

Empowering New Orleans Teens: A Summer with Geaux Girl!

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Zoe Seibert (SLA '26)

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Since fall 2023, I have had the privilege to intern with Geaux Girl!, a local non-profit magazine created by and for New Orleans teen girls. In 2018, Heide Winston founded the magazine to combat the significant lack of sex education resources in New Orleans. Working for a magazine that includes comprehensive reproductive health information in each issue has been extremely impactful.



This summer, another intern, Kaitlin Phou, and I worked on a sexual education project. Since Louisiana does not require public or charter schools to teach comprehensive sex ed, we wanted to outline why sex ed resources are crucial for teens. Kaitlin and I researched legislation, health data, and challenges. All our findings deeply interested me, and I was truly shocked by the state's health statistics. For instance, the CDC ranked Louisiana as having the third highest teen birth rate (23.7 per 1,000) nationwide in 2022, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive sex ed resources.

After Kaitlin and I collected information on the lack of sex ed in New Orleans and greater Louisiana, we contacted organizations to learn about specific sex ed programs for teens. A major organizational challenge is funding. Although many groups have ended services due to inadequate financial support, a small number are still able to provide quality sex ed services for youth. Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast has a variety of teen-specific programs and events, including "TeenREACH," a peer health educators' group where teens provide health information to their communities, and "TeenVIBE," an education summit led by teens every summer to discuss a range of sexual health topics.

Although this project has demonstrated that much progress is needed, trailblazing groups, such as Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, are achieving change. After being part of the Geaux Girl! team for almost one year, I feel empowered knowing that the magazine is part of the solution by helping teens. After researching Louisiana's and New Orleans' sex ed landscape, I believe that Geaux Girl!'s collaboration with other organizations will reach teens and bring greater awareness to the reasons why comprehensive sex ed services for youth are essential.