



Newsletter of the Indiana Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

SYRF action coming to the IU-Bloomington campus!

Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom (SYRF) has hired two new student programmers on Indiana University's Bloomington campus to engage in comprehensive sex education with students and build a community that believes that you can be spiritual as well as pro-choice. The two programmers, **Nina Loftspring** and **Jenn Queen**, have been active in their campus community and are excited to work with the pro-choice community of Indiana.

Nina Loftspring, a junior, is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio and is a triple major in History, Jewish Studies and Nonprofit Management. She hopes to be able to teach her peers about safe sex and how religious beliefs support pro-choice legislation. Jenn Queen is also a junior, double majoring in Jewish Studies and Sexual Health Education and Advocacy through the Individualized Major Program. She is excited for the opportunity to explore creative methods of broaching the subject of sexuality on a college campus, as well as planning and executing comprehensive sexuality education and sharing her knowledge with fellow IU students.

After Thanksgiving break, Nina and Jenn have planned **an informal educational program called "Cookies & Condoms"** where they will be distributing cookies and condoms as a way of encouraging safer sex practices. This semester

they will also be engaged in a **"Safe Sex Fact Campaign"** where they will plaster their university

campus with facts to show their campus the importance of sex education. They are in the process of planning an **interfaith panel** for next semester in which members of clergy



SYRF is a national program of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, for ages 16-30. For more information: www.syrf.org

from a variety of faith-based communities will discuss how their pro-choice views relate to their spiritual background, in addition to views on love and relationships.

For more information, feel free to contact Nina or Jenn:
Nina Loftspring nloftspr@indiana.edu
Jenn Queen queenj@indiana.edu

New brochure launches congregational outreach initiative

Congregations throughout the state may find new programming opportunities as a result of IRCRC's new brochure, "Exploring Faith and Reproductive Health."

The brochure offers a list of presentations, workshops, and film discussions which IRCRC leaders and clergy are willing to provide to congregations and groups.

Many topics are suggested, including faith-based counseling for women with crisis pregnancies, comprehensive sexuality education, and religious views on abortion.

No speaker fees are charged, and presentations can be adapted.

Through this new initiative, IRCRC hopes to raise awareness on issues relating to faith and reproductive health and help create a climate in which these issues can be discussed with mutual respect and understanding.

Also, programs may lead faith groups to become more active in reproductive health and justice activities. Possibilities include:

- congregations providing sexuality education for their youth
- committees and other groups becoming active in legislative advocacy, and
- congregations or committees signing on as Organizational Supporters of IRCRC.

Check out YOUR copy of the new brochure inside this newsletter—share it with your clergyperson and others in your congregation. Bring an IRCRC program to your faith community today.





News Briefs

Congress makes disgraceful decision to increase funding for abstinence-only education

Last month the U.S. Congress agreed to the Bush administration's request for \$141 million for abstinence-only education programs, an increase of \$28 million.

This increase was made despite the fact that multiple studies, including a recent one by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (see page 3), have shown that abstinence-only programs do not work. Programs that include both abstinence and information about contraception and condoms do.

Our government leaders have failed our nation's young people. IRCRC will continue to speak out against government funding of these ineffective and harmful programs. For more information go to www.nomoremoney.org.

Anti-contraception official appointed to family planning post

Health advocates across the nation were appalled at the Bush administration's appointment of Dr. Susan Orr as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs at the Office of Public Health and Science. Orr has a professional track record of opposing government support for family planning. Join with thousands of other people of faith and speak out against this outrageous appointment. Go to www.rrcr.org and click on "Action Alert."

Legal analysis considers the possible end of "Roe"

According to a recent study by the Center for Reproductive Rights, at least 21 states will likely outlaw abortion if the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v Wade*. (Indiana is rated at "medium" risk for an outright ban.) Many legal and political scholars believe the overturning of *Roe* is very possible, depending upon the outcome of future elections. This scenario would leave 400,000 women without access to legal and safe local abortion services. Sadly, they would not be given greater access to pregnancy prevention either—not one "pro-life" organization or "pro-life" presidential candidate supports family planning programs. **Read the full report at www.reproductiverights.org.** ♦



Surprise! To be genuinely pro-life, one *must* be pro-choice

by Kaye McSpadden, President

There can no longer be any doubt. A recent study provides compelling proof that the way to reduce abortion is *not* by outlawing it.

According to a recent report published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, abortion rates are no lower in countries in which the procedure is illegal than in countries where it is legal. In fact, **the rate of abortion is lowest in countries where it is legal and where contraceptive services and comprehensive sexuality education are widely available.**

There was one significant difference that was found between the countries, however. In countries where abortion is illegal, women suffer higher rates of injury and death due to unsafe abortion.

If those who claim to be "pro-life" *really* want to reduce the number of abortions, they must give up their effort to criminalize it.

If those who claim to be "pro-life" *really* care about the lives of women, they must give up their effort to remove access to safe, legal abortion.

Many people of faith consider themselves "pro-life" and "pro-choice." IRCRC is working for better access to family planning and better sexuality education — the only measures that have been shown to reduce abortions and ensure the health of women and families. Isn't that "pro-life?" ♦

The groundbreaking study was a collaboration of scientists from the Guttmacher Institute and the World Health Organization. Read the entire report online at: www.guttmacher.org/media/nr/2007/10/11/index.html

Help keep the faith for choice in Indiana!

Watch your mailbox for our annual end-of-year appeal coming soon

and please respond generously.



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.

Faith & Freedom is published by Indiana Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (IRCRC), PO Box 723, Lafayette IN 47902-0723 877-441-5797, Fax: 501-644-3168 info@ircrc.org, web: www.ircrc.org

How can we help youth to make responsible, healthy decisions? See what they're doing at schools in Maine and in an Indianapolis church

A few more girls in King Middle School of Portland, Maine, will have the chance to grow up and complete their education before becoming mothers.

Portland school officials voted 7 to 2 this fall to include access to birth control pills, patches, and implants among services provided by the school-based clinic in King Middle School. The health clinic provides access to dental and medical health care, including care for mental illness.

Of the three middle schools in Portland, King Middle School was chosen as the site of the health clinic because it has the highest percent of students receiving free lunch vouchers on the basis of financial hardship. King Middle School will become the first Maine middle school to offer a range of contraception to its male and female students. The schools already distribute condoms. The school board's decision was prompted when Portland's middle schools reported seven pregnancies in the last four years, not counting the number of miscarriages or abortions.

In this light, Portland middle schools have a relatively low rate of reported pregnancies and sexual activity. Five out of the 134 clinic patients reported being sexually active. Health officials and school officials of Portland looked beyond those commendable statistics to address the needs of the few adolescents who were sexually active and unprotected despite all previous interventions.

Some of Portland's parents and community members were outraged that children would have access to birth control. There were also e-mails expressing outrage from outside the Portland community. Four main themes dominated the complaints — the decision is equivalent to giving permission for children to have sex, it violates parents' rights, it is against God's will, and hormones are a health risk to children.

At First Congregational United Church of Christ of Indianapolis, we offer our middle school youth comprehensive sexuality education through a curriculum called *Our Whole Lives: Sexuality and Our*

Faith. Through Our Whole Lives (OWL), we teach our adolescents about all methods of contraception including education about correct usage, application, availability and the failure rates. **Although abstinence is recommended as the best preventative method for pregnancy and STDs, OWL facilitators emphasize contraception that prevents both pregnancy and STDs.**

Recently, in the OWL session on contraception, the facilitators displayed samples of condoms, spermicidal cream, foam and suppositories. Adolescents are fascinated by the samples, and they enjoy acting squeamish when they handle condoms. The follow up to the contraception session is a field trip to a Planned Parenthood family planning clinic for a tour and talk with Planned Parenthood staff. In a future session, the youth will participate in a fun and energetic session that teaches about condom usage through relay races, condom stretching and measuring and learning to place condoms on a penis model. The comfort level for handling condoms rises proportionately with knowledge and handling.

Education about contraception does not encourage usage but gives youth the skills they need if they do decide to have sexual intercourse. **Amazingly, teens that learn about contraception in a comprehensive sexuality educational program that encourages the development of values are more likely to delay their first sexual intercourse** and will use contraception according to the Emerging Answers Study of 2007 presented by the Sexuality Education Council for the United States (SEICUS).

It is easy to make a moral statement that middle schoolers are too young to participate in sexual experimentation and therefore should not have access to contraception. However, that is not this country's reality. Teens throughout our nation are sexually active, risking their future and their health. The CDC reports that in 2005, 34% of 9th graders across the nation have experienced sexual intercourse.

At First Congregational, UCC we



Carolyn Meagher (left) and Sue Ellen Braunlin are coordinators of *Our Whole Lives* at First Congregational, United Church of Christ in Indianapolis. They were presented with IRCRC's 2006 Dr. Stella Boyd Award for Service (above) for their extensive work with faith-based comprehensive sexuality education.

believe in a just sexual morality that helps youth to develop and articulate their religious and sexual values and to make responsible, healthy decisions based on those values. This includes teaching middle school youth about methods of contraception applications, failure rates and availability.

In providing birth control access to a few girls who need it, Portland has shaped its own future to be healthier, more productive, and more sustainable for all its citizens. ♦

—by Sue Ellen Braunlin and Carolyn Meagher

Did you know...?

- You can read the entire “Emerging Answers 2007” report at the website of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy at www.thenationalcampaign.org/EA2007
- An Associated Press poll taken in late October showed that 67% of Americans support public schools providing birth control to students.
- You can join with others who are working for better sexuality education in Indiana! Go to www.getrealindiana.org

Fall 2007 Issue

Inside: New brochure for you, campus news, faith-based comprehensive sex ed at an Indy church, and more!

Change Service Requested

Opportunities for action and learning

ANNOUNCING—

2008 Faith & Freedom Dinner
Sat. evening, May 3, 2008
 Radisson North
 251 E Pennsylvania Parkway
 Indianapolis
 (near I-465 & Meridian)

Keynote speaker:
Rev. Carlton Veazey
 President, Religious Coalition
 for Reproductive Choice

Music by Sapphonia, ensemble
 of the Indianapolis Women's
 Chorus

More information in the coming
 months. In the meantime, be sure to

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



Annual Tippecanoe County Fair booth a big success

About 30 volunteers from IRCRC, League of Women Voters, and Planned Parenthood worked together at the annual pro-choice booth at the Tippecanoe County Fair in July. They provided information on comprehensive sex ed, invited people to support prevention legislation, talked about different religious beliefs on choice, and informed people about the new voting centers. Many volunteers attended a training session (above). Thank you! ◆

Check it out...

- **“RH (Reproductive Health) Reality Check,”** a terrific, lively new website with the latest news and commentary on a variety of reproductive health issues. Sign up for the free weekly and/or daily e-newsletters. Go to www.rhrealitycheck.org
- **“Fresh Focus”**—a video contest for 15-30-year olds. Produce a video about sex ed! Grand prize: \$3500. Deadline is Dec. 31. Go to www.rhrealitycheck.org/freshfocus
- **Add your voice to RCRC’s “Call to Justice.”** Sign up for e-alerts and opportunities to take faith-based action. Go to www.rcrc.org and click on “Call to Justice.”
- **Are you receiving IRCRC’s “Faith & Freedom” e-newsletter?** Just send your name and e-mail address to info@ircrc.org.
- **College students!** Like Nina and Jenn (see front page), you can start some SYRF action at your campus, too. Attend the **SYRF Regional Training Institute in Chicago on Mar 3-4, 2008.** Go to www.syrf.org. ◆