

Jersey City woman produces show on teenage moms

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By Lisa Vives

What happens to teenagers whose lives are unexpectedly disrupted by pregnancy? How do they describe what it's like to be a teenage mother?

Tami Gold of Jersey City is the co-director and producer of a new video-film titled "Looking for Love: Teenage Parents," on the sensitive subject of adolescent mothers.

"We saw a great need for this film, not a superficial treatment of the issue, but a serious approach which teenagers could relate to," said the 31-year-old filmmaker and mother of one, with another on the way.

Working with Christine Vogel, executive director of Newark Media Work, they decided to concentrate on the topic of teenage motherhood in New Jersey, which has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the nation.

The film focuses on the lives of 16-year-old Audrey, and Diana, also 16, both pregnant at 14, and 17-year-old Denise, who now works in a counseling program with other young high school age mothers.

The common thread in the stories told by the three young women was a failure to take measures to prevent pregnancy. The reasons are varied.

"There are too few women's health services," suggested Gold,



Video camera balanced on one shoulder, Tami Gold prepares to film a sequence of her forthcoming documentary on teenage mothers.

"not enough trust between mother and daughter, and heavy social pressures on young women who are advised not to be sexually active although everything in their environment, especially the advertising for a wide range of products, tells them the contrary."

Pre-release showings of the film to young audiences provoked "unbelievable discussions," recalled Gold. But, she guessed, "probably 90 percent of kids today would insist that 'this couldn't happen to me'."

Gold's concern above all was that high school audiences "take" to the movie, and hopefully be influenced by its not-too-subtle message. So when she observed that teens were being turned off by the admonitions of an older social worker, who they perceived as another authority figure telling them what to do, the tape underwent a major modification.

The downtown Jersey City filmmaker also expressed her concern about new legislation which requires that parents be notified when their children ask for contraceptive counseling or devices.

"Boys are already inhibited in asking for sex-related help," said Gold. "With this new legislation, you can probably forget about it."

Gloria, the 37-year-old mother of Audrey, and Maria, the 35-year-old mother of Diana, both young mothers themselves, figure prominently in the tape.

Pregnant in the 11th grade, Gloria was a high school dropout who thought she'd finish her studies when the kids were older. But seeing her daughter about to follow the same scenario, she offered to stay home with the baby while Audrey finished school.

Shortly before the end of the filming, Audrey moved away from home and Gloria returned

to school. Now, said Gold with obvious pleasure, "Gloria has her high school degree and is taking up a course in computers."

Audrey's boyfriend also makes an appearance in the 30-minute color tape.

"How did you feel when you found out I was pregnant?" Audrey asks bravely while the cameras roll. When the young man admits he was scared and nervous, although somehow glad at the same time, she admonishes him for not admitting that to her before.

"We tried not to present any stereotypes of the boyfriends," said Gold, who stressed that the picture does not try to pin all the blame on the men.

After the movie plays on Channel 13 Sunday, (Mother's Day) at 10 a.m. and Saturday May 15 at 6 p.m., Gold hopes that local schools will order the film from the distributor, the Educational Consortium for Cable, in Summit.