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*"We will cling to the pillars of the temple of our liberties  
and if it must fall we will perish amidst the ruins."*

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## Heritage Organization Holds Parent-Student Workshop Renowned Abstinence Spokeswoman Brings Message to Edgefield

Lakita Garth has a message – one that she's been promoting for nearly ten years and one that she says has become her life's mission – to inculcate within young people the dire importance of sexual abstinence.

Having already spoken to hundreds of thousands of teenagers across the world, she brought her message to Edgefield County this past weekend in a series of events sponsored by Heritage Community Services.

"We live in a microwaved, gotta-have-it-now society," she said in an interview, "and what we've learned to do is divorce consequences from our actions."

That, Lakita says, is the reason that she does what she does – to ensure that young people become aware of the oftentimes staggering conse-

quences that can ensue when sex is taken lightly.

In addition to two performances on Friday at JET Middle School and Strom Thurmond High School, she also served as the keynote speaker at Saturday's widely attended Parent-Student Workshop.

In her eye-opening and interactive seminar, Lakita spoke with students "on their own level," dispelling lies about sex that she says have deceived a vast majority of the American youth culture.

Though Lakita (who was a runner-up in the Miss Black America pageant and has testified before the U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Senate on teen pregnancy) may seem like a one-woman show at times, she's not alone in her mission.

Here in Edgefield, her

message is furthered by the staff of Heritage Community Services, who sponsored and organized the workshop on Saturday, leading a number of breakout sessions themselves throughout the day. Among the topics discussed were the consequences of premarital sex, community drug issues, and communication between parents and their children.

"What we want to see is more parent-child communication," says Susan Swanson, the regional director of Heritage Services. That is why, according to her, the parent-student workshop was so important, "Hopefully this will encourage some discourse between parents and their children."

"Parents need to set boundaries," Swanson says. "They need to teach their children

how to make meaningful family relationships and how to raise families of their own."

This was a concept that was echoed throughout the day. In a session on the influences of the media, Heritage staff members Chris Williams and Will Smith urged parents to "talk to your kids, find out what kind of music they're listening to."

Attending the workshop was a diverse crowd of parents, grandparents, and students of all ages. According to the sign-in sheet, they came from inside the county and also from as far away as Allendale and McCormick. With two seminars led by Lakita, two 45-minute breakout sessions, and student entertainment (provided by Heritage students Brittany Johns, Tiffany Vlach, and



Lakita Garth

Elizabeth Gonzales) the workshop lasted a good portion of the day.

Based on the responsiveness of the students and parents, the event seemed to have been enjoyed – and perhaps more importantly, taken to heart – by all those in attendance. *See pg. 7*