

Let's Talk About Sex

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Getting teens to talk is never a challenge. Getting teens to talk about sex is a completely different story. Tulane University's Upward Bound program, New Orleans theater company Junebug Productions and the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies recently teamed up to encourage open discussion about healthy relationships and HIV/AIDS in a creative writing and theater course for high school students.



New Orleans-based Junebug Productions, which collaborated with Upward Bound for this course, is the organizational successor to the Free Southern Theater, formed in 1963.

The collaboration strived to combat a "lack of sexual health information that is received by youth in this city," says Jennifer Glick, program director of the [Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies](#).

"The topic was chosen in order to examine teen relationships and the social side of teen development, which proves to be as important as their intellectual development," says Tanya Jones, director of [Upward Bound](#) at Tulane.

Summer proved to be a time of reflection for the 15 participants in the first residential program hosted by Upward Bound since Hurricane Katrina, as they expressed themselves through creative methods introduced by representatives from Junebug Productions.

One method the theater company used to spark dialogue and debate was a story circle. This exercise "works to generate conversation," says Kiyoko McCrae, program director for Junebug Productions. "It's a democratic process and teaches participants to value the experience of each individual."

Following a series of discussions, students wrote original material and poetry. The candid work of seven of the students was presented in a [performance](#) at the Upward Bound annual awards ceremony. Between readings, other students from the course announced facts on HIV/AIDS from the audience.

Writing and performing allowed the students "to explore stories on a deeper level," says McCrae.

Upward Bound is a federally funded program that aims to increase the rates at which high school students enroll in and graduate from college.