

# Parenting

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## Experts agree that parents should be anchor for healthy discussions on sex

By MIKE LATONA, STAFF WRITER

**O**n the national level, noted chastity advocate Molly Kelly makes nearly 200 appearances per year promoting her message.

The County of Monroe's \$300,000 "Not Me, Not Now" program, a campaign aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy through abstinence, has been vigorously promoted through television commercials, billboards and school lectures.

Yet as valuable as these directives for teenagers may be, the messages may not be emphasized often enough to offset increasing sexually driven media influences.

"Sex has become bigger than life. How do we deal with a sexually obsessed society?," remarked Kelly, following a lecture she gave earlier this month at Pittsford's Church of the Transfiguration.

The most vital resources for reinforcing strong moral messages about sex can be found in the kitchen cooking dinner, or in the back yard mowing the lawn, or in the driver's seat of the family car.

However, these are resources which must be tapped — or be willing to be tapped — more frequently.

"I believe the parents are the primary educators of children, and they need to open the communication lines and do the teaching," remarked Kelly, a mother of eight from Philadelphia.

"The biggest problem is that sex has become a dirty word — parents fear the topic. You shouldn't be afraid to say sex or sexual intercourse," said Pat Baloga, who serves as chastity-program coordinator for the Problem Pregnancy Help Center, 3252 Lake Ave., Rochester.

Adding to the dilemma of broaching this subject with teens is the lack of quality time available for today's families.

"The time that teens and their parents actually spend together talking about things that are important — these would be opportunities for parents to help their kids — is very small, in contrast to (teens) listening to music 21 hours a week, watching TV 21 hours a week and being with their peers 56 hours a week," said Deborah Helitzer-Allen, a researcher from the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health.

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