2008 ANNUAL REPORT
Dear Friends,

The watchword for Answer this past year—and for this Annual Report—could certainly be “change.” For example, in keeping with the “Then and Now” theme for the Spring 2008 issue of the Sex, Etc. magazine, our teen staff looked at how life—and sex ed—have and have not changed from their parents’ times. Take a moment yourself to think back to how different the world was when you were a teenager.

Despite the many shifts in our culture, advances in technology and other changes that have occurred, certain “truths” remain the same. Chief among them for all of us at Answer is that, just as you did when you were a teen, young people today have questions—and need honest answers—about their bodies, their relationships and their lives.

It is hard to overstate the continuing need for honest, accurate sexuality education for young people and quality sexuality education training for teachers. A few recent headlines paint the picture: 1 in 4 U.S. Teens Has an STD, Fewer Sexually Active Teens Using Condoms, Teen Births Up for First Time in 15 Years.

It is clear that our nation’s youth remain at risk for unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Yet they are still not getting enough comprehensive sexuality education. At Answer, we work to correct that and fulfill our mission to provide and promote comprehensive sexuality education to young people and the adults who teach them through our unparalleled programs.

We intimately understand what is happening with teens and teachers because we work with them every day. All of us at Answer and all who benefit from our programs are sounding the call for honest, accurate sexuality education.

I was honored to lead Answer through a leadership transition and am thrilled to announce that in September 2008 I will turn over this powerful organization to Elizabeth Schroeder, Ed.D., M.S.W., a renowned sexuality educator and trainer.

Although we have been doing this important work for more than 25 years, our efforts are as essential as ever. We thank you for your continued support of our programs. We are all changing the lives of young people for the better.

Sincerely,

Rana E. Barar, M.P.H.
Interim Director

All of us at Answer and all who benefit from our programs are sounding the call for honest, accurate sexuality education.

Future of Sexuality Education

This year, we are proud to be part of a new, important discussion about the future of sexuality education in America with two other national organizations: Advocates for Youth (AFY) and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). Answer, AFY and SIECUS began a series of meetings to discuss the current state of sexuality education in the United States and directions for moving forward. There has been a critical need to begin this national discussion, as more and more states have rejected abstinence-only-until-marriage federal funding, yet need help adopting a more comprehensive sexuality education approach.

These Future of Sex Ed (FOSE) discussions will culminate in answers to key questions, such as how we can advance comprehensive sexuality education at the federal, state and local level.
For Charlotte, a 1976 graduate from Texas who was interviewed for the *Sex, Etc.* magazine, the closest she had to “sex ed” was home ec, where girls were taught to be good wives and mothers. Fortunately, Answer recognizes that an integral part of ensuring that young people make healthy decisions is seeing that they receive honest, accurate sexuality education from trained educators and professionals. We have a long and esteemed history training educators and professionals through our Sexuality Education Training Initiative. Many of our training participants become advocates for comprehensive sexuality education and go on to change the lives of students in classrooms across the nation.

This has been an unprecedented year for our training initiative, with increases in enrollment and important additions made to our program. Headed by Nora Gelperin, M.Ed., our director of training and education, and staffed by a cadre of expert trainers and key Answer staff, our program provided 122 workshops to more than 2,700 teachers, community educators, nurses, counselors, school administrators and other professionals across the United States, through the following:

**Open-Enrollment Workshops**

This year we held 37 open-enrollment workshops covering a broad range of topics for K-12 teachers and other professionals across New Jersey. Topics included teaching about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues; body image and sexuality; puberty; sexually transmitted disease (STD) and pregnancy prevention; and making healthy, responsible choices about sex.

**In-Service Trainings**

These training sessions, also encompassing a broad range of topics, are held in school districts and agencies within and outside the state. We saw a dramatic increase in the number of in-service trainings this year: 55 workshops, up from 22 the year prior.

**Presentations at National, State and Regional Conferences**

We presented workshops on our new Online Professional Development initiative at the national conferences of three organizations this year: the Healthy Teen Network in Baltimore, MD, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance and the Society for State Directors of Health and Physical Education, both in Fort Worth, TX. We also presented at eight state and regional conferences.

**Evaluation Findings Highlight Workshop Effectiveness**

Results from the 2007-2008 evaluation of our Sexuality Education Training Initiative support what we have long seen in practice: Our topic-specific, open-enrollment workshops provide participants with “valuable and lasting learning experiences” that substantially increase their “knowledge and confidence in the key skill areas of importance to teachers of sexuality education.” The report also finds that the gains in confidence and knowledge do not disappear following the training, but are sustained after participants return to their classrooms.

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**What’s New on Answer’s Web Site**

**Debut Blog**—In June 2008, we launched our first-ever organizational blog: Sex Ed, Honestly: The Answer Blog, at http://answer.rutgers.edu/blog. It covers the latest sexuality education and sexual health issues and updates readers on our programs. The blog features posts by our former executive coordinator, now senior advisor Susan N. Wilson, MS.Ed., a national leader in sexuality education.

**Parent Chats**—In May 2008, we debuted our “sex ed chats” with sexual health experts for parents on the Answer site. The three chats we have held helped parents understand what is happening with teens today and how to initiate and maintain good communication with their children about sexuality issues.
Online Training: One Teacher’s Experience

Katharine Malec, a middle school health teacher in West Windsor, NJ, is just one of the 82 educators and other professionals who participated in our first Online Professional Development workshop, “Sexuality ABCs (Abstinence, Birth Control and Condoms).”

This was her first year teaching eighth-grade health, which is when New Jersey students start learning about contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). So, Malec wanted to “increase the tricks that I had in my teaching methods. I only have two days to spend on STDs and contraceptives and needed something comprehensive, yet fun and informative.”

The workshop gave her a deeper understanding of the topic and also gave her activity ideas, like a contraceptive Jeopardy game, that she implemented with students. Like many participants, Malec is devoted to helping students make sexual health decisions with medically accurate, complete information.

“We want young people to abstain from sexual activity—and that’s what we teach them—but we don’t see that they are not abstaining,” she explains. “And then we often force them to make risky decisions, because they are unaware of the consequences and prevention methods.”

“We need to address the sexual behavior of all our students, and not just the ‘norm,’” she adds. “A lot of people feel that teaching students about sexuality is giving them permission to be sexually active, but you are really giving them life tools.”

Training Institute in Sexual Health Education (TISHE)

At TISHE 2007, our weeklong residential, skills-based training institute, a team of expert sexuality educators trained 38 participants from across the U.S. TISHE also underwent its first-ever, two-phased evaluation. Initial findings included participants reporting notable increases in confidence in their skills at providing sexual health education, including helping students with challenging personal situations, such as coming to terms with their sexual orientation or facing an unplanned pregnancy.

“The complete TISHE experience has made me a better sex educator,” says one 2007 participant. “It has made me more confident in my skills and given me the tools to execute new ones.”

Another new addition to training this year is the “Learn and Share” listserv. Started and moderated by Answer’s training coordinator Todd Slawsky, M.Ed., the listserv is a peer-to-peer forum for educators and other professionals who teach sexuality education. Started in October 2007, “Learn and Share” now has 500 members nationwide, including teachers from kindergarten to grade 12, college professors and community educators, many of whom have already taken an Answer workshop.

“Learn and Share’ serves as a supplement to professional development by allowing educators to get answers to questions from their colleagues across the country,” says Slawsky. “The hope is that ‘Learn and Share’ allows them to get feedback on ideas, advice on issues and to benefit from the questions and ideas of others.”

Any sexual health education professional can register for “Learn and Share” by becoming a member of Answer’s Web site, at http://answer.rutgers.edu.

Online Professional Development

The launch of our first-ever Online Professional Development (OPD) workshop was a highlight of the training program this year. Answer is the first comprehensive sexuality education organization nationwide to offer the equivalent of an all-day workshop online. (Other organizations have offered one-hour tutorials or semester-length courses.)

Months of research, planning and testing resulted in our dynamic, new online sex ed workshop, “Sexuality ABCs (Abstinence, Birth Control and Condoms).” Podcasts, videos, threaded discussions and animation help professionals who teach middle and high school students learn the latest on adolescent sexual behavior and contraception.

“It was inspiring to imagine the reach we could have,” says Nora Gelperin, M.Ed., about adding OPD to Answer’s training initiative. “And it was also challenging, because it put us on the cutting edge of innovation by crafting something that’s never been done before.”

Eighty-two participants to date have signed up for “Sexuality ABCs” (one of them shares her experience in the sidebar at right). Educators continue to enroll each week and the workshop will remain open for years to come.

OPD is a rapidly growing area, and we plan to build a range of workshops for professionals, with our second one, titled “STD Basics,” scheduled to launch in early 2009.
Thirty-five thousand to 40,000 copies of Sex, Etc. magazine are currently distributed to teen readers three times a year via more than 600 adult subscribers across the United States.

“What impresses me the most about the teens is their willingness to keep working until we come up with something that engages our readers,” says Lucinda Holt, M.A. “I don’t remember having that kind of dogged persistence as a teen. And I certainly wasn’t brave enough to write in first person about the tough topics they write about so candidly.”

With Sex, Etc., we give teens a solid foundation of the comprehensive information they need to make responsible decisions about sexual health. We also give educators and other professionals a valuable teaching tool with the Discussion Guide for each issue of Sex, Etc., which features lesson plans built around the teens’ stories.

“Sex, Etc. Teens: Where Are They Now?”

Elizabeth Marchetta, 24—Elizabeth was a Sex, Etc. teen editor her junior and senior years of high school, from 2000 to 2002. Today, she is a Peace Corps volunteer, working in the Community Health and Outreach Project in South Africa, a well-established nongovernmental organization that works to prevent and eliminate the abuse of children. “South Africa has one of the highest reported rates of rape in the world, and one of the most important ways to fight this is to get people talking about it,” says Elizabeth. “Just like in the states, many people here are not comfortable with talking about sexual issues, even though the media is saturated with sexual images, and that needs to change if we are going to address the scourge of sexual abuse.”
Sex, Etc. Web Site

Our Sex, Etc. Web site, Sexetc.org, continues to be one of the top destinations for young people looking for honest, accurate sexual health information on the Internet. With our one-of-a-kind, teen-written content, the site continues to provide young people with an exciting place to find answers, ways to share their experiences and opportunities for making a difference in their own communities.

With hundreds of teen-written stories on 16 topic areas, a vibrant Forums section where teens share opinions and questions, plus videos, quizzes, games, polls and an “Ask the Experts” section, it is no wonder we are the go-to source for young people and the go-to sex-ed referral site for adults who work with them.

Sexetc.org experienced tremendous growth in 2007-2008. We hired a new online content manager to monitor the accuracy and timeliness of all our sexual health content, and to build our Medical Advisory Board, an 11-member board of medical professionals and expert sexuality educators who ensure that our content is up-to-date and medically accurate.

On Valentine's Day 2008, we launched our new Sex, Etc. blog: Beyond the Birds & the Bees: Sex Education for the Next Generation. The blog uses today’s popular teen media—movies, music, video games, social networking, YouTube videos and more—to talk about a range of sexuality education topics.

Another popular feature on Sexetc.org is our weekly online chat for teens with sexual health experts, which we increased from two to four hours to handle the volume of questions.

What Teens Say About Sexetc.org

I was blessed with parents that presented me with the information that I needed about sex. But unfortunately, not all adults in this country are as levelheaded as my parents, which is why I wanted to thank y'all for this resource. I’m sure it has helped many teens, and hopefully it will continue to help more in the future.

—17-YEAR-OLD VISITOR

My parents seem to think that avoiding awkward discussions is the way to keep me out of trouble, but, in reality, there are TONS of things I would love to be able to talk about with them. I wish more parents would open up, because like your story says, I would feel better about myself if I could confide in them. Maybe they’re the ones who need sex ed instead of the kids!

—18-YEAR-OLD VISITOR

Where Are They Now?

MARK BARTKIEWICZ, 22—Mark was a Sex, Etc. teen editor his junior and senior years of high school, from 2002 to 2004. Today, after graduating college and “dabbling in the corporate world,” he is pursuing a master’s degree in sociology with an emphasis on gender, sexuality and society at the University of Amsterdam. He ultimately wants to work for a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, pro-choice or human rights organization.

Web Site Evaluation

In order to achieve a deeper understanding of our impact and help us plan for the future, we hired an independent evaluation consultant. The final evaluation of our programs will be available in fall 2008, but preliminary data on Sexetc.org are in—and we could not be happier with the results (see below):

Sexetc.org receives 25,000 unique visitors per day and two million page views per month. It was selected as a 2008 Official Honoree in the prestigious Webby Awards. It also won a silver award in the World Wide Web Health Awards for fall/winter 2007.

Teens “Highly Satisfied” With Sexetc.org

Users report coming to Sexetc.org to learn specifically about the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS</th>
<th>50%</th>
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<tr>
<td>DECIDING ABOUT SEX, ABSTINENCE AND VIRGINITY</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIFFERENT KINDS OF SEX (HOOKING UP, ANAL OR ORAL SEX, ETC.)</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIRTH CONTROL AND CONDOMS</td>
<td>39%</td>
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We were gratified to discover that teen users report a very high level of satisfaction with content on the site. Eighty-two percent reported that they “definitely” trust that the information on Sexetc.org is “honest and accurate.” What is more, the majority of respondents reported that reading Sexetc.org has a positive impact on their skills in making healthy decisions about sex. In fact, three-quarters of respondents agreed that the content on Sexetc.org helps them to make better choices about sex.
National Partnerships

Our national partnership with the Kaiser Family Foundation and MTV for its Think campaign is still going strong after seven years. Our teen staff’s monthly column for the site is featured in the “It’s Your (Sex) Life” section. Our video-sharing partnership with Scenarios USA also continues, as we added more of their teen-written videos to Sexetc.org.

This year, we began a new partnership with Internet Sexuality Information Services, Inc. (ISIS), the University of Colorado and Columbia University in a response to request for applications from a group of federal government entities, including the National Institutes of Health, for “culturally appropriate research to prevent HIV transmissions and infection in young people.” Our collaboration proposes to create an interactive, dynamic, youth-driven profile on MySpace to deliver HIV-prevention and sexual risk-reduction messages in a forum that appeals to young people ages 16 to 20. Once developed, the interactive site will be thoroughly evaluated for effectiveness, and the data collected will add to a growing body of evidence that online interventions can work to change teen behavior. Answer will be heavily involved with content and design development, particularly in the area of facilitating youth involvement, and the ongoing monitoring of the site once it launches in winter 2009.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT


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This is not an audited financial statement. Answer is a component of the Rutgers University Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. It shares the Rutgers University Foundation’s 501(c)(3) status and its expenditures are monitored by Rutgers’ Division of Grants and Contracts Accounting.

* Our annual fundraiser was postponed from FY08 to FY09.
** Several one-time consulting fees (e.g., evaluation and transition assistance) created an increase in administrative costs.

Answer has nine full-time and four part-time employees, all of whom are dedicated to our mission “to provide and promote comprehensive sexuality education to young people and the adults who teach them.”
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the following for their support:

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