



# AMTC

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## News

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— ANGELA TURNER

### AMTC News

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## Adapting during COVID-19

I am amazed, although not entirely surprised, at how rapidly our clients have adjusted to and embraced technology to deliver their services during COVID-19. They have spent countless hours with preparation and implementation, plus spending time on the phone at all hours of the day. All of our clients are doing their utmost to reach the individuals they serve during this challenging time, when people are feeling more isolated and their motivation may be waning. In this newsletter, you will read about two of our clients who are creatively approaching this hurdle, **Abstinence and Marriage Education Resources** and **Peacemakers Family Center**.

Both these organizations are rolling out initiatives to engage participants during the pandemic. These approaches are imperative, now more than ever. With the nation's school districts largely focused on how to deliver academic courses, we don't want teen pregnancy prevention to fall by the wayside.

Despite the challenges of this new era, at AMTC & Associates we are focusing on the positives. While no one would have wished for COVID-19, there have been positive

outgrowths. The initiatives and platforms that our clients are implementing could last indefinitely into the future, to supplement already strong evidenced-based curricula, or even as standalone materials. These new deliveries can reach even more youth!

There is a lesson in every experience. It is imperative to be adaptable and have contingency plans in place. Being able to engage from home—or anywhere—even in the middle of the night, to help clients sort out these contingencies has always been a strength of AMTC and its clients. I invite you to read about two of our associates in this newsletter who help build this strength.

Wishing you good health,

Angela Turner  
Principal





# POWERFUL ONLINE PREPARATION

by A&M Resources

Left: Scott Phelps, President, A&M Resources

There is no substitute for strenuous preparation, so even when the unforeseen hits, one is in a better position to adapt and is more likely to succeed. An organization that embodies this work ethic is **Abstinence and Marriage Education Resources** (A&M Resources), led by its president, Scott Phelps. When COVID-19 unexpectedly impacted the world, Phelps and his team had already invested over five years of research toward developing an online component to parallel and add depth to its existing hard-copy curriculum for teen pregnancy prevention. “When COVID hit,” said Phelps, “we were far down the track [with online development] and told our team we really need to get this out the door.”

Still, Phelps and his team will not widely release the online component without due diligence. The online program is initially being shared on a small scale to garner feedback, which has so far been positive, noted Phelps. The most significant factor for its success is to ensure that a virtual format works exceptionally well for teens, and that it’s enjoyable. “Kids already love the content and respond very well to it,” emphasized Phelps. Translating this into a digital format, with greater dimensions and learning opportunities, is key.

“The digital world is where kids live,” said Phelps, so the team has to know how youth use technology. For example, viewers lose interest if videos are too long; therefore, every few pages of curriculum contain an instructional video that lasts only a few minutes. Additionally, some videos include real-life individuals whose lives were impacted by their sexual choices; while the hard-copy curriculum also includes their stories, it’s powerful to hear and watch. Online, the entire text of the workbook is available on audio, thereby building literacy skills, with end-of-chapter quizzes for review.

Robust tracking is paramount. Students must complete certain steps or the online program will not allow them to move forward. Educators can track every student: whether one logged on, how much was completed, how much time was spent, and other measurements. Fidelity is maintained to its utmost: “We know exactly what [content] they’re getting... [and they’re] getting exactly what we as the designers intended for them,” said Phelps.

Maximum scalability is what Phelps and his team have always aimed for; online is no different. “It’s really important that the workbooks and online platform can theoretically reach every teenager in the country,” emphasized Phelps.

## Looking to Go Virtual?



Check out these benefits and considerations:

### Benefits:

- Intrinsically motivating for students
- Versatile: utilized in-class and/or virtually
- Highly relevant due to pandemic (“new normal”)
- Can incorporate motion and sound (video)
- Reaches more modalities of learners
- Makes curricula more appealing to potential new users
- Easy to utilize flip-classrooms (i.e., students learn new material prior to lessons)

### Considerations:

- The best platform for your audience (e.g., via app, software, website)
- Expenses and time involved in building a platform and/or hiring a tech firm
- Ability to track logistical and performance indicators (e.g., attendance, amount of time students spend on tasks and how much work is completed)
- Program fidelity: confirms curricula is covered and how it is delivered
- Method for assessing knowledge (e.g., quizzes, check-ins)

### Bottom Line:

- ▶ Building a well-thought-out virtual platform is well worth the benefits. The return on investment far outweighs the prep and expenses involved.

# CREATIVE SHIFTS

## to Reach Youth Online

Educators nationwide were thrown into online instruction without any advanced notice. Engaging youth online has challenges, such as delivering instruction in a way that youth find relevant and are motivated to join. **Peacemakers Family Center** is striving to meet these challenges with creative approaches to instruction. It provides services in the areas of teen pregnancy prevention (TPP), after-school programs, summer camps and much more, in high-risk communities.

### PlanBe\_ for Teen Empowerment

“PlanBe\_” is the name of its TPP program, with a blank line to empower teens to fill in more-positive life choices instead of risky behaviors. Due to the organization’s impact, PlanBe\_ has grown to include 36 schools and 20 community sites in Miami-Dade County, Florida, and Harlem, New York. Until COVID-19, curricula were delivered in person.

Now much instructional delivery is online, but with an innovative approach. Certain days are dedicated to specific areas, such as “Bored in the House Wednesdays” and “Relationship Fridays.” Bored in the House Wednesdays include live sessions on yoga, taekwondo and more. Relationship Fridays provide a forum for teens to talk about issues such as sex and STIs.

Teens themselves take a leadership role in determining and shaping online topics through a Youth Leadership Council, so teens have a vested interest. Teens are also helping Peacemakers to increase its online presence, harnessing teens’ adeptness at social media. More is planned for the future, such as brief TED-style talks delivered by educators to address diverse stakeholders.

### Benefit: Reaching More Students

Crystal Agnew, the Deputy Director of Peacemakers, spoke about growth during these times in terms of reach and as an organization: “Despite the challenges, the benefit is that you can reach more people and the content is reinforced for those who went through the program.... We have to have grace for ourselves to make mistakes, but we will make adjustments to figure out what works best for our youth and families.”



Crystal Agnew, Deputy Director of Peacemakers

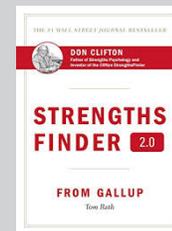
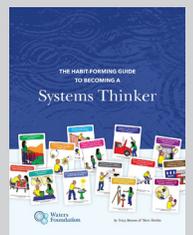
## GREAT READS

### to Engage Staff during COVID-19

A book club among staff has been highly valuable and enjoyable during the COVID-19 outbreak, noted Crystal Agnew, Deputy Director of **Peacemakers Family Center**: “Every week we go through the chapters to discuss and ask questions. This is one way that we’re becoming stronger as a team and better prepared for the classroom, whether in-person or virtually.”

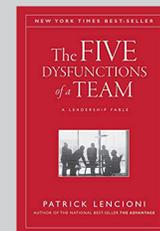
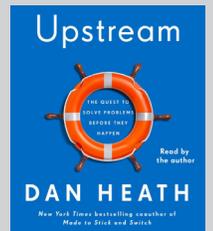
Here are the books she recommends:

***The Habit-Forming Guide to Becoming a Systems Thinker***, by Tracy Benson and Sheri Marlin. Apply systems thinking to education, business, parenting, and more.



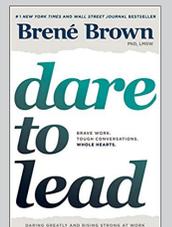
***StrengthsFinder 2.0***, by Tom Rath. Discover your strengths and learn how to use your greatest natural talents to get the most out of your life.

***Upstream: The Quest to Solve Problems Before They Happen***, by Dan Heath. Practical solutions for preventing problems rather than simply reacting to them.



***The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable***, by Patrick Lencioni. A powerful model and actionable steps for overcoming common hurdles and building a cohesive, effective team.

***Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.***, by Brené Brown. Learn how to cultivate braver, more daring leaders, and embed the value of courage in your culture.



# Meet our *Associates*

Our diverse team delivers fast, relevant results for our clients. Here are two associates who contribute to those efforts.



## **MAURICE MOORE** IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION ASSOCIATE

**PRESIDENT,**  
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT  
ASSOCIATES, LLC

*WITH AMTC SINCE 2011*  
*EDUCATION:* Southern Illinois  
University, Eastern Illinois  
University

### ***What is your educational background?***

I earned a BS in Business Administration from Southern Illinois University, and an MA in Sociology from Eastern Illinois University.

### ***What is your role at AMTC?***

As a consultant, I help ensure the fidelity of grant-funded fatherhood programs by periodically assessing the effectiveness of service delivery, and providing feedback to program administrators and AMTC contractors.

### ***What do you find meaningful about your work?***

In cooperation with AMTC's high-quality staff, I contribute to the significant knowledge base of the responsible fatherhood field nationally.

### ***Name some significant prior experiences in your field.***

Utilizing more than \$1.5 million per year of Annie E. Casey Foundation funding between 1999 and 2010 for responsible fatherhood enabled me to collaborate with other national funders and mobilize strategic initiatives. My efforts resulted in the creation of The National Fatherhood Leaders Group and Women in Fatherhood. Since 2006, these organizations helped secure more than \$50 million yearly to benefit low-income fathers and their dependents.

### ***Moving forward, what do you hope to accomplish?***

I'll continue to make my years of experience available to organizations seeking to improve human service programming through innovative and evidence-based practice.

### ***Outside of work, what do you enjoy?***

Meeting with friends for lunch or dinner, and regularly exercising at my local YMCA.



## **CINDY M. WALKER**

**PRESIDENT & CEO,**  
RESEARCH ANALYTICS CONSULTING,  
LLC

**VICE PRESIDENT,**  
AERA DIVISION D ON MEASUREMENT  
AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

*WITH AMTC SINCE 2009*  
*EDUCATION:* Roosevelt  
University, Illinois State  
University, University of Illinois

### ***What is your educational background?***

I have a PhD in Educational Psychology, specializing in quantitative research methodologies, from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I have an MS in Mathematics from Illinois State University and a BS in Mathematics, with a minor in Computer Science, from Roosevelt University.

### ***What is your role at AMTC?***

I provide technical assistance for research design, create instruments to measure impact and analyze statistics. I assist with grant writing, particularly regarding logic models, and I report data results to clients.

### ***What do you find meaningful about your work?***

Especially rewarding is to work with AMTC staff to determine what participant behaviors, knowledge, attitudes or beliefs should theoretically change upon program completion.

### ***Name some significant prior experiences in your field.***

I have been a professor for over 20 years in social sciences. I authored publications in psychometrics and am currently serving as the VP of Division D (Measurement and Research Methodologies) of the American Educational Research Association.

### ***Moving forward, what do you hope to accomplish?***

I love doing what I do for AMTC! Therefore, I recently decided to start my own business, Research Analytics Consulting, LLC, with the hope of doing similar work for others.

### ***Outside of work, what do you enjoy?***

I enjoy cooking, photography and boating. I also am training our dog to compete in agility courses.