

Jump in U.S. teen births leaves

THURSDAY, DEC. 6, 2007 THE DOMINION POST 3-A

health officials baffled

Associated Press

ATLANTA — In a troubling reversal, the nation's teen birth rate rose for the first time in 15 years, surprising government health officials who had no immediate explanation.

The birth rate had been dropping since its peak, in 1991, although the decline had slowed in recent years. On Wednesday, government statisticians said it rose 3 percent from 2005 to 2006.

U.S. health officials said it was possibly a one-year statistical blip and not the start of a new upward trend.

But several experts said they have been expecting a jump. They blame the rise on increased federal

funding for abstinence-only health education programs that do not teach how to use condoms and other contraception.

Some key sexually transmitted disease rates have been rising, includ-

ing syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia. The rising teen pregnancy rate is part of the same phenomenon, said Dr. Carol Hogue, an Emory University professor of maternal and child health.

"It's not rocket science," she said.

The new report is based on a review of more than 99 percent of the birth certificates from last year by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.