



<http://teensandtwenties.com/teen-moms-share-struggles-triumphs/>

Teen moms share struggles, triumphs



Members of a young parent support group stand outside the Exchange Club Family Center in Alamance, 200 N. Main St., Graham, on Oct. 30. / Scott Muthersbaugh, Times-News

*By Zoie Nelson
Times-News correspondent
teens20@timesnews.com*

Tujiela Wright, Andriana Dollison and Deja Siler are going through different things in their lives, but they all share one thing in common — they're teen mothers from Alamance County. The topic of teen pregnancy makes many people think of the popular reality show "Teen Mom" from MTV. But just how realistic is it?

"I watched 'Teen Mom' when I was pregnant with my child, but for the most part it's pretty relatable," 17-year-old Siler said.

"They should show more couples that truly love each other rather than already broken relationships or relationships that are on the rocks," Dollison added. "They also show a lot of party girls who have multiple partners, but we're not all like that."

"I may be young, but that doesn't change how I can take care of my child. I can take care of my child just like a 25 or 30 year old with a new baby," Dollison, 19, said.

Talking about parenting brings up the topic of her young daughter's father.

"When I first told him, he seemed excited about it all," Dollison said. "But then he disappeared and isn't a big part of my daughter's life anymore."

It's a sad reality that having a baby doesn't always make the father stay.

"(After I had my child) relationships got a lot harder," Siler added.

Only 20 percent of couples end up staying together and getting married after having their child,

according to stayteen.org.

School is hard for everyone, but once you add a child, it can get overwhelming. That's why more than 50 percent of teen mothers never graduate high school, according to dosomething.org.

"When my son came along, my plans for the future didn't really change," said 17-year-old Wright. She is still in school working to graduate so she can go to Elon then UNC-Chapel Hill in order to become a pediatrician one day. "Having a job, going to school and being a parent is tough, but my son is my motivation."

"(Teenage pregnancy) rates are going down in Alamance County and that's good, but we still need to keep working on getting the numbers down, especially when there are almost 200 reported pregnant girls in our county alone," said Sarah Black, the County Director at the Exchange Club Family Center in Alamance. "Parents need to talk to their children about sex (in order to get teenage pregnancy rates to continue decreasing.)"

The Exchange Club Family Center in Alamance has classes to help educate teens about teenage pregnancy or to help other teen parents. For more information call (336) 227-5601.

Zoie Nelson is a sophomore at Williams High School and a Teens & Twenties writer.