

Teen Pregnancy a new Trend

In 1997, abortion rose from 43 per cent in 1995 to 48 per cent, and Amber Keirstead was among them

By Jennifer Michels

At age 19 you have your whole life ahead of you.

That's how it was for Amber Kierstead. She was living in Hamilton, Ont. moving there from Amherst, N.S. shortly after graduating from high school in 2007.

Kierstead planned to move back home in a year's time to attend college. She had applied to schools and was enjoying her time in Hamilton working in retail.

Then she discovered she was pregnant. She had only been with her boyfriend for a few months, but still expected his support.

By July 2008, Kierstead had moved back to Amherst and was living with her mother, step-father and sister. Her boyfriend had planned to move to Amherst the following November.

Plans changed when Kierstead found out the soon-to-be-father was no longer planning to move to Am-

herst, instead he was staying in Hamilton with his family.

By November 2008, Kierstead had moved out of her mother's home and into her own apartment.

She maintained contact with the father even though he was still not willing to support her and their unborn child.

When Kierstead found out she was having a boy she had a name ready, Jaden Alexander Wayne.

She has received financial support from the child's father, allowing her to purchase a stroller and car seat.

Currently, she is working as a telephone operator and is due to give birth in early March.

Like many other young women her age, she is learning how difficult it is going to be to raise a child on her own.

She is not alone.

While teen pregnancy rates in Canada have gone down every year since 1994, teenage abortion rates are high-

er.

In 1997, abortion rose from 43 per cent in 1995 to 48 per cent. Among girls aged 15 to 17, some 54 per cent of pregnancies ended in abortion.

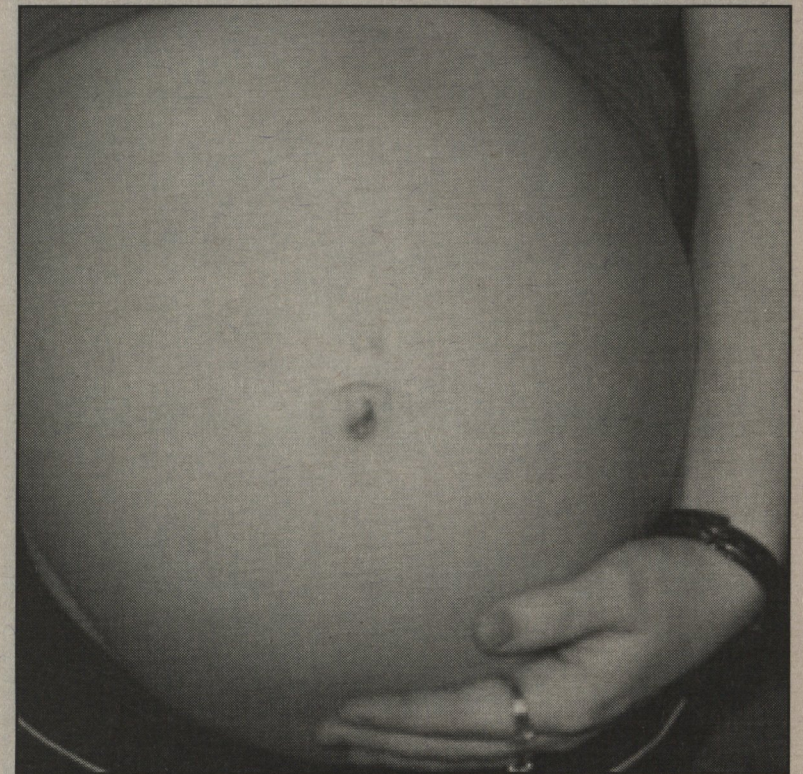
In Ontario and Alberta, 96.5 per cent of single pregnant teenagers had an abortion done in a hospital, while 96.1 per cent had an abortion done at a clinic.

Until recently, women who got pregnant at a young age were removed from school and hidden from the public eye.

Today pregnancy has become a common topic in the news. Stars like 16-year-old Jamie-Lynn Spears are having children, giving young girls the idea it's OK.

Maclean's magazine has said unplanned pregnancy has become a popular way to make money. Movies like *Knocked Up*, *Juno* and *Waitress*, along with celebrity moms, are part of a trend taking the world of teens by storm.

Maggie's Place, a well-



Amber Kierstead is due to give birth to a boy this March in Amherst, N.S. Holland College photo

known support group in Amherst, N.S., has weekly meetings for mothers and a library full of information.

Prenatal program coordinator Donna Farrell said the programs offered at Maggie's Place are available to all mothers or mothers-to-be. There is a group for young moms who need help from

other mothers.

She tries to keep the groups neutral, Farrell said. Teenagers shouldn't have to feel like their being put on the spot during the programs, she said.

"I wouldn't want to single anyone out."

Michels is a journalism student at Holland College

NDP candidate sees campaign as a valuable experience

By Taunya Murchison

New Democratic Party candidate Mike Avery, his wife Theresa and his son Jeremy, watched the election results on TV with optimism.

Despite losing to Lawrence MacAulay in the most recent federal election, Avery was proud of the success his campaign had in Cardigan and the 1,557 votes he received.

"The Island has always

been flagged as red and blue, so it's nice to see NDP proving to be a steady competitor. We're coming a long way," said Avery.

Although Avery is a familiar face in provincial politics, this was his first time running federally and he doesn't expect it will be his last.

"It was an easy decision. When I was asked to run for the NDP, and after getting the encouragement from my wife, I knew it was the right choice. I told myself if

I received about 10 per cent of the votes in the district, I would run again. So, only time will tell."

Avery, an employee of the Department of Highways and a volunteer, said the highlight of his five weeks of campaigning was the lively debate.

"We only had one town hall public forum and it was exciting. You never know what questions are going to be asked.

Not only did Avery consid-

er his campaign a learning experience but it was a step towards recruiting "new-age voters" to the NDP.

Avery said one issue he and political leader, Jack Layton focused on was P.E.I.'s struggling economy, particularly the farming and fishing industries.

"There's no easy way around it, our Island industries are in crisis. Regulated quota systems could be beneficial to farmers and fishermen in the future. I believe

strongly in this," Avery said.

In the 21 years he's lived in Fort Augustus, Avery said not one federal politician campaigned at his door, something he wanted to avoid in his campaign.

"Eight-five to 90 per cent of the people I visited door-to-door said I was the only politician to do so. A voter wants to be recognized not only as a person, but as a valued voter."

Murchison is a journalism student at Holland College