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VIEW INVENTORY

CENTRAL NY NEWS

Hey girl: Syracuse-based website aims to help teens with sexual health questions

Updated: Feb. 13, 2025, 10:46 a.m. | Published: Feb. 13, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

Tiffany Lloyd, 44, was a health education supervisor at the Family Planning Service overseen by the Onondaga County Health Department for more than ten years before launching Layla's Got You. Ryann Phillips | rphillips@syracuse.com

By [Ryann Phillips](#) | Contributing Writer

Syracuse, N.Y. -- When J'Viona Baker found out that her teenage cousin had a boyfriend, she wanted to make sure that she was practicing safe sex.

Baker, 21, told her cousin to visit [Layla's Got You](#), a Syracuse-based website that answers questions about sex, pregnancy, birth control and sexually transmitted diseases.

An ambassador for the organization, Baker knew that her cousin could get confidential answers to her questions on the website.

Layla aims to be a friend for girls and teens when it comes to sexual health. The online character is a chatbot that responds to women's health questions in an understandable way for 11- to 18-year-olds. Last month, dozens of new users visited the website.

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They wanted to know about abortion and STD testing. Where can I get Plan B? Where can I get mental health help?

Tiffany Lloyd, the director of women's health and empowerment for the Allyn Family Foundation, is the brains behind Layla. She launched the Syracuse-based program in 2019 to reduce the number of women getting pregnant unintentionally.

The website was created for Black and Latina young women by Black and Latina young women. Women in the community chose the name "Layla" after Lloyd presented different options at local high schools and colleges.

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There's no human that monitors the chatbot 24/7. But if someone asks a question that hasn't been answered yet, a representative from Layla's Got You will update the answers. After talking with medical professionals, ambassadors for the organization make sure that all responses in the chatbot feel authentic to a teenager.

"When you look at it from that perspective, we do see Layla as being living and breathing, because she is able to learn as she goes," Lloyd said.

While the chatbot targets younger teens, Layla's Got You also has ambassadors. Those "Laylas" work with teens and college-aged women throughout the community to educate them about sexual health and provide support.

Layla's Got You has 24 volunteer-based ambassadors, "The Laylas," ages 20 to 31, who connect with other young women at local events. Provided by Layla's Got You

Users can access the chatbot by clicking Layla in the corner of the main website, then typing in questions. The interaction is confidential. The website directs users to local medical professionals, and in some cases, to Vera House if there is a concern about domestic violence.

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Lloyd, who worked at the Family Planning Service overseen by the Onondaga County Health Department for more than 10 years, is working on meeting more young women where they are to educate them about sexual health. Recently, she created playing cards with the "Laylas" about social, emotional and sexual health to put on tables at restaurants in Syracuse. It's called, "Put It On Da Table."

The Layla ambassadors also hold other events. They are often downstairs at Salt City Market, connecting with women at local bars and attending Syracuse events curated for Black women.

"This is about the plight and fight for Black women in our community...Maybe they're not going to involve their parents. We always think it's a plus if a young person can have a strong relationship. But we don't think whether or not you have a relationship with your parents, and you're talking about sex should dictate whether or not you have access to the things you need to keep yourself safe," Lloyd said.

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