

The Force of Ideas  
High School Students Organize Countywide Empowerment Conference for Their Peers

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Corrections: A photo caption last week incorrectly identified one of the participants in a workshop about abstinence at the Kiamsha Youth Empowerment Conference in Bowie. The speaker pictures was Naomi Pharr. (Published 03/28/96)

Near midnight one recent Tuesday: The basement of the Largo Government Center is transformed into a makeshift recording studio. Some high school students cluster around a big microphone and sing a new song with a dainty melody that rides a heavy go-go beat:

The theory of Kiamsha, according to Barbara Dunn, the volunteer adult coordinator of the conference, is that the 30 planners would teach and get feedback from the invitees, who would then pass on to their classmates whatever wisdom emerged. Kiamsha is Swahili for “that which awakens me.” This year’s slogan was “yearn to learn,” and the organizing theme was abstinence from violence, drugs and sex. It was a conference of teenagers, by teenagers and for teenagers.

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