

# Take these steps to improve communications with your teenager

by the American Counseling Association

Most parents are frustrated by the lack of communication with their teenaged children.

Parents want to know what their teen is thinking, feeling, and doing, but often get only silence or vague, empty answers.

It's a common problem root-

ed in a teen's need to be more independent. The teenage years are often a confusing time as teens strive to do more on their own while also finding themselves frightened by that

growing independence.

From the parent side, things aren't much simpler. We want our children to be strong, independent and capable of making decisions, but we don't want them making the same mistakes we made, so we lecture them and try to control them and make decisions for them.

A first step in overcoming the communication gap is to accept that your teen is going to want to communicate more with his or her peers than with his or her parents. It's only natural. Your teen's peers are facing the same issues and problems, and sharing the same values and interests, as your teen.

You, the parent, however, are the "authority" figure, setting the rules, declaring what's right or wrong, and probably lecturing (a lot more than you really mean to) about everything.

So what can change? Start by accepting at least some of what your teen so readily accepts. Make your teen's friends feel welcome at your house. Learn to tolerate their music, movies and TV shows. Make

an effort to be interested. Realize that much of what your teen likes is chosen specifically to help develop a separate identity from yours.

It also helps to accept that your teen's feelings and emotional reactions, irrational though they may seem, are very real to your teenager. Rather than immediately giving advice, validate what's being felt by accepting his or her reaction and being understanding and supportive.

Lastly, try giving your teen more power. Don't offer a decision when a problem arises, but rather ask what he or she might do. If no answers are offered, provide suggestions but leave the final decision up to your child. Yes, mistakes will be made, but that's how we've all learned.

It will take time for your teen to see that you won't lecture or provide answers to every situation, but once that realization sets in, and your teen sees that you value his or her developing identity, you just may find that communication becomes more open.

## *Congratulations Burdette & Larinda Robb!*



*Burdette & Larinda were married on December 27th 2008, at the home of Larinda's parents Michael and Marie Botchie in Rainier, Oregon after a brief engagement and years of friendship. The ceremony was conducted by their friend and "Civil War" Captain Bob Olin. Despite the snow, the evening wedding turned out to be as beautiful as the couple hoped it would be.*

*The parents of the Groom, Burdette Robb and Cathy Robb, along with several close family and friends attended the private wedding and reception.*

*After a brief honeymoon at the beach, Burdette returned to his Military Training at Fort Sam Houston where he is currently training to be a Combat Medic, after having already successfully completed his Basic Training at Fort Benning, GA.*

*Larinda is continuing her education at PCC where she has already completed her EMT Basic training and plans to pursue a Paramedic Degree.*

*The couple is anxiously waiting on orders to learn where the Army will take them.*

*For the Hero in both of you, we are all very proud!*

## Healthy Start program gets grant

Healthy Start of Columbia County and the Commission on Children and Families warmly thank the Safeway Foundation for a recent grant award of \$2,500. Dan Floyd, Director of Public Affairs and Public Relations, presented a check to Healthy Start Program Supervisor Sunday Kamppi (center), at the St. Helens store on January 12. Representing the Commission were Vice-Chair Woody Davis, 4-H Extension Agent, and Jan Spika Kenna, Commission Director.

Healthy Start and the Commission especially thank the local Safeway employees who donate to the Safeway Foundation giving program. LGPA is also a donor supporting the Foundation.

Healthy Start promotes positive parenting skills through child development education, reading literacy, health and safety information to first-birth families. It is a part of Community Action Team's Child and Family Development programs

and is funded and supported by the Commission on Children and Families.

Healthy Start is Oregon's largest child abuse prevention program. The local program, started in 2002, serves at-risk first birth parents county-wide. Healthy Start is a nationally accredited program which meets the highest professional standards.

The Safeway grant will be used to provide families with early literacy materials and basic health and safety needs.

"The Safeway Foundation committee was impressed with Healthy Start of Columbia County and its mission to promote and support positive parenting skills through child development, health and safety information available to first born children and pregnant parents," Floyd said.

For more information about Healthy Start, or to ask about a "Welcome Baby" packet call the Healthy Start program at 503-366-0800.