

Faith & Freedom

December 2005

Newsletter of the Indiana Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

What's happening at the Statehouse—

Proposed legislation on reproductive health and what we should do about it



**Thursday, January 26, 2006
7:00pm-8:30pm**

Location: Lafayette, TBA
(check www.ircrc.org or contact IRCRC)

Guest Speakers

Michael McKillip

Director of Public Policy and Legislative Affairs, Planned Parenthood of Indiana &

Lindsey Mintz

Director of Government Affairs, Jewish Community Relations Council

Will Senator Patricia Miller try to bring back her state authorized pregnancy bill? Will lawmakers try to protect pharmacies that refuse to fill prescriptions? Will there be any bills to improve women's and family health that we can support?

The speakers will give an overview of bills that are currently under consideration in the state legislature. They will also explain how the legislature works and teach us how to be effective advocates.

Light refreshments

This event is free and open to the public

Now, more than ever, we as people of faith must make our presence known to our elected officials!



At its November meeting the IRCRC Board of Directors reflected on the year's activities and our many accomplishments in the areas of outreach, education, and advocacy. **Some of the major events and activities included:**

- Three major public events in Lafayette—guest speaker on comprehensive sex ed, workshop with clergy panel, and film showing
- Outreach to Purdue students, three congregations, and a state advocacy group through speaking engagements and other activities
- Several letters to the editor and a guest column
- Publication of a newsletter and brochure and several mass mailings
- Shared booth with Planned Parenthood at Tippecanoe County Fair
- Participated actively in two major state coalitions
- Signed on to several important letters relating to legislation or public policy
- Joined amicus brief for Ayotte v. New Hampshire Supreme Court case

We hope everyone shares a great sense of pride at such a strong beginning for a new organization!

What's next? The Board is already hard at work making plans for 2006! Activities will include:

- Jan. 26—Legislative Advocacy session, Lafayette (*see at left*)
- Feb. 21—All Options Clergy Counseling Training, Indianapolis (*see p.3*)
- April 22—1st annual dinner with guest speaker, Lafayette (*mark your calendar!*)
- Fall (tentative: November)—Conference on comprehensive sexuality education, Indianapolis (*re-scheduled from last fall*)

And more—we've only just begun!



Drowning out the noise

by Kaye McSpadden, President



My father is a remarkable man. Once a month he gets up in the wee hours of a Saturday morning and heads to a local clinic that provides abortion services. There, he quietly and protectively walks alongside frightened and nervous women as they enter the clinic under a barrage of hateful and venomous yelling and screaming.

I can only imagine the terror and pain this must cause many of the people walking into the clinic. Recently someone told me of a friend whose baby had died in utero, a tragic complication necessitating a D&C, a procedure sometimes used for abortion. Because she could not afford to have the procedure done anywhere else, she went to a clinic. First, however, she had to endure the hateful gauntlet outside, an experience that only magnified the personal pain and grief she and her husband were already feeling.

Thousands of courageous and dedicated people across the country are clinic escorts. What is perhaps remarkable about my father is the fact that he is 82 years old. He is also a United Methodist minister.

It seems that because he is a minister, my father is a particularly favorite target of some of the protesters. One man gets right up in my father's face, yelling and screaming unmentionable things right into his ear. Sometimes people push him. One time someone even knocked him down.

Recently, my father came up with an idea to drown out all the noise, not so much for his benefit, but for the benefit of the women he is escorting. He now carries a tape recorder and plays a tape of Scottish bagpipe music. He tells the women he's going to play the music so they won't have to listen to the

protesters. He says it's working very well, effectively blocking out the hateful noise of the protesters. In fact, one of them was so infuriated that he knocked down the tape recorder and broke it.

There is so much noise coming from the anti-choice movement these days.

Earlier in the fall a Lafayette congregation posted a large billboard that added to the "noise." The sign featured a large photo of a beautiful several-months-old child next to a statement proclaiming that "Abortion is the ultimate child abuse."

FAITHFUL WITNESS: You can be an escort too!

An Indianapolis Planned Parenthood clinic desperately needs escorts. Escorts will attend a 2-3 hour training session and commit to at least one 3-hour morning shift per month. Please contact Jennifer at jen@ppin.org or call 800-421-3731x1155.

Several people told me they found this billboard so hurtful they could not even bear to drive through that intersection. One friend confided that she had ended a pregnancy at the age of 12, herself the victim of sexual abuse.

I sent a letter to the local paper criticizing the billboard. I suggested that it would be better to "provide honest information and compassionate support instead of posting hurtful accusations." I also said that if the congregation really wanted to reduce the number of abortions, it would "advocate for


effective approaches to reducing unintended pregnancies, including access to family planning services and comprehensive sexuality education."

Six (count 'em, SIX) anti-choice response letters followed. I was reminded of something a local radio journalist told me last year. He said he had wanted to air a news story about the fact that over 100 people from the Lafayette area traveled to the March for Women's Lives in Washington DC. His boss, however, would not let him do it. Why? Because "the pro-lifers would complain and make too much noise."

Maybe it's time we start drowning out their noise. Not with more noise, but with music. With **the music of honesty and compassion, the rhythms of faithful advocacy, and the harmonies of understanding and respect.**

We need to start speaking up and speaking out. For every six of their letters, we need to write twelve more. When news coverage is biased, we need to complain. When anti-choice groups are visiting state legislators, we need to be there too.

I doubt my dad will ever change the mind of one of those protesters, but he certainly is making a difference in the lives of hundreds of people, and his constant presence is a witness and a reminder that many people of faith will walk their talk in brave and helpful ways.

Let us make peaceful and respectful advocacy and loving service the music of our lives. That is the type of sound the world needs to hear. 

IRCRC brings the moral power of religious communities to ensure reproductive choice and health through education and advocacy. IRCRC is a state affiliate of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

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IRCRC and Planned Parenthood volunteers reach out to the community through county fair booth

“The standard in Indiana is that religious people are NOT pro-choice!”

Of all the comments we received while working at the county fair booth, that one was perhaps the most astounding. (Although a close second was: “There’s no religious coalition—there’s only one religion!”)

Despite occasional negative comments like these, the overall

response to the joint IRCRC-Planned Parenthood booth at the Tippecanoe County Fair last July was overwhelmingly positive.

Many visitors told us how glad they were to see our booth. Many were surprised and happy to learn that so many faith groups are, in fact, pro-choice.

Many appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues such as contraception, abortion and sex education with people who showed respect for different points of view.

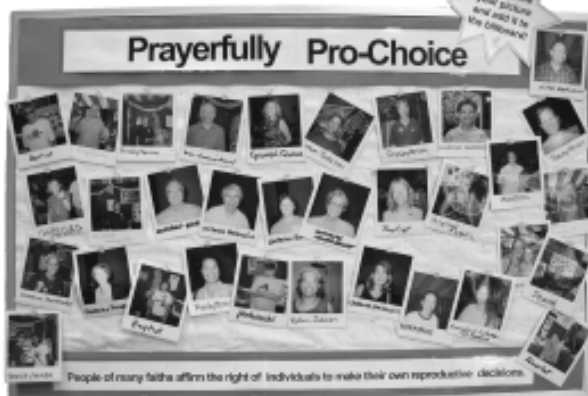
One lady asked, “are you pro-abortion?” We explained that IRCRC



Working at the County Fair booth

is neither pro-abortion nor anti-abortion—we simply believe that each person should be free to make their own decision in private, based on their own faith and conscience. She then realized that that was what she, too, believed.

We are very grateful to the over 40 volunteers who braved the dust, the summer heat, and the rain to spread our **pro-faith, pro-family, pro-choice** message to the community.



Visitors to the county fair booth were invited to have their photos added to the “Prayerfully Pro-Choice” billboard. The photos included people who are Baptist, Presbyterian, Jewish, United Methodist, Hindu, 7th Day Adventist, and others.

Take action! Four important things you can do

1 Write to Senators Bayh and Lugar and ask them to oppose the nomination of Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court. Read the RCRC’s official position at www.ircrc.org.

2 Sign a petition showing your support for the **Prevention First Act**, an important bill introduced in the U.S. Congress that would address the high rate of unintended pregnancy as well as the need for emergency contraception for rape victims. IRCRC is collecting names of Hoosiers who support the bill. The names will be given to the Indiana congressional delegation. To sign the petition and to read more about the Prevention First Act, go to www.ircrc.org. (You can also download a petition and collect names!)

3 **Join the IRCRC!** If you have not already done so, now is a great time to join with other Hoosiers of faith across the state and begin speaking up for reproductive health and choice. You may use the enclosed envelope to send in your membership form and a generous donation.

4 **Talk to your congregation, civic group, or committee** about becoming a supporting organization of the IRCRC. Let us know if you’d like to arrange a guest speaker, film showing, or other program for your group.

IRCRC is proud to present Indiana’s first-ever
All Options Clergy Counseling Training Session
Tuesday, February 21, 2006, 9am-3:30pm with optional clinic tour afterwards
At a location in Indianapolis

This program trains clergy in how to counsel women facing problem pregnancies from a supportive, non-coercive, and faith-based perspective. A certified trainer from the national RCRC will conduct the training. The session will be informative and engaging, fostering professional growth and personal enrichment. Participants will receive a manual and other helpful resources. Lunch will be provided. A modest fee will be requested to cover supplies and lunch.

For more information contact IRCRC at info@ircrc.org or 1-877-441-797 (toll-free)
Registration is limited.



Voices of Faith

Many religious groups and people of faith support reproductive rights. Read more at www.rcrc.org.

An Episcopal priest speaks out

“Now, more than ever, we need to recognize that there is no single Christian perspective on abortion, no single ideology that passes scriptural muster, no one correct way for people of faith to think about this issue.

“Abortion is to our society what wearing the veil is to Islamic fundamentalists: a way to balance a society’s moral ledger by forcing something on women...

“I don’t buy the notion that, politically, abortion is about the sanctity of human life. If that truly mattered to people, then we would hear similar outcries against capital punishment, alcohol and drugs, guns, war and other threats to life. I think the issue is women’s freedom.”

—Tom Ehrich, Episcopal priest, from a column published in the *Indianapolis Star*, 11/5/2005

A valuable resource for Catholics (and non-Catholics too!)



“*Conscience, the Newsjournal of Catholic Opinion*” offers news and insight on social, legal, political, and theological aspects of reproductive ethics from a

Catholic perspective. Published quarterly by Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), the journal is a rich source of news, reflection, and commentary. A subscription is only \$15/year. Get one for yourself—or consider a gift subscription for a Catholic friend!

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IRCRC goes to Washington



IRCRC President Kaye McSpadden attended the national RCRC conference in Washington DC in November. She met national RCRC leaders as well as colleagues from other state affiliates. Above, Kaye (at left) meets with leaders of our neighboring Kentucky affiliate.

At press time:

On Nov. 30 Planned Parenthood of Indiana presented the 2005 Margaret Sanger Award to Kaye McSpadden for “dedication to the promotion of religious and reproductive freedom.”