

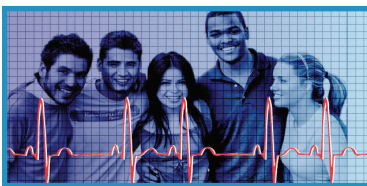
## Finding The Pulse on HIV/AIDS/STDs

By Jane Stueve, Adolescent and School Health Consultant

The 10th annual Human Sexuality Education Regional Conference was held June 9-11. The conference is designed for teachers, school nurses, prevention and care providers, administrators, health professionals, community health planners, physicians, counselors, persons from community-based organizations, members of the faith community, social workers, parents and public health individuals. This year there were 173 attendees from 17 different states.

The conference began with a session facilitated by Dan Egger-Belandria – entitled *To Find the Pulse, Become the Drummer*. This was a unique experience where each participant used a drum to find his or her inner rhythm. Drumming has been used for centuries as a way to communicate and bring people together to celebrate, galvanize and inspire.

This was followed by sessions on engaging the learner, cultural competency, evaluation tools, adaptation of



evidence-based programs, students with special health care needs and diverse learning styles.

Dan Flowers provided a keynote on *Illegal, Immoral or Uncomfortable - What Do*

*We Mean When We Say "Wrong"*. He provided intriguing questions on examining what is right and wrong for ourselves in order to help our youth.

Bill Tavemer presented on *Making Sense of Abstinence*. He addressed the theoretical and academic lessons beyond “just say no” and fear tactics. He covered the history of the promise ring, marketing in the 17th Century, and presented abstinence as a positive choice.

This conference promoted the principle that we each must know our thoughts and feelings on difficult questions in order to work with students and create a non-judgmental atmosphere. Instilling a sense of personal responsibility and a sense of community are concepts that can be used when addressing HIV/AIDS/STDs.

## Teens With Chronic Illness and Body Image

By Jane Stueve, Adolescent and School Health Consultant

Teens with chronic illness may struggle with their body image especially when there is a visible deformity or limitation in activity. Teen years are a time when they desperately struggle to fit in with their peers. For teens that need to take medicine as part of their chronic illness treatment, compliance may become difficult. Some medicines, especially those relating to cystic fibrosis, may also cause unwanted side effects causing embarrassment. Despite this, many adolescents with chronic illness have a body image which is not significantly different from those teens without chronic illness.

Parents of teens with chronic illness may appear to be more protective of their child, adding to the teen's struggle for independence. The teen may in turn become more dependent on their family to provide companionship and social support if they are not well connected to peers.

Teens with chronic illnesses develop a sexual identity, but it may be delayed. Chronic illness may cause concern with teens about their sexual capabilities, physical attractiveness and ability to have healthy relationships.

Teens with chronic illness that engage in risky behaviors may be at a higher risk than their healthy counterparts. For example, a teen with chronic illness that is

taking immunosuppressive medications could become seriously ill from mononucleosis or a sexually transmitted infection.

Playing sports may cause some dehydration which can become a major problem for a teen with a chronic illness relating to their kidneys. Likewise, an injury to teen with hemophilia or sickle cell disease can become life threatening.

School nurses play an integral part in the success of teens with chronic illnesses. They are the liaison for the student with parents, school, hospital and physician. The school nurse may be asked to educate staff, students and others about the teen's health – all while staying within HIPPA and FERPA laws. The school nurse may need to monitor blood sugars, medication administration, peak flow meters, weight and/or perform hands-on procedures. As the leader of the health care team, the school nurse will develop a health care plan to ensure that any potential emergencies or special circumstances are addressed.

As teens become adults, we can all support the transition through diligently working with teens to become independent individuals responsible for their health care needs.