



## Whose Kids?...Our Kids! Pemi-Baker School District Teen Health Risk Behaviors

In December of 1999, the Teen Assessment Project (TAP) was conducted in the Pemi-Baker School District to learn more about the youth in the community. At that time approximately 85% of the high school students (659) participated. The Pemi-Baker School District granted permission to the Lin-Wood/Newfound/Pemi-Baker Community Coalition to re-survey its youth in 2002 to determine what changes in perceptions, behaviors, and concerns had occurred. In November 2002 approximately 79% of the high school students (666) participated.

		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
183	9th graders	84	99
155	10th graders	75	80
175	11th graders	98	77
153	12th graders	72	81

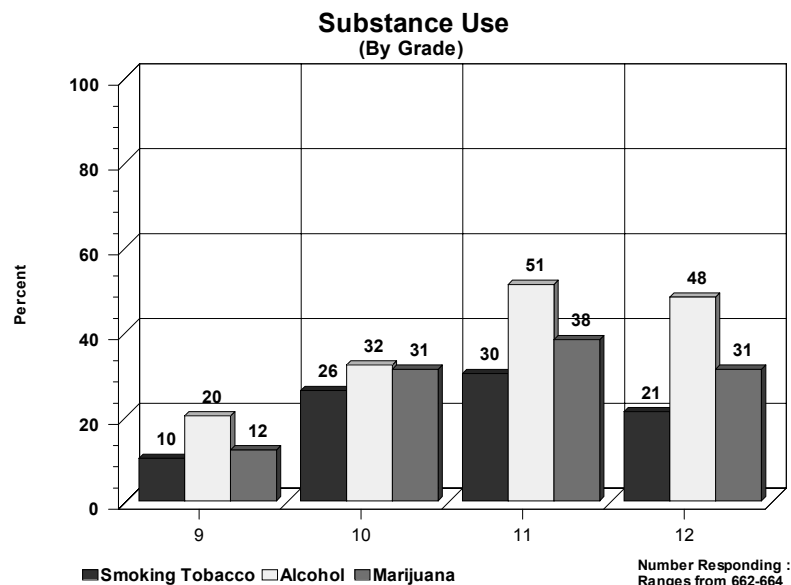
"Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" is a parent newsletter series of the Teen Assessment Project (TAP), a program of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. This project was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), through the Division 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 under 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](mailto:charlotte.cross@unh.edu).

This issue of WHOSE KIDS?...OUR KIDS! looks at the topic of alcohol and other drugs. How often do teens drink and use drugs? Is this part of growing up? Should we be concerned?

Today's teenagers hear mixed messages about drinking alcohol and using other drugs. One minute they hear the simple message, "Just say NO!" or they hear "Don't Drink and Drive." Television commercials, magazine ads, and billboards have a different message. These state that drinking is "fun," "sexy," "romantic," "adult," or "macho." On top of this, teens know adults who use alcohol or pills to relax, to get rid of stress, or to socialize.

### Alcohol and Drug Use Among Local Teens

How often do teens use substances? Forty-eight percent (48%) of teens reported that they use at least one substance on a monthly or more often basis. Alcohol is the most frequently used substance on a monthly or more often basis (37%) followed by marijuana (28%).



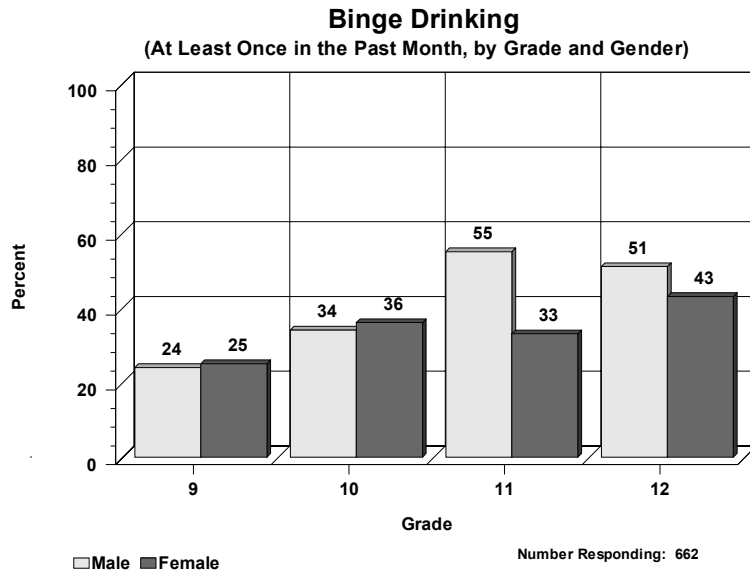
## Warning Signs of Teenage Alcohol or Drug Abuse

When can you tell a teen has gone beyond trying out drinking or drugs? The following warning signs show that a teenager may be abusing, or often using, alcohol or other drugs.

- missing work
- not saying where he or she is going
- lying about where he or she has been
- stopping activities the teen used to enjoy and not filling the time with other fun activities
- getting angry easily and often
- borrowing money from parents or friends
- can't explain loss of money or valuables
- sniffing, running nose; losing appetite; dilated or red eyes
- associating with a new group of friends, often with those who use drugs
- hiding things that would show alcohol or drug use.

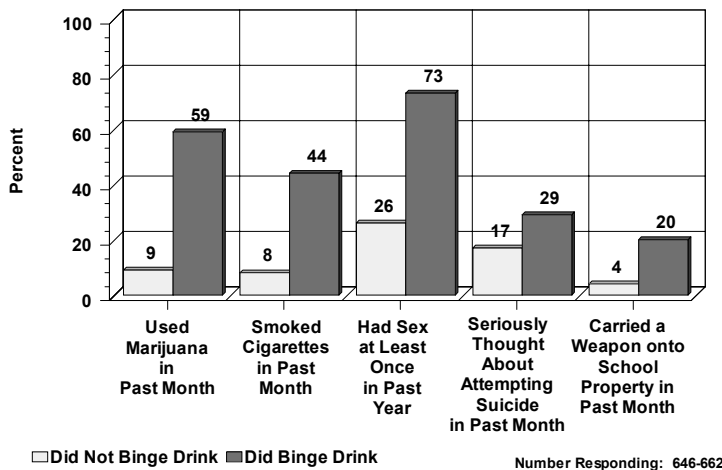
Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Binge drinking is when teens have 5 or more drinks in a row at one time. In response to a question about binge drinking in the past month, more than 1 in 3 students (37%) reported that they engaged in binge drinking at least one time in the past month. A greater percentage of males than females reported this behavior.



Research suggests that binge drinkers also engage in other health risk behaviors. The TAP survey results confirm this when the behaviors of teens who report binge drinking in the past month are compared with those who do not report this.

## Risk Behaviors Among Those Teens Who Do Vs. Those Who Do Not Engage in Binge Drinking



## Ways Parents Can Help

- **Encourage your teen’s abilities and interests.**

Parents need to encourage their teens in activities that develop interests and skills. These activities should help teens feel good about themselves without the use of alcohol or drugs. Hobbies, school events, sports, and volunteer work may keep youth from using alcohol and drugs out of boredom.

- **Help your teen or pre-teen deal with peer pressure.**

Parents can help their teens say no to alcohol/drugs and early sexual activity without “losing face.” Here are some things teens can say: “I don’t like the way it (beer, cigarettes) tastes.” “I don’t like what it does to my body.” “No thanks.” “Not today.”

- **Tell your teen to involve you when needed.**

Let your teen know it is okay to bring you into the conversation if they need to. For example, “My mom is going to give me a driving lesson this afternoon.” “If my dad finds out I’ve been drinking, he’ll never let me use the car again.”

- **Know the facts about alcohol and other drugs.**

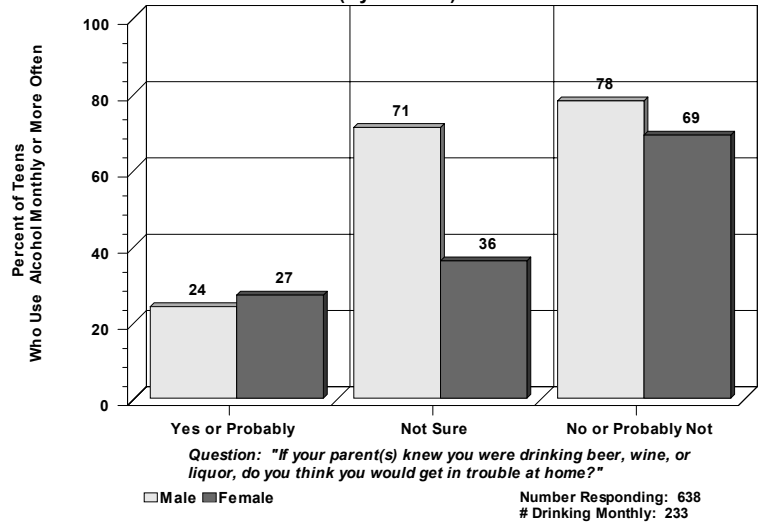
Parents should know the effects of alcohol/drugs on the body and on driving, and the risks of alcohol/drug abuse.

- **Create strong family ties.**

Strong family ties can help protect against alcohol/drug problems in young people. Family activities (for example, sports, movies, or family meetings) along with open discussions and flexible rules can be particularly helpful. Really listening to your teen, even when you don’t agree, will strengthen the ties between you.

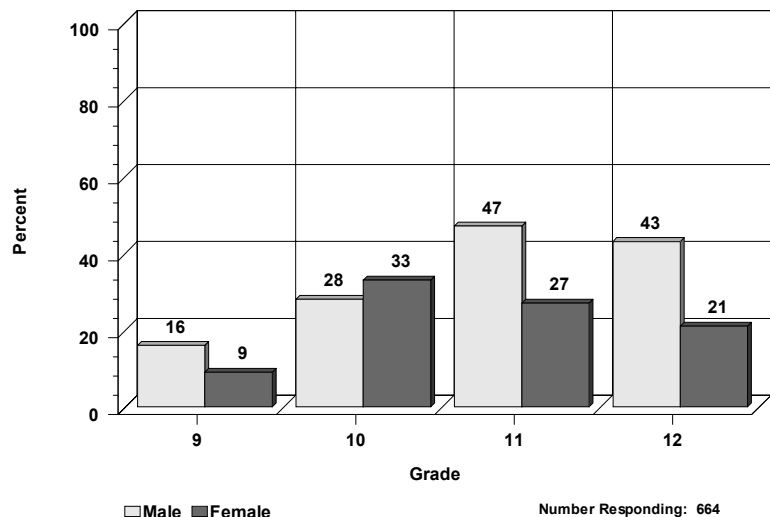
*What role do parents play in influencing their teens' substance use behavior?* The results of the TAP survey show that parents matter. Lower levels of substance use are evident for teens who know their parents' values, who know there will be consequences, and who are monitored by their parents. The chart below shows the relationship between teen perception of parental consequences and monthly teen drinking.

**Relationship Between Teens' Perceptions of Parental Consequences and Monthly Teen Drinking (By Gender)**



Use of marijuana is lower than alcohol use for both males and females. Overall, more than 1 in 3 males (34%) and 1 in 5 females (22%) use marijuana monthly or more often. A greater percentage of males than females use marijuana on a monthly or more often basis.

**Teens Who Use Marijuana (Monthly or More Often, by Grade and Gender)**



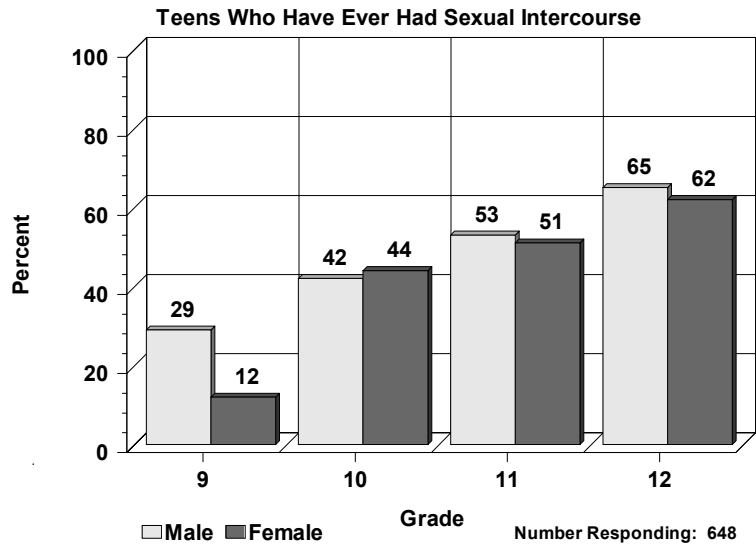
## Tips for Parents in Communicating about Sex

What can parents do? Hopefully 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 with your child about a sexual issue. TV scenes can lead to a good talk about sexuality.
- 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 teens' 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. Talk with them about the books.
- Honor their privacy.**  
 What your teenager tells you should remain confidential.
- 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 teen's views. Ask questions to make your teen think. When two people have intercourse, what does each person think about the relationship?

## Sexual Activity Among Local Youth

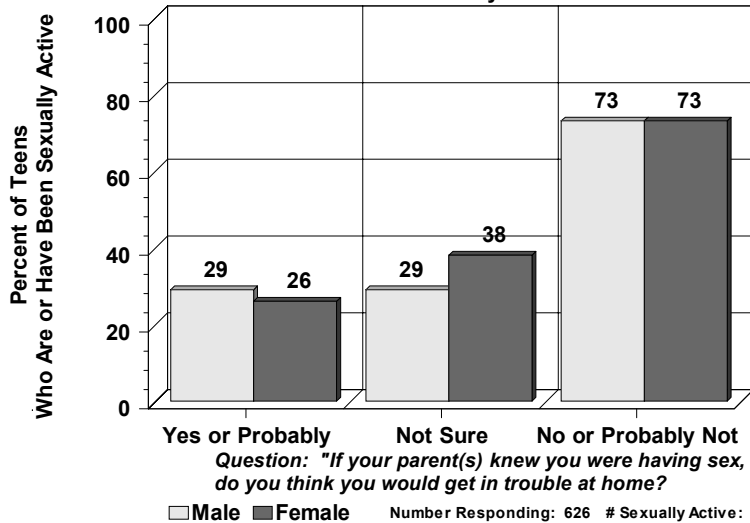
A fear for many parents is that their children will become sexually active before they're ready. Parents fear an unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), emotional harm, date rape, and sexual abuse. Most parents feel early sexual experiences will harm their children. Almost 1 in 2 teens (44%) reported having had sexual intercourse. About 1 in 5 teens (20%) in the 9th grade have had sexual intercourse. More than half (64%) of the teens in the 12th grade reported having had sexual intercourse. The number of youth who have had sexual intercourse generally increases with age.



## Parental Influences

The level of teen sexual activity varied according to whether teens knew their parents' values, the consequences of behavior, and the level of parental monitoring. Of teens who did not feel they would get in trouble at home for sexual activity almost 3 out of 4 teens (73%) were sexually active versus 1 out of 4 (27%) if they thought they would get in trouble at home.

**Relationship Between Teens' Perceptions of Parental Consequences and Teen Sexual Activity**





# Whose Kids?...Our Kids!

## Pemi-Baker School District

### Teen Health Risk Behaviors

#### Fact Sheet

\* The overwhelming majority of students feel safe at home (92%) and safe at school (83%).

\* Students feel cared for. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of students feel that mothers care about them "often" or "very often"; 76% reported this for their fathers.

\* Binge drinking did not increase significantly from 1999 to 2002. It remains one of the riskiest behaviors because accidents and alcohol poisonings can be fatal.

\* Not everyone is doing it! Less than half of high school students use at least one substance (48%; tobacco, alcohol or other drugs) on a monthly or more often basis.

\* Parents Matter! Of the teens who reported that they would get in trouble at home for drinking alcohol, 26% drink alcohol monthly or more often as compared with 74% of teens who reported that they would not get in trouble at home for this behavior.

\* Teens are proud of their education. Over three-quarters of teens (78%) reported that they were getting a good quality education.

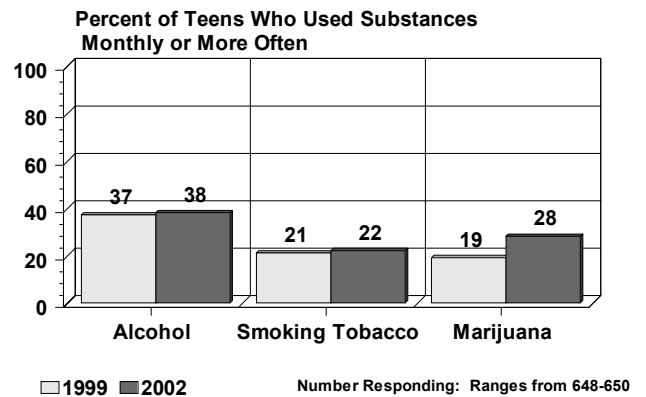
\* Continued education is in their future. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of teens reported that they planned to go to a 4 year college or university after high school.

\* Sexual activity increases throughout the high school years. Twenty percent (20%) of 9th graders report having had sexual intercourse as compared with 64% of teens in the 12th grade.

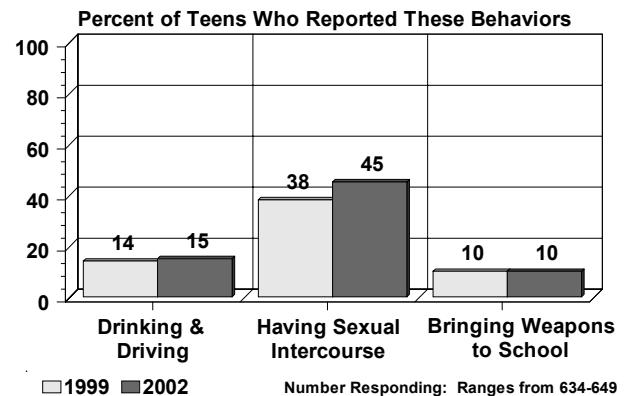
\* Teens care about others. Almost two-thirds of teens reported that they often think about doing things so that people can have things better in the future.

*Read the full Pemi-Baker School District Report at [www.ceinfo.unh](http://www.ceinfo.unh). Click on 4-H Youth Development, TAP.*

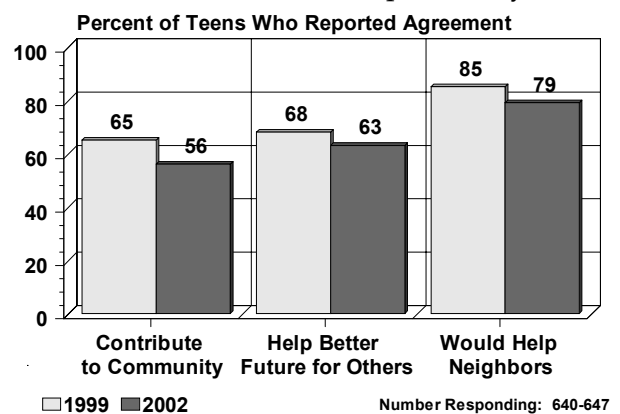
1999 and 2002 Monthly or More Often Use of Substances



1999 and 2002 Health Risk Behaviors



1999 and 2002 Teen Social Responsibility



## Would You Like To Get Involved?

If you are interested in getting involved with others in the community to address teen issues, please call Deborah Maes at 787-6944, Grafton County Cooperative Extension, or Lisa Mure at 536-3720 x108, Lin-Wood/Newfound/Pemi-Baker Community Coalition.

## Resources for Parents and Young People

### About Substance Use

- Perkins, W. & Perkins, N. (1996). **Raising Drug-Free Kids in a Drug-Filled World.** New York: Hazeldon.
- Schaefer, D. (1996). **Choices and Consequences: What To Do When A Teenager Uses Alcohol/Drugs.** Minneapolis, MN: Johnson Institute Books.
- Steinberg, L. & Levine, A. (1997). **You and Your Adolescent: A Parent's Guide for Ages 10-20.** New York: Harper & Row.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1993). **Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention.** Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Offices.
- Youcha, G. & Seixas, J. (1989). **Drugs, Alcohol, and Your Children: How to Keep Your Family Substance-Free.** New York: Crown Publishers.

### About Sexuality

- Bell, R. (1988). **Changing Bodies: Changing Lives.** New York: Random House.
- SIECUS. (1992). **Talk About Sex: A Booklet for Young People on How to Talk About Sexuality and HIV/AIDS.** (Available for \$2 from SIECUS, 130 West 42nd St., Suite 2500, New York, NY).

## 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. Mooselaukee 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

Grafton County, Family and 4-H Youth Development ..... 787-6944

**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.

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