“Teen Maze” Encourages Students to Make Smart Decisions
By: Michelle Elliott and Casie Walker

The Pulaski County Archway Community Health Issue Work Group hosted the “Teen Maze” on March 22, 2012 at the Pulaski County Board of Education. The Teen Maze was a life size interactive game that allowed teenagers to experience the real life consequences of risky behavior, in a safe environment. Each teen had an individual path in the maze and confronted real life situations such as pregnancy, STDs, and even death.

The Teen Maze was the first step in Archway’s teen pregnancy reduction efforts through the Department of Community Affairs’s Communities of Opportunity Program. In Hawkinsville, every seventh through twelfth grade student attended the maze as well as many private school students.

“Over 200 volunteers from this county and the region participated to bring this wonderful opportunity to our teens,” said Vonnie Berryhill, Chair of the Teenage Pregnancy Reduction Committee. “This event brought all sections of our community together in a concentrated effort to improve the lives of our students.” Healthcare professionals, local colleges, emergency personnel, local business people and countless others gave up their day to create this opportunity in the community.

The Teen Maze impacted everyone in the community in a positive way. Students saw that the community cared about them and their choices, as volunteers from all walks of life worked together to benefit the community.

Berryhill also said, “Many adults approached me saying they would have loved to participate in something like this when they were teens because if they had access to the information shared through the Teen Maze when they were young, they would have made some different decisions.”

The Teen Maze was a starting point to address the issue of reducing teen pregnancy in Pulaski County. The Hawkinsville Hoops League is addressing responsibility with young males this summer and plans are underway to provide abstinence programs in the fall. These efforts demonstrate the continued dedication to the young people in this community and the choices they make. Another Teen Maze is already being planned for 2014 and a workshop to help other communities learn how to host a Teen Maze will be held in August, 2012.

Advancing Community Priorities: One of Pulaski County’s top priorities determined by the Pulaski County Archway Executive Committee is Community Health. The Teen Maze helped assist teens in understanding the importance of their decisions and to realize the consequences that can change their lives forever.

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