

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Published: Wednesday, March 10, 2010 3:11 PM PST

Not just abstinence

Editor: As the parent of an Analy High School student, long-time volunteer fundraiser for Free to Be, and one of their many supporters in West County, I write to set the record straight.

To call Free to Be an “abstinence-only” program, is a misnomer and misleading.

Free to Be presentations provide the abstinence component of a comprehensive sex education program and include building healthy relationships, setting boundaries, dealing with pressure, making well thought out decisions, and goal setting. They are not the sole provider of sex education in West County high schools. They do not teach contraceptive methods, which are provided by the schools through other means.

Over the past six years they have provided, not their curriculum, but one teen panel annually whose members are high school youth who share personally about their choice to remain abstinent and encourage our youth to consider this same choice.

Contrary to the ACLU’s claims and according

to six legal opinions, Free to Be presentations are in compliance with the State of California Education Code, which requires public schools to provide “*information about the value of abstinence*” and “*that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to prevent unintended pregnancy ... and sexually transmitted diseases.*”

Free to Be is diligent about using medically accurate statistics and data, drawing their information from credible sources such as the Center for Disease Control and the Department of Health and Human Services.

It is unfortunate that people who have never seen a Free to Be presentation would mischaracterize it. Free to Be presents abstinence as a choice, one which teens don’t often hear. Following a panel, a West County high school student said: “*The presentation showed me that I have the choice to say no to having sex now.*”

Please don’t let Free to Be’s vital and relevant health message be censored from our youth.

Linda Zepponi-Hervey
Sebastopol