

Tuesday, May 09, 2017

OU, Pontiac High School partner for program to assist teen parents

An Oakland University professor and her students are working to address some of the challenges faced by teen parents.

"Teen parents face a unique set of challenges due to financial constraints, educational demands and social stigma," said Kanako **Taku**, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at Oakland University. "All of these challenges can have a lifelong impact on both parent and child.

"It is therefore important to focus on providing resources and information, as well as facilitating possible social support networks to foster this vulnerable population's wellbeing and sense of personal growth."

Dr. Taku recently received a \$1,500 Community Engagement Grant from the **College of Arts and Sciences**, which she plans to use to develop a new educational intervention program to assist teenage parents in need at Pontiac High School.

"This project is important because the city of Pontiac has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in Michigan," Dr. Taku said.

"This grant will allow us to not only provide valuable resources to a special population desperately in need, but also to gather data regarding the efficiency of the program so that it can be continually improved to best fit the needs of the population."

Participants in the program must be at least 13 years old, pregnant or a teen mom, and be a student at Pontiac High School.

"The intervention program will provide resources and allow the teens to connect with each other," Dr. Taku said. "They will also learn about the importance of social support, and highlight non-traditional means of support, such as through community programs and pets. Additionally, teens will learn about the possibility of Posttraumatic Growth, which emphasizes the possibility for positive psychological change."

Dr. Taku will be collaborating on the project with Shelby Seyburn, an undergraduate student at Oakland University; Aundrea Walenski, a graduate student at the University of Michigan; Whitney Dominick, a graduate student at OU; and Angela Powell-Medlock, a social worker at Pontiac High School.

"We all are very excited to start this project and thankful for this opportunity," Dr. Taku said. "It is a great opportunity to further build and strengthen the OU/Pontiac Initiative."

Participants in the program will attend three sessions, which will last approximately 60 minutes each.

"We are expecting up to 30 teen parents from Pontiac High School to participate in the program," Dr. Taku said.

Participants who attend at least two sessions will receive a \$25 gift card.

Pontiac High School students interested in the program are encouraged to contact the school social worker, Angela Powell Medlock at angela.powell-medlock@pontiacschools.org or graduate assistant Whitney Dominick at wdominick@oakland.edu.



An Oakland University professor is using a \$1,500 Community Engagement Grant from the College of Arts and Sciences to develop a new educational intervention program to assist teenage parents in need at Pontiac High School.



Collaborating on the project are: Dr. Kanako Taku, Shelby Seyburn, Aundrea Walenski, Whitney Dominick, and Angela Powell-Medlock (not pictured).