

**MOLLY:** Hey it's Molly Cox and you are listening to The Story Goes, a collaborative podcast between KLRN- your local public television station- and SA2020- the nonprofit that drives progress towards a thriving San Antonio. The Story Goes is an opportunity for us to highlight people and organizations who are doing some amazing things in our community and tell a more complete story of things that you may not have heard in like snippets, right? So for example, you may have heard that Bexar County's teen birth rate is pretty high- in fact it's one of the highest in the nation's 49%, I believe, higher than anywhere else in our nation, and that's...yeah...not something to be excited about- and yet, over the course of the last nine years, San Antonio and Bexar County have been reducing our teen birth rate *exponentially*...decreasing that national and local gap by a lot....and I have the privilege of sitting with my pals, Evelyn Delgado, who is the Executive Director of Healthy Futures of Texas. Not only are you a person who is working very hard in this space, but your organization has been one of the leading organizations in helping us reduce the teen birth rate...so thanks for being here...in this dark closet of ours... (Molly and Evelyn giggle together) [\(01:25\)](#) Let me talk first, Evelyn, like, I know Healthy Futures of Texas was founded...how long ago?

**EVELYN:** In 2006!

**MOLLY:** Okay, so not long, it's a relatively new-It's a teenager...So you were the second person in charge (**Evelyn:** Yes...Yes), you followed the founder, always easy (Evelyn and molly giggle) ...Always such a fun time to be the person who comes in like after the founder! [\(01:50\)](#) Tell me how you got involved with Healthy Futures to even get started?

**EVELYN:** Well, I knew of Healthy Futures because I used to work at state level, like health, like community health, focusing on women and children- and teen pregnancy was one of my priorities at the state level, so I already knew Dr.Realany, our founder, and I knew the work of Healthy Futures.

**MOLLY:** You were in state work, where were you living? Austin, I assume?

**EVELYN:** Actually, New Braunfels! I'm from San Antonio, but I was working and commuting to Austin for about 17/18 years...quite a drive! [\(02:28\)](#)

**MOLLY:** So, you're from San Antonio, originally (Evelyn agrees) ...grew up here. The question is always asked," Where did you go to high school?"

**EVELYN:** McCullum High School! Go Cowboys!



**MOLLY:** Like it's required by law- like if you're from San Antonio, you're asked what high school you went to! So, were you always in public service? Always in...?

**EVELYN:** No...actually, after I graduated from Trinity, I went to work for South Western Bell *a long time ago...*

**MOLLY:** Oh wow, alright, we're not dating you with that at all!

**EVELYN:** And then I moved to California, started working in financial analysis, and when I came back, I ended up in...working for the state. I was just gonna do it for a little bit, and then leave, 'cuz I didn't... I thought I wanted finances...*but I loved it! I loved* helping people, knowing the programs that we do, helped people. And the kind of folks that we helped is that most need the help...and so that was something that just felt good. [\(03:30\)](#)

**MOLLY:** So, when you decided to leave the state, I imagine coming back to your hometown was probably important, but also, did you specifically leave like, 'hey in gonna leave the state and go work for a local nonprofit organization? [\(03:43\)](#)

**EVELYN:** I did, but believe it or not, but I got this idea, except that I knew nonprofits do wonderful work, to do community work, and I wanted to do it in San Antonio, so that had been my goal for many years. And so, this job came up, and I felt that it was like..to be. Yeah, it was calling to me.

**MOLLY:** It was sort of calling to you- which I enjoy. So, started working at Healthy Futures, you've been involved in sort of...obviously, locally...but you've also seen it out of state-wide level. I wanna talk more specifically about teen pregnancy and teen birth rate, and sort of the conversations that consistently- when we talk about it, we knew that we had to originally...I always tell this story, when we talk in San Antonio about things being complex, very complex challenges, it starts to feel overwhelming. [\(04:32\)](#) And then we always talk about our idea of teen birth rates, and how exponentially it has gone down. Back in 2011/2012, the San Antonio teen pregnancy prevention collaborative got together and started talking about nonprofit, city county folks, secular, religious...it didn't matter! If you were working on teen pregnancy, you were sitting around this table, and our community said," Hey, we want to reduce our teen birth rate by 15% over the next decade". And what we found was a reduction in that teen birth rate in like two years, so then the same group said," Alright let's reduce it by 25% in the year 2020" and then that happened by 2014! And then it was like, "Let's reduce it by 50% by the year 2020." And we've gotten there, too! I mean it's just...what I think this particular topic shows is that we are capable if we put a goal together and set in the middle of our table, we all want a piece of this goal, we can actually make that goal happen. And we use that coalition and that collaborative group as one of our "Shining Stars" in our community. [\(05:49\)](#) So, I'm curious, right, as a member of that collaborative, and then also, like doing the work that you're



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doing...when talking about teen pregnancies, and teen birth rate, I don't know that we always tell the full complete story of how teen pregnancy and teen birth rates not only impact health and wellness, but impacts education and economic development, and neighborhoods, and family-wellbeing and the and, and, and, any. And ya'll have been so great at sort of showing how it kind of has this ripple effect, upstream and downstream of these various things. Can you tell me a little bit about -just specifically- what Healthy Futures if Texas does? [\(06:32\)](#)

**EVELYN:** So Healthy Futures helps young people achieve their goals and dreams by providing sexual health education. Information that students need- that young people need and their parents need in order to make good decisions about their reproductive life and their life plans.

**MOLLY:** I love that you always start with, and this is very important, that you're like, "We're helping young people achieve their dreams and we're doing that specifically by talking about sexual health. That's a completely- what you're doing is sort of incredibly nebulous, super-super high-level dream, right, this vision of and saying, "Our lane is here. We stick right here in sexual health." How do you help young- why would you think sexual health and we know that it does...but why is it that sexual health and helping teenagers sort of understand that-and their parents and their families...etcetera...help them ultimately achieve their dreams? [\(07:33\)](#)

**EVELYN:** Well sexual health is not all about sex, for one, it's about talking about abstinence, talking about when you're ready to become sexually active, it's about healthy relationships. What is a healthy relationship supposed to look like?

**MOLLY:** Can you tell me what that's like? Help me please!

**MOLLY and EVELYN laugh together**

**EVELYN:** You need to come to one of our classes, Molly! (MOLLY: clearly!) We'll let you in! So yeah, it's about healthy relationships and many of our young people haven't had that modeled for them, and they, too have young parents, who, you know, still are developing and becoming the best that they can be. So, we talk to them about that, they need to know how their body works, you would be surprised of the number of students -college students-who are still kind of in the dark about your reproductive health. Because the guys don't know how he female body works, and then also contraceptive methods, not that they're gonna use them right now, but they need to know that they're available. And so that way, they can plan, and they can say, "Okay, I know all about this, I choose to be abstinent, that's my way of achieving my goals." And another young person may say," Hmm, I've got two more years of college" or, "I've got three more years of Highschool, I definitely want to reach that goal. But I'm gonna be sexually active." They have options. And they have that information they need so they can be successful. [\(09:04\)](#)



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**MOLLY:** Do you...the...immediately when you start talking, I start to have that tiny tiny nervousness or embarrassment about, "Oh you're saying 'sex'!". It immediately becomes this like...I can imagine- I'm a grown woman who is still like, "Ohhh are we supposed to talk about that?"- I can imagine then you and your organization, and you have staff members, you have volunteer board members, you're speaking to young people. Teenagers, college students, high school students, middle school students-you're speaking to all of them! I'm curious how you then have healthy conversations about sex. [\(09:42\)](#)

**EVELYN:** Okay...well think back when you were in high school- when I was in high school.

**MOLLY:** It's been a minute I don't remember. (Molly and Evelyn laugh together)

**EVELYN:** Well I don't remember these conversations. Never, ever! Maybe a little bit- a little sliver of conversation in biology class, perhaps? Maybe? And that's it! I think maybe when we start talking to young people- even to the parents- we usually do some ice breakers, just getting people comfortable being in the room, and then we go right into it and start to desensitize a little bit, and then start using the proper language. Sometimes young people aren't associating the right biological language with what's what. You know, what to call *this*, or what to call *that*, and what it *means*. And so it's our way to get people comfortable, the conversations starts to flow, it takes a while, usually, for the questions to start popping up, but definitely, *lots of questions*. [\(10:41\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Yeah, I can't imagine. And it's also just the idea when you start talking about it, it immediately it begins- you said, "desensitized", that's exactly right. To talk about it and it becomes this sort of thing that we just generally talk about, it's different. I'm curious, then...how young do your classes start? How far do you take them? And then I also want to talk about the idea that you also have an ambassador's program of teenagers who are also doing this work. How young do you say, "Hey, you should be talking about sex."... Like at what age? [\(11:15\)](#)

**EVELYN:** So we're...well...as far as parents talking to the children about sex, that needs to start form the very beginning, as opportunities come up that are age-appropriate discussions, so that you build on that over the years. In terms of our formal education, we've been doing sixth grade through community college, however, we've been getting more and more requests for fifth grade. And so for fifth grade, it's a different approach. It's not about sexual health education, but it's about- it's not even about relationships- it's about healthy friendships. So you start to lay that frame work for : What does a healthy friendship look like in your fifth grade going to sixth grade? And then, you can start that sexual health education that many schools offer at sixth, seventh, eighth, and of course, it's age appropriate. We're also doing it in the community colleges- Alamo colleges is a great supporter of our program. The "Baby-Safe" Program, and their colleges, and so we work with college students. [\(12:20\)](#)



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**MOLLY:** So what is the “Baby-Safe” Program?

**EVELYN:** It’s a sexual health education program. And it’s bae- before anyone else- be safe, for us old people, we might have to- have a definition of baeby- safe means! So, we provide health education, in the classrooms, sometimes, or...in the afternoon when students come to us. (12:46)

**MOLLY:** I want to ask you, then- I’m gonna put your teenage ambassador over to the side- and I’m gonna ask you very seriously...I can imagine, right, particularly in the day and age that we’re in, where you’re hearing about bills that are coming up, and Roe v. Wade, and so much information coming out, women’s body’s, and the right to choose, and abortion rights, etcetera, etcetera... That when you have conversations, about unplanned pregnancies, when you’re discussing sexual health...does that sometimes become like...contentious? (13:27)

**EVELYN:** Abortion’s always a very hot topic, as you know, but, so... we emphasize our efforts to educate about prevention. We want to prevent the unplanned pregnancy. It’s the unplanned pregnancies that then, you know, have people seeking options. You know, so, if we can help you plan, and prevent your pregnancy until you’re ready- until you’re ready enough, you’re mature enough, you’re ready financially, you’re ready socially, your family situation, whatever that might look like, then, you can plan it that way. (14:11)

**MOLLY:** It’s such an interesting holistic approach that we’re gonna start talking to children when they’re very young, that they can start to really understand their own bodies and their own relationships with other humans, then determine, “How and where do I want to go? And would a pregnancy potentially stop that?” So it’s very interesting to me that if you frame it in the way of preventative and it’s also about really understanding who you are as a human, as you relate to other people, and who you are standing squarely in your own shoes. So, yeah, it makes total sense, right, when you think about it that way. (14:50)

You have a program that brings in new...young people-teenagers- and they do advocacy and they do work with other teenagers. Can you talk a little about that program? I’m mildly obsessed with it, mainly because I love it when we give-like when we put youth out front and we say, “You go do the thing.”(15:13)

**EVELYN:** It’s such a great program. We have a youth program called The Youth Advocacy Council, so- or the YAC- The YAC Program goes from September through the spring, so it’s a nine- month program, and so they really get to learn a lot.

**MOLLY:** Wait I have to ask. Did you do the nine months for this? Like on purpose?



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**EVELYN:** (Giggling) Yeah, no, nine months because it's a school year. So, it's a nine-month program, twenty-five students come in together and they learn about sexual health education, they also learn how to communicate with other students about sexual health, so that they can be kind of like a peer-educator. The advocacy piece is around the topic of sexual health, they get to talk about and decide how and what initiatives would they want their elected officials to be aware of and to support, they do their research, they write their white papers, they practice what their talking points would be, and we take them to the capitol and they meet with the legislators there, and it's a wonderful experience. [\(16:24\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Yeah, we're not talking about doctors, you're talking about young people, in high school...

**EVELYN:** Young people! These are high schoolers in their freshman through senior years, they talk to local elected officials, to the school districts, they've presented at board meetings, a wonderful opportunity to learn what it is to advocate. It's not just talking, you have to plan what you're gonna say, you have to pick your main points and have your data behind it. And it's a skill that is not just for sexual health, that's the topic we're using, but if they can do that, they can advocate for just about anything- they know the steps and they've practiced it. [\(17:04\)](#)

**MOLLY:** The idea that you created this sort of not only peer group, but young people advocating, did that spring out of anything in particular? Or were you thinking like, hey we do need more young people talking to young people.

**EVELYN:** Actually, it kind of sprung out of what we were doing at the YMCA with a group of young people. From there, it seemed like there was a need to have a longer session with some specific goals, so that's how the YAC evolved. And so, every year, we improve it, every year, the students tell us what worked and what didn't. and it's a wonderful program. Students come out of there with so many good skills to take to their future. [\(17:52\)](#)

**MOLLY:** I would say that I've met many of them, like, throughout the years, like run into the YAC members, always, like completely overwhelmed by- it doesn't matter the topic they're talking about, they always are so well-prepared to just have a conversation and it's the same as I say about kinds in theater: they're always ready for any conversation. You're building these sort of skills with them that are for preparing for presentation, etcetera, and it's transferrable beyond, which is why I'm like, "Yes, of course education, economic, competitiveness, etcetera, etcetera... When we talk about teen birth rates, typically when we aggregate information, we find very specifically about sort of that fifteen to seventeen year-old age and eighteen to nineteen year-old age, and how those sometimes very separate, sort of, conversations. And the idea that eighteen and nineteen year-olds could plan, when ya'll are doing your work, do you think about those sort of age-group differently? [\(18:56\)](#)



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**EVELYN:** Absolutely, because the intervention, the approach will be different depending on the age group, so when you think about it, in 2016, which is the last data San Antonio Metropolitan Health district has, because data runs entirely slow. At every level, every state. But that's the latest data we have; 2,044 Teens in Bexar County. And that was from age ten to nineteen. But the ten to fourteen age, that was only 2% total, so, it's a problem, but a whole different conversation. [\(19:37\)](#) So of those a little over 2,000...69% are the eighteen and nineteen year-olds. So, you're talking about a group that's probably already working, in college, something, and you're right, some of those will be planned pregnancies, but that is the age group that we really address through interventions where we can find that age group. The other age group consideration is that about 20% of those births are to teens who already have one or more children. So, that's another challenge, again, it could've been planned, but, knowing you have a teen with one or more children, you know there will be challenges for the mom and for the children. [\(20:26\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Of course. So what I'm hearing is that eighteen and nineteen year-olds is a larger number of births, and then, some teenagers already has a child, is going on and having a second child. So those are our two sort of major populations that are inside that 2,000 number. [\(20:43\)](#) So, when you work- we know very clearly Healthy Futures of Texas cannot eliminate our unwanted or unplanned teen pregnancy all by themselves. So I know that you're working collaboratively with other organizations, is that something that you focus on, then? Like, how then are we targeting the community that needs us most to potentially come in and give them these resources and tools? Is that how it works? [\(21:13\)](#)

**EVELYN:** Correct, and you know, congratulations to San Antonio, and thank you for SA2020 for holding this accountable! It's having that spotlight on those numbers whether they're going up or down, and in our case, fortunately, it's improving. But it does take accountability, and working together. So that whole collaborative approach that San Antonio has with everyone coming together at the table with an interest to reducing teen pregnancies...can we know what each other is doing so we don't duplicate, and we learn from each other also. [\(21:47\)](#)

**MOLLY:** So I would assume that there's also conversations happening in like continuums of care. So, when you're talking, yes we know it's 2% that ten to fourteen would assume that we're also having conversations about what organizations that might be working in child abuse and neglect or family violence, or etcetera, where those might be coming from that space. So, the reason I'm mentioning this sort of continuum of care is because you very specifically when we started said, "We help teens achieve their dreams through sexual health." Very specifically targeting that- so I assume you have partnerships on all ends of the spectrum when you're like connecting teenagers [\(22:26\)](#)



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**EVELYN:** Right, so the San Antonio Teen Pregnancy Prevention Collaborative is a collaborative primarily of youth serving organizations. Whether it's sexual health, whether it's afterschool kind of programs or other...programs that help build youth.

**MOLLY:** Right, build them up it is, right? Okay. Got it. So I guess my final question- and it will inevitable spiral into like fifteen other questions- but my final question right now is.. what are the- somebody is listening right now, maybe got a little squirmy there for a second because "Oh they said 'sex' out loud!" And I'm gonna say it again. Sex! Got a little squirmy. (23:12) What are the things that I as a potential listener need to know about either me talking to my own children or how can I get involved in helping San Antonio reduce our teen birth rate by even more? (23:27)

**EVELYN:** Okay and this is...where I think we've been really successful, but the more people that know and are engaged, the better. From a parent perspective, I would say, talk to your kids often, know where they're at, monitor their activities, in terms of who are they hanging out with...The usual stuff that they think, kind of, I've heard in the past. But also, something that you may not have thought of, is let them have their own reproductive health visit. (24:00) So when your child- is still a child- But let say you're still taking your child to the doctor's office...you know, for just a general checkup, or it's maybe their first reproductive health visit...let them have some space with the provider- some private space. Somehow figure out a way to step out and let that provider start building that relationship with that provider. And let them have the freedom and the privacy to ask questions that they may not ask in your presence. So that's something that's important. In terms of how to help- in terms of organizationally-I would say support any of the organizations that are providing teen pregnancy prevention services; You've got Central Metro Health, you've got UT Teen Health, Martinez Street. Different organizations that are doing this. So, we're primarily a lot of nonprofits, non profits always need funding, and supporters, so that's always a way. Or volunteer with organizations that better the community, and I'd say just in general. With not just your child, but you know, be there for others. Your nieces, nephews, your grandchildren, and just be supportive in that way. (25:21)

**MOLLY:** Sure, it's almost like being the person who if it's okay if a teenager asks you a question. You're the one that- the cool one that will answer it.

**EVELYN:** I was the cool aunt for many years!

**MOLLY:** I mean, we'll check your references. Okay, I really appreciate that you are here and that you're talking about this. I'm gonna add to this sort of list of things... Make sex less scary, like, it's okay to talk about stuff like this. There's a whole song about this. Let's talk about Sex, Baby. So, yeah, I do think that such a- I say easy step, but I'm like yeah, why not have that conversation. (26:02) Alright, everything that you heard about today on The Story Goes Podcast



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will be on our website at [klrn.org /thestorygoes](http://klrn.org/thestorygoes) , we of course want you to subscribe and listen to all the podcasts, of course share it with all your friends, then, get involved, right! Absolutely what you heard today is something you can get involved with. You can look up Healthy Futures of Texas. Would they find resources on your website? (26:26)

**EVELYN:** Yes! Absolutely!

**MOLLY:** Okay, so perfect, you can go- we'll make sure we will have a link to that, and then you can go get more resources, etcetera. (Whining) Don't be scared to talk about it, that's the whole thing! Thank you so much for being here, Evelyn!

**EVELYN:** Thank you, Molly.

**MOLLY:** (Quiet Whispering) Don't forget to talk about it. Let's talk about sex... (26:46)



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