

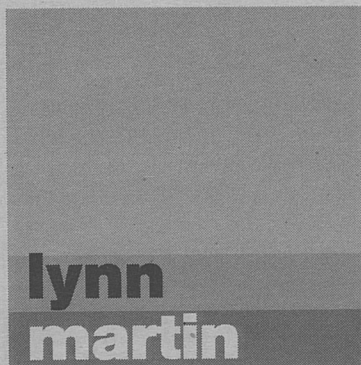
Views: Abstinence Only

Why we as parents should be concerned about abstinence only programs in our schools:

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.
— Proverbs 21:6

That's a pretty awesome responsibility placed on us poor human parents.

The Christian Bible gives us total responsibility for what a girl or boy becomes as an adult. So ingrained is this in our psyche, that when a child is first put into our arms, either at birth or through adoption, we all take a gasping breath, as the import of being responsible for this innocent life hits us in the solar plexus. I know I felt total-



watching eye. I, for example, know that cars and trucks can kill. Thus I teach the child to look both ways before crossing a road. Or not to cross a road without holding my hand. If I had the knowledge about cars and trucks, and did not give that to the child, I would be immoral. To let a child learn that by trial and error would be

injecting drugs is putting the idea in the young person's head and they will immediately go out and try it.

What world do these people live in? Do they not watch television? Any young person who watches television for five hours is more enticed toward exploring sex than from hearing any HIV prevention message. Do these people not remember how curious they were when they were young? Human beings are programmed to explore the world they live in. But somehow the people who insist on programs based on abstinence-only, choose to ignore this.

I have nothing against teaching abstinence. Most young people are not ready for relationships at an early age. But to offer only abstinence is like not telling a child about trucks and cars in the road. Here I am, as an adult, with the knowledge that could prevent my child from having a life threatening disease like HIV. I know full well that human beings are apt to make erroneous decisions (any reading of the Bible illustrates this). Or, heaven forbid, be enticed to do something they wouldn't ordinarily do. Why would someone not tell them how to take care of themselves? Why would someone not tell them about condoms and sterile syringes as a way to prevent HIV? I believe not to do this is immoral.

It makes me angry. Somewhere a young person will die because of their beliefs. They will say, it was the young person's fault. I say a society that doesn't protect its young is in deep trouble. ▼

Lynn Martin is a poet and AIDS prevention worker who lives in Brattleboro.

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ly awed and inadequate when I held each of my three children for the first time.

It has always been my belief that parents or guardians are responsible, as far as it is possible, to teach the child by word and example how to stay safe in an unsafe world. It's a bit easier to do that when the child is young, and under your

ludicrous.

But it gets much more difficult when it comes to drinking and using drugs. I don't believe this should be left to trial and error either. Which is what it feels like to me when I hear people who feel that talking about safer sex, the use of condoms, or the use of sterile needles when getting tattooed or

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