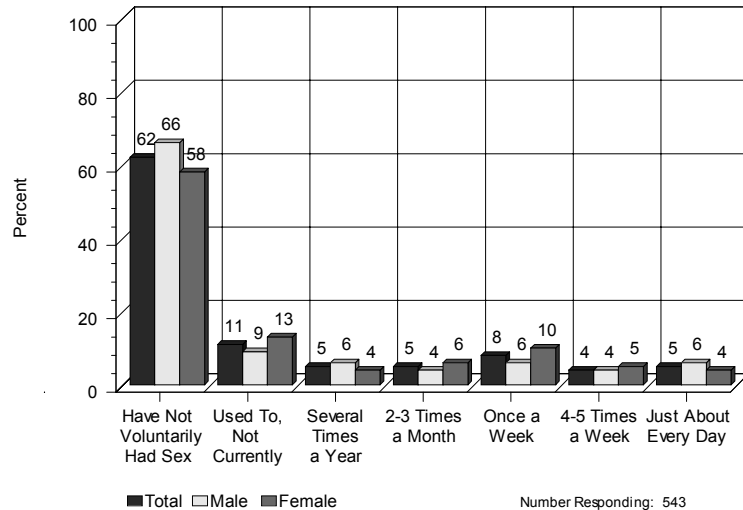
What can parents do? We hope you've been able to talk with your children about sexuality as they've been growing up. If not, it's never too late — start now! In her book, *Straight From the Heart*, Carol Cassel offers the following hints for getting started.

- **Seize the moment.** While doing a job together, or watching TV, talk to your child about a sexual issue. Choose a night, choose a TV program (the "soaps" are ideal), and watch with your child. Many of the TV scenes can lead into a good talk about sexuality.

Continued on page 3

One in 8 local youth (13%) used to be sexually active but aren't now. More than 1 in 4 youth (29%) are currently sexually active. Another 62% of local youth have never voluntarily had sex (middle school, 76%; high school, 54%).

Frequency of Sexual Intercourse
(By Gender)

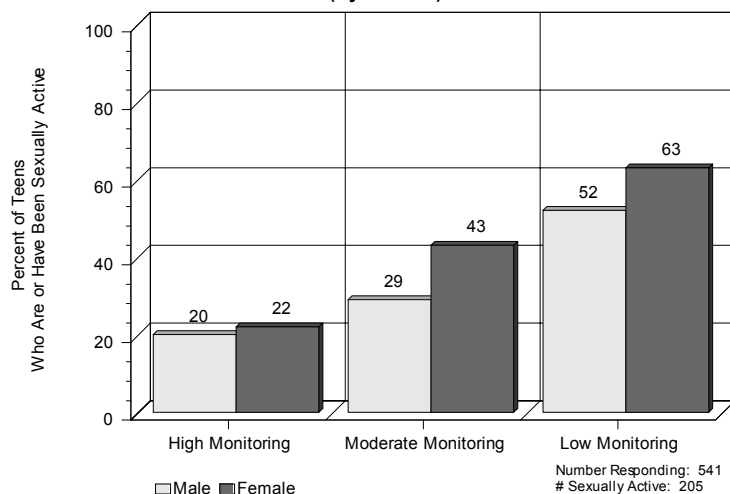


Teens are having sexual intercourse, but many teenagers don't always use birth control. Almost half of the sexually active teens (49%) reported they didn't always use birth control (boys, 52%; girls, 46%). Almost two-thirds (61%) of 12th graders who have sex always use birth control (boys, 48%; girls, 71%). This means that some teens are at risk for pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Parental Monitoring and Levels of Teen Sexual Activity

Parental monitoring is an important factor in preventing adolescent problem behavior. Parental monitoring means parents supervise their children or know where they are and what they're doing. Higher levels of parental monitoring are related to lower levels of sexual activity in teens.

Relationship Between Levels of Parental Monitoring and Teen Sexual Activity
(By Gender)



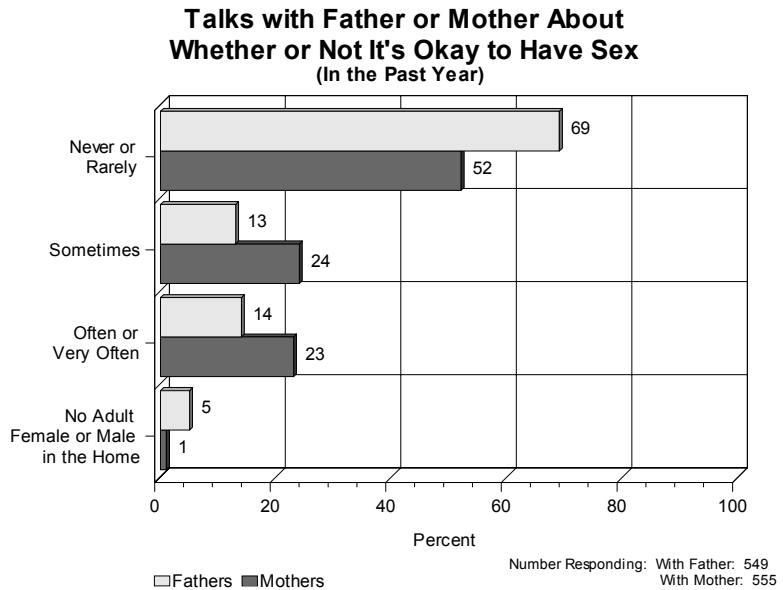
Tips for Parents

- Be alert to moments to teach.**
As your teen’s body is changing, use this chance to discuss the subject. An easy opener could be, “You are really growing up. One of the experiences you may soon have, or already have had, is ...”
- Get to the point.**
Answer your teenager's questions without being too boring or jumping to conclusions. Don't accuse them of having sex just because they ask a question, they may only be curious. If you don't know an answer, say so. Offer to find out for them. Buy them their own book on teenage sexuality. Talk with them about the books.
- Honor their privacy.**
What your teenager tells you should remain confidential. Don't tell your friends or relatives what your teen has told you.
- Be available, but don't push.**
Answer questions, and ask if there's anything else your teen wants to talk about.
- Discuss, don't dictate.**
You can talk about what you think is important while respecting your child's views. Ask questions to make your teen think. When a boy and girl have intercourse, what does the girl think about the relationship? What about the boy? What could he be thinking?

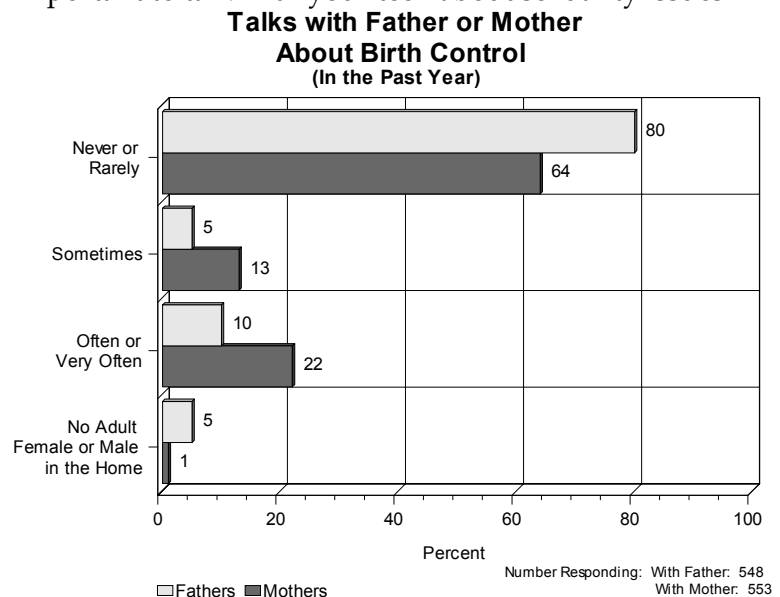
Be aware of your own values, beliefs, ideas, and fears.

Parent-Teen Communication About Sexuality

How do teenagers learn about sexuality? Do they get education at home, at school, or at church? Do you talk with your child about his/her developing sexuality? We asked teens if their mothers or fathers talked with them about sex or birth control. Many parents don't talk to their teens about whether or not it's okay for teenagers to have sex. Over half of all teens (52%) reported that they had "never" or "rarely" had a good talk with their mothers about whether or not it's okay to have sex. Even more adolescents (69%) have never had a good talk on this subject with their fathers.



If you haven't talked with your adolescent about birth control, you aren't alone. Many teens (64%) reported they never or rarely talked to their mothers about birth control. Even more teens (80%) said they never or rarely talked to their fathers about birth control. Although you may find it difficult, it is important to talk with your teen about sexuality issues.



National Trends

A recent study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2000) shows that half of the U.S. high school students have had sexual intercourse. One out of 12 students reported having had sexual intercourse before the age of 13. Nearly 1 of 6 high school students have had four or more sexual partners before their graduation. Over half of the sexually active high school youth reported that they or their partners used condoms during last intercourse (66%, males; 51%, females). One in 4 sexually active high school youth reported that they had used alcohol or drugs before last intercourse (31%, males; 19% females).

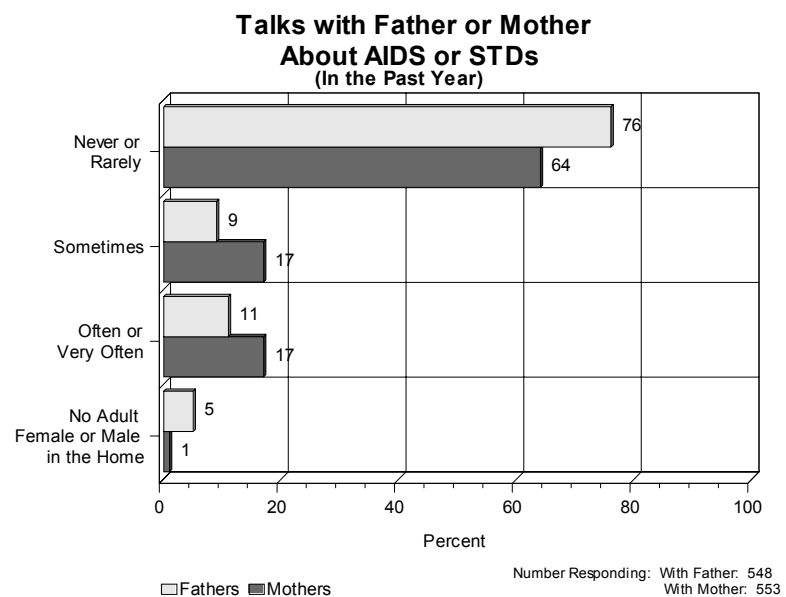
About one-half of all teenagers use contraceptives the first time they have intercourse. Younger teens are even less likely to use contraceptives. Many teens who plan ahead for first intercourse are much more likely to use contraception. Half of all first pregnancies happen in the first six months of having intercourse. About 1 in 5 first pregnancies happen in the first month.

These statistics paint a frightening picture of the risk of unplanned pregnancy. Most girls say they are surprised when they find out they are pregnant. They give many reasons for being surprised. They think they didn't have sex often enough. They were at the wrong point in their menstrual cycle. They were too young. They didn't have an orgasm. The boy had withdrawn before he ejaculated. Some girls forgot to use a method of birth control. Some believed they wouldn't get pregnant.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Sexually active teens are at high risk of getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Female teens have a high rate of gonorrhea, chlamydia cervicitis, pelvic inflammatory disease (P.I.D.) and cytomegalovirus. There is growing concern that AIDS victims in their 20's contracted or caught the disease in late adolescence. Teens use condoms sometimes but not always.

In addition to sexuality and birth control, most parents also don't talk to their teens about the dangers of AIDS and other STDs. Over half of all teens (64%) reported that their mothers never or rarely talked to them about AIDS or other STDs. Again, even more (76%) said their fathers never or rarely talked to them about this subject.



Parental Consequences and Values and Levels of Teen Sexual Activity

Research suggests that there is a link between parental consequences and teen health-risk behaviors. Three of four youth who reported that they would get in trouble at home or probably would get in trouble at home for having sex also reported that they had not had sexual intercourse. Another link was seen between parental values around health-risk behaviors and teen behaviors. This is illustrated in the chart on the following page.

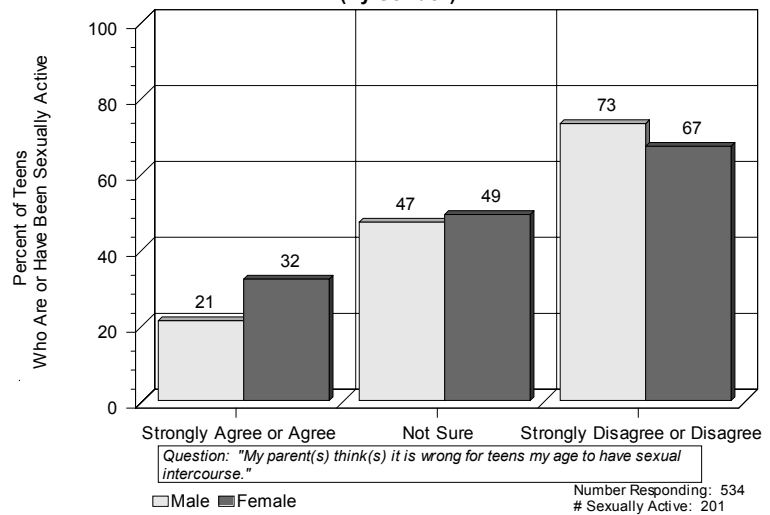
Why Are Teens Sexually Active?

There are many reasons why teens are sexually active. Obviously, teens are going through changes in their bodies. For example, changes in hormone levels cause breast development, hair growth, and the deepening of male voices. The hormonal changes may increase teens' sex drive, thus contributing to sexual activity.

In addition to the physical changes taking place, teens are also starting a period of greater independence. The teen is balancing parental beliefs, peer group influences, media messages, body changes, and personal values. All of these things contribute to his or her sexual behavior. Researchers have found the following about teen sexuality.

- Teens who can't talk with their parents are more likely to have sex early. They're also more likely to begin smoking and drinking earlier.
- Teens whose parents supervise them closely are likely to begin intercourse later. These parents know where their teenagers are and who they are with. They check to see if there is adult supervision when appropriate.
- Some fathers may believe sex is okay for boys, but not girls. This gives girls and boys different messages.
- The more often parents talk to children about sexuality, the later teens are likely to begin sexual intercourse.
- What kids *think* their peers are doing affects early intercourse *more than* what their peers are *actually doing*.
- Teens who are not doing well in school or don't care about education are more likely to have sex at an early age.

Relationship Between Teens' Perceptions of Parental Values and Teen Sexual Activity (By Gender)



Have You Talked to Your Adolescent About Sex?

Have you talked to your teen about the topics in the box below? Are you embarrassed? Do you know about all the topics? Do you know how you feel about the topics? Do you know how to discuss the subject? Are you put off when your teen says, "Oh Mom, I know that!" **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.** Don't give up! Try a new approach, buy a book, or talk to a friend. Find a way to talk with your teenager. Remember, you don't have to be an expert. What's important is that you are willing to discuss these issues with your teen.

Think how much you have talked about the topics listed below with your teen. If you have not discussed the subjects below with your adolescent to the degree that you would like, decide when you might.

| | Never | Somewhat | Enough |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Body changes during puberty | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Menstruation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wet dreams | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homosexuality | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sexual activity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Peer pressure to be sexually active | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gender roles (what does it mean to be male/female) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Conception/reproduction | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Masturbation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Contraceptives/birth control | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Your values/beliefs about the above topics | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Resources For Parents

- Boston Women's Health Book Collective. (1996). **Our Bodies, Ourselves for the New Century: A Book by and for Women.** Old Tappan, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Griffin, C.W., Wirth, M.J., & Wirth, A.G. (1997). **Beyond Acceptance: Parents of Lesbians and Gays Talk About Their Experiences.** New York: Prentice Hall.
- Schwartz, P. & Cappello, D. (2000). **Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children about Sex & Character.** New York: Hyperion.

Resources For Young People

- Bell, Ruth (1998). **Changing Bodies, Changing Lives: Expanded Third Edition: A Book for Teens on Sex and Relationships.** New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Fairchild, B. & Hayward, N. (1998). **Now That You Know.** San Diego: Harvest.
- Hein, K. & DiGeronimo, T.F. (1994). **AIDS: Trading Fears for Facts—A Guide for Young People.** Fairfield, OH: Consumer Reports Books.
- Heron, A. (1995). **Two Teenagers in Twenty: Writings by Gay and Lesbian Youth.** Boston: Alyson Publications.

UNH Cooperative Extension Resources:

- **Publication Series:**
Living with your Teenager
- **Workshop Series:**
Family Focus: Parenting the Young Teen

Helpful Resources

Abuse

| | |
|---|----------------|
| NH Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) | 1-800-894-5533 |
| (To report child abuse or neglect) | |
| Sexual Assault Support Services | 1-888-747-7070 |

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) | 1-800-593-3330 |
| Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Recovery | 1-800-804-0909 |
| Treatment Hotline of U.S. Dept. Health & Human Services | 1-800-662-4357 |

Counseling Services

| | |
|---|----------------|
| HELPLINE | 1-800-852-3388 |
| Parent to Parent of NH Family Support Network | 1-800-698-5465 |
| NH Legal Assistance | 1-800-334-3135 |

Crisis Hot Lines

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Access Crisis Line | 1-800-987-6562 |
| Boys Town Hotline | 1-800-448-3000 |
| TeenLine (confidential, for any problem) "Head Rest" | 1-800-639-6095 |
| Youth Crisis Hotline | 1-800-448-4663 |

Family Planning/Health Services

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Plymouth Family Planning | 536-3584 |
| Franklin Family Planning | 934-4905 |
| Mt. Mooselauke Health Clinic | 764-5704 |

Information and Referral

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Help Line (also crisis intervention) | 1-800-852-3388 |
| Info Link | 1-888-499-2525 |
| Poison Information Center | 1-800-222-1222 |
| Lin-Wood/Newfound/Pemi-Baker Community Coalition (youth alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention) | 536-3720 x 108 |

Runaway

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Child & Family Services of NH Group Home | 224-9313 |
| National Runaway Switchboard | 1-800-621-4000 |

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Plymouth Family Planning (testing, info) | 536-3584 |
| Franklin Family Planning (testing, info) | 934-4905 |
| Lakes Regional General Hospital | 524-3211 |
| NH AIDS Hotline | 1-800-752-2437 |

Suicide and Depression

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Speare Memorial Hospital | 536-1120 |
| Franklin Regional Hospital | 934-2060 |
| Lakes Regional General Hospital | 524-3211 |
| TeenLine (confidential, for any problem) "Head Rest" | 1-800-639-6095 |

UNH Cooperative Extension

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| Grafton County, Family and 4-H Youth Development | 787-6944 |
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Also see the "Self-Help Guide to Human Services in N.H." at the front of your telephone book

This newsletter was based on a publication by Stephen A. Small, University of Wisconsin at Madison. The UNH Cooperative Extension newsletter "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" was edited by Charlotte W. Cross, Extension Specialist, Youth Development and Mary W. Temke, Ph.D., Extension Specialist, Human Development, with assistance from Fran Chickering, Program Coordinator, UNH Cooperative Extension. Desktop publishing provided by Santhana Souksarmrane, UNH Work Study Student.

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