



Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace prevented the integration of Tuskegee High School by encircling the building with state troopers.

"I've been crying every day and every night. I keep on blaming myself for this."

MONICA SELBY, a high school senior from Canton, Ohio, who is six months pregnant.

Rash of pregnancies hits Ohio school

13 percent of female students expecting

By **Connie Mabin**
Associated Press

CANTON, Ohio — High school senior Monica Selby thought she would be busy this year planning for college, not preparing for the birth of her first child.

"I've been crying every day and every night. I keep on blaming myself for this," said the 18-year-old Selby, who is six months pregnant.

She cries about starting classes this week at Timken Senior High School with a bulging belly, about the emotions of planning an adoption, about becoming part of a statistic that has snagged the nation's attention: 64 of Timken's 490 female students — 13 percent — are pregnant.

The statistic at the school in the heart of this old steel city contrasts with a decade of declining teen pregnancy rates nationwide. But teen pregnancy experts say the problem is not exclusive to Timken High.

Experts, parents and students themselves struggle to explain such pockets of high teen pregnancy rates. Are teens receiving appropriate sex education? Do they have access to birth control, and are they using it consistently? Has the stigma of unwed motherhood lost its edge?

"This might be a school that is forthright with its problems while others are not," said Jay Green, chairman of the Education Reform department at the University of Arkansas. "But this is a widespread issue."

Green wrote a study last year for the conservative New York-based Manhattan Institute for Policy Research that found 20 percent of urban teenagers have been pregnant, compared with 14 percent of suburban teens.

Urban teens as a whole don't use birth control as consistently or often, according to his research, and often have less to lose financially and socially than those in the suburbs.

But Green couldn't say whether those factors applied to Timken. The school, which has about 1,000 students, draws teens from across neighborhood and economic lines in Canton, the state's ninth-largest city.

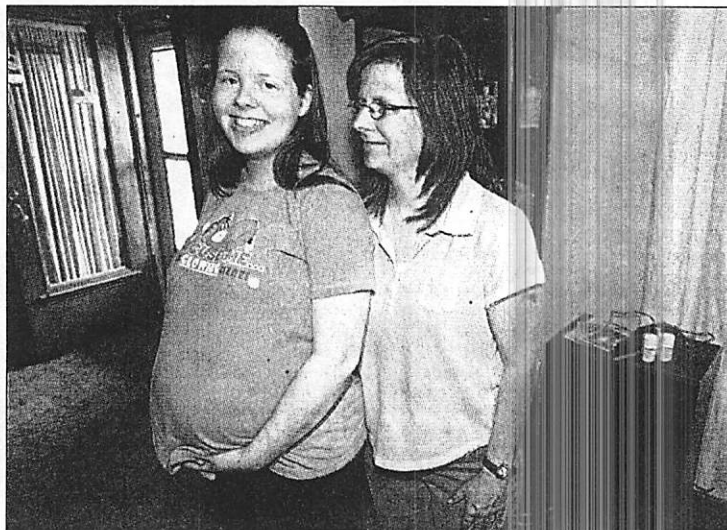
Last school year, the two high schools in the city's district reported a total of 55 pregnancies. Ninety-nine pregnancies are expected in the district this year, most of them at Timken, where expecting students get six weeks of maternity leave.

"This has gotten to horrible proportions. I wish I knew the answer to why it's happening," principal Kim Redmond told the city's daily newspaper The Repository. Redmond did not return several messages left by



Tony Dejak/Associated Press

Monica Selby, 18, who is six months pregnant, is struggling with the emotions of planning an adoption. She attends Timken High School in Canton, Ohio, where 64 of the school's 490 female students — 13 percent — are pregnant.



Julie Vennitti/The (Canton, Ohio) Repository via AP

Raechel Hinton, 16, is eight months pregnant. Her mother, Joanne, thinks Timken High School's abstinence-based sex education program isn't enough.

The Associated Press.

Joanne Hinton, whose 16-year-old daughter, Raechel Hinton, is eight months pregnant, thinks the school's

abstinence-based sex education program isn't enough.

"It's time to take the blinders off and realize that these kids are having

sex," she said. "Obviously, abstinence is not working. If we have to, just give them condoms."

Abstinence-based programs have been growing nationwide at schools over the past few years. In Ohio, the Bush's administration and the state's health department have awarded \$32 million in grants to Ohio agencies for abstinence education since 2001.

Hinton stresses that she doesn't condone teenage sex and that her daughter doesn't fit the mold some may think pregnant teens come from: The Hinton household has two loving parents with a strong relationship who asked the straight-A Raechel "45 times a week if she was having sex, doing drugs, drinking. We were constantly checking on her."

Raechel, who plans to return to the 10th grade at Timken after delivering and completing an adoption, said many students are sexually active and need more information about birth control.

"It can happen to anybody no matter who you are, not just bad girls," she said.