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After a decade, Planned Parenthood puts campaign behind

Austin Business Journal - by [Sandra Zaragoza](#) ABJ Staff



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Robbie and Tom Ausley, board members of Planned Parenthood, plan to use funds the organization recently raised to add a second phase onto its current facilities.

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When Robbie Ausley began raising money to build a new Planned Parenthood clinic, she didn't imagine the job would take almost a decade to complete.

"It took perseverance. It was a labor of love for me," says Ausley. She and her husband, Tom, became co-chairs of The Choice Project capital campaign when it launched in 1998.

The \$6.6 million two-phase capital campaign funded the creation of a flagship clinic and administrative office in South Austin for Planned Parenthood of the Texas Capital Region. The first part of the campaign funded a medical clinic that opened in 2004.

In a few weeks, the nearly 70-year-old Planned Parenthood is unveiling the second phase of the center -- a freestanding administrative office with a library and meeting room that's connected to the clinic by a secured walkway.

Raising money for the South Austin buildings not only involved knocking on doors, but also dealing with opposition from religious leaders and antiabortion groups. It required a breaking down of preconceived notions about Planned Parenthood, Ausley says, which is why the campaign took almost twice as long than originally expected.

"Some people equate Planned Parenthood with negativity and abortion," Ausley says.

"But our first goal is prevention and reproductive health. It took a while to educate people about who we really are."

That education process was a big reason it took a bit longer for the campaign to reach its goal, Ausley said.

The new clinic, which allowed Planned Parenthood to offer abortion services for the first time, did elicit protests from abortion opponents during its construction -- even from members of the construction crew. Ironically, that media attention accelerated fundraising and helped rally support for the campaign, Ausley says.

Planned Parenthood has addressed the security of both patients and staff through the building's design, security cameras and a gate.

The South Austin clinic also offers a laboratory and surgical rooms that are more efficient for the clinic and more convenient for patients, according to the nonprofit. Among the services the clinic provides are anemia screening, pap smears, HIV/STD testing and woman wellness exams.

While Planned Parenthood's campaign did face obstacles, it also had some influential support, including help from the late former Gov. Ann Richards. Her daughter, Cecile Richards, who is president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America in New York, will give a keynote address at an Oct. 21 fundraising dinner for the nonprofit.

The nonprofit was also successful at attracting a number of individual donations, ranging between \$5,000 and \$100,000 in size. The largest individual gift the campaign received was \$350,000.

Planned Parenthood's campaign is far from the largest capital campaign completed this year. The well-known Long Center for the Performing Arts extended its capital campaign after exceeding its \$77 million goal this spring.

Although it was a struggle at times, Planned Parenthood views its capital campaign as a major success.

Sarah Wheat, director of public affairs for Planned Parenthood, credits the capital campaign with creating an invested base of donors that is continuing to show support.

People are recognizing Planned Parenthood's role in women's health care in Central Texas, Ausley says.

"Women, men and families will always need access to reproductive health care," Ausley says. "That will never go away."

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