

## FOCUS ON THE FAMILY RESOURCE SHEET

### **WHAT ONE PERSON CAN DO – BACKGROUND AND COMMON RESPONSES TO COMMON QUESTIONS**

#### **THE PROBLEM**

It is a common occurrence. While parents pay for their groceries at checkout counters, their kids scan the displays for candy and little toys. How often do their eyes light on sexually explicit magazine covers sometimes featuring scantily clad women and often containing salacious headlines? Too often. That's why [we] are launching a regional campaign to make grocery and retail store checkouts more [family] friendly.

#### **THE OFFENSIVE PRODUCT**

The publications most often mentioned by offended shoppers are *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour* and *Redbook*. With a combined monthly circulation of nearly eight million, these magazines heavily depend upon supermarket and retail store checkout aisles for maximum exposure and sales.

On the February, 2000, cover of *Cosmopolitan*, grocery shoppers were urged to try the "Angel and Eight Other Sizzling Positions. So Hot, You'll Burn A Hole Through The Bed." April's cover of *Glamour* teased children with, "What Men Think About Your Orgasm Face." Shoppers, on the other hand, are urging the stores to clean up their act.

Stories whose sex-laden titles appear on the front cover are a teasing prelude to the pornographic nature of the stories inside. *Cosmopolitan* graphically details sexual foreplay in order to "make him plead for mercy – and beg for more." *Cosmopolitan* also allows young children unrestricted access to its website, where they can perform a "virtual boy toy" striptease of men.

#### **THE CAPTIVE AUDIENCE**

Because *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour* and *Redbook* have the highest circulation of ladies' magazines (although only 3% of the nation buys any one of them), they get the premiere slot at the checkout lane – eye level and within easy reach.

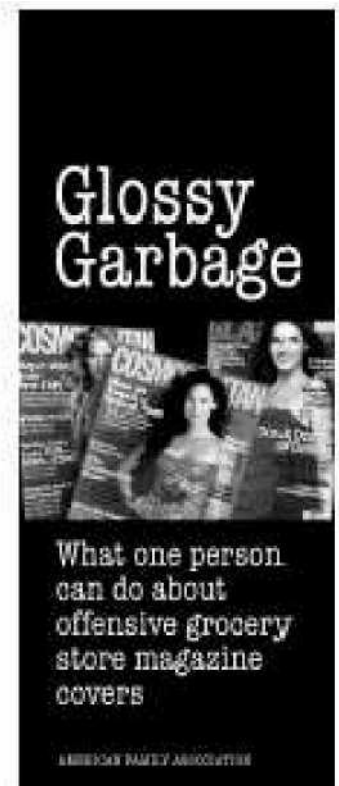
Most parents have come to accept that waiting in the checkout lane is part of the shopping process. However, parents should not expect their children to receive an unsolicited sex education class at the same time.

#### **FAMILIES HAVE THE ADVANTAGE**

The supermarket industry is one of the most competitive in the nation. Every small town or city has a number of supermarkets battling for the same customer dollars. Each week, national chains spend tens of millions of dollars advertising in local newspapers through color inserts and full-page ads. Even newspapers say that, if not for competition, they would feel a significant impact in reduced ad revenues. This certainly gives the grocery shopper a legitimate advantage when approaching the local store manager.

By combining efforts, communities can apply financial pressure in convincing stubborn supermarkets to seriously address customer concerns regarding the display of inappropriate magazines in checkout aisles. Summarily, supermarkets know that customer loyalty is what keeps them in business. They need to be reminded that the profit lost from a regular customer over the period of a month far exceeds the profit made on the few monthly magazines that prompted the customer to shop elsewhere.

Supermarkets would have to sell an additional 156 magazines per month to replace the profits made from a family of four who choose to buy groceries elsewhere.



## **ANSWERING COMMON OBJECTIONS**

**Objection:** 'We don't want to be censors''

**Answer:** The choice to carry magazines is not an issue of censorship. Using this fallacy, the manager would have to agree that by not carrying Playboy or Penthouse, he is a censor. It is a decision based on sales and profit margin. For private industry, the issue is responsibility.

Besides, you're not asking the store to remove the magazines, you simply want them displayed responsibly.

**Objection:** 'We have no control. An outside company takes care of our magazine rack.'"

**Answer:** Supermarkets can and do control what materials are sold in their store. Just as a store would not place Igloo Today in a Florida store, it should not place adult material in an area frequented by children.

**Objection:** 'What you see on those magazines is no worse than what's on television.'"

**Answer:** Parents can control what their children see on television. In the checkout aisle, there are no buttons to turn off, no parental controls. The only option available is to shop elsewhere.

**Objection:** 'We have aisles that have no magazines. You can use those.'"

**Answer:** Those aisles are not marked or may have longer lines. The manager is asking you to go out of your way. He should be reminded that this is an issue of what is appropriate for all children – exposing children to sexually explicit covers has no place in the family marketplace.

**SOURCE:** Focus on the Family