



987 Airway Court, Ste. 16  
 Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
 www.free-to-be.net  
 email: info@free-to-be.net  
 Phone: 707.526.3819

# The Free to Be Connection

**A Call to Action!**  
**Free to Be Launches Campaign**  
**"Speak Up Sonoma County!"**  
 by Sue Bisbee, Executive Director

Since 1992 Free to Be has reached out to teens through a peer-based program that motivates and equips youth to live an abstinent lifestyle and to make healthy choices as they build their futures. Throughout the past 17 years, Free to Be has developed collaborative relationships with our local school districts and has built a reputation of excellence in the community.

Recently our agency has been unfairly attacked by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), who has threatened Sonoma County public school districts with lawsuits if they continue to utilize Free to Be's educational services as a component of their comprehensive sexual health education. Regrettably, many districts are responding to the intimidation of the ACLU by cancelling or failing to schedule presentations.

In response to the ACLU's unfair attacks, Free to Be is launching "Speak Up Sonoma County!" a campaign to give back a voice to the youth who have been silenced and to affirm that teens are free to hear a balanced approach regarding their sexual health.

We are confident that with the support of our community, the voices of the youth who speak for Free to Be will continue to be heard. Take a stand for the youth in your community today. Join us in our campaign to speak out!

**Together we can work to continue our mission of "encouraging healthy decisions for a healthy future."**



Peer Educators Dakota and Lizzy representing F2B at the Santa Rosa Downtown Market.

If you believe in **Free to Be**, **now** is the time to show your support!

**Here's How You Can Get Involved:**

- Call our office at (707) 526-3819 or email amy@free-to-be.net to request a "Speak Up Sonoma County!" campaign packet.
- Contact your public school superintendent, principal and school board members to encourage Free to Be presentations at your local school sites.
- Invite Free to Be to your club/group meeting to share about our organization.
- Host a reception for your friends and neighbors to learn about Free to Be. If you are in Sonoma County, we can come to your home or office to do a presentation.
- Provide Free to Be with connections for financial and other support from your friends, family, and acquaintances.
- Become a Free to Be pledger and donate monthly.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.
- Email amy@free-to-be.net to receive email updates on the progress of "Speak Up Sonoma County!".

*"Each time I stood up and shared, it was an opportunity for me to declare a commitment to myself and out loud to others."*

*- Sonya McVay, Program Assistant*

## NEW PEER EDUCATORS!



Mary



Ben



Beldon



Steven



Emily

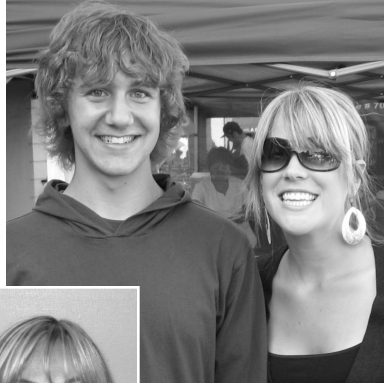


Yohan



RC

Peer Educator RC and Program Director Christy tabling at the Santa Rosa Downtown Market.



Peer Educator Maria and Family Education Coordinator Vicky at ¡Padres Hablan Ya! event in Cotati.

Regional Director Casey and Peer Educator Tania at the End of the Year Social.



Peer Educators Mark, Lizzy, and Lisa and Youth Outreach Coordinator Jason at the Six Flags Social.

We are excited to introduce our new Office Administrator. Welcome, Amy!



I have always been the kind of person that loves being bold for a cause. When I was in eighth grade Free to Be gave me the chance to do so. Having the background that I did, I couldn't wait to share with others about how passionate I was regarding sexual abstinence. The only problem was that I had never held a boy's hand. In fact, I hadn't even been on a date. I can remember the first group of teens that I ever spoke to. It was Mrs. Moquete's class at Casa Grande High School. It was scary. I knew that for sure someone was going to see right through me and call me out in front of everyone by saying something like, "Don't you mean you're abstinent because you can't even get a date?" Fortunately for me, that never happened.

Instead, at the age of 13, Free to Be gave me the stage to share my personal story in such a way that would make a difference for others. I never once had any negative feedback or teasing. Each time I stood up and shared, it was an opportunity for me to declare a commitment to myself and out loud to others. My story was appreciated by my peers and supported by Free to Be.

As an adult, I believe that my experience with Free to Be helped me immensely along the road to marriage. During my college years, I was armed with the story that I had told hundreds of teens. I never was embarrassed or without a reason not to have sex. In coming full circle, my belief about waiting is this: Although abstinence never immediately satisfies, you still always want it around the next day. The same cause that I loved speaking for as a teenager still lives in me today as a wife and mother. I can't wait to retell my story and support this new generation of Free to Be Peer Educators.

# A NEW GENERATION THRIVES!

by Christy Wohlert, Program Director

Fourteen youth, representing seven different Sonoma County schools, gathered in September to attend Free to Be's 2009/2010 Peer Educator Orientation at Alliance Redwoods Conference Grounds in Occidental. Throughout the weekend, Peer Educators participated in workshops, activities, and group discussions to address the current issues teens are facing in today's society. Concepts from the current Free to Be curriculum were also reviewed and discussed.



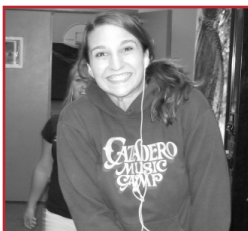
Tommy, a Free to Be Youth Advisory Board member, opened up the weekend with the first workshop. It was rewarding to observe a Peer Educator teaching his peers with such a commanding presence. Tommy also led the Youth Advisory Board in performing a skit that took a humorous approach to explaining what new Peer Educators could expect from the program staff while being involved with Free to Be. Jeffrey acted as Jason, our Youth Outreach Coordinator, and Tommy acted as me! It was hilarious to watch the YAB members as they "played-up" our personalities. They had the whole group practically rolling on the floor laughing.

Along with fun times, there were also some more serious times throughout the weekend. Laretta Lewis, our Community Outreach Coordinator, came out on Saturday and shared an inspiring story with the students. The students were really touched by what she shared and many were inspired by her courage.

The orientation was a huge success! Thanks to Alliance Redwoods Conference Grounds for hosting us at a discounted rate and thank you all for your continued support. This weekend reemphasized to me the importance of our work at Free to Be and the importance of our role in the lives of Sonoma County youth.

## **Why are you applying to become a Free to Be Peer Educator?**

*"I know from personal experience that when listening to adults talk about sex and things in that realm it is instinctive to shut out every word they say. But when a friend or someone my age talks about it, I receive and process it differently. I want to help make a difference."*



th

ink

it

ov

er





987 Airway Court, Ste. 16  
 Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
 www.free-to-be.net  
 email: info@free-to-be.net  
 Phone: 707.526.3819

NON-PROFIT  
 US POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 SANTA ROSA, CA  
 PERMIT NO. 218

th

ink

it

ov

er

...

Help save a tree! E-mail [lauretta@free-to-be.net](mailto:lauretta@free-to-be.net) to receive your copy of the Free to Be newsletter by email.

**HELP SONOMA**



**COUNTY YOUTH**



**SPEAK OUT!**



**DONATE TODAY!**



**SAVE THE DATE!**

5th Annual STARS Banquet

"Star Search"

Friday, April 23, 2010

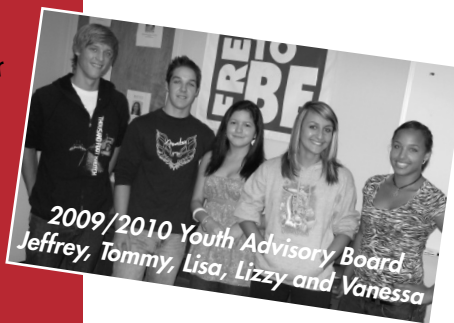
Mary Agatha Furth Center

6:00 - 9:00 pm

**2009 FALL EVENTS**

- Oct. 2nd
- Oct. 13th
- Oct. 23rd
- Oct. 26th
- Oct. 28th
- Nov. 17th
- Nov. 20th

- F2B @ La Tortilla Factory Health & Wellness Fair
- Parent Ed @ Sheppard School
- Peer Educator Corn Maze Social
- Parent Ed @ Apple Valley Community Center
- Parent Ed @ Resurrection Church
- F2B Booster Meeting - Please Join Us!
- Peer Educator Girls Night/Man Power Social



This newsletter was partially funded by a grant from the Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.