



County Planned Parenthood joins Northeast Ohio group

By ERIN PUSTAY

Erin.Pustay@IndeOnline.com

Planned Parenthood of Stark County recently announced it will be part of something bigger.

The local chapter of the national federation recently joined four other area chapters to form the Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio (PPNEO). Karen Hackenberry, vice president of public policy, said that, in addition to the Stark County chapter, the newly-consolidated Planned Parenthood group is comprised of health and service centers in Greater Cleveland, Mahoning Valley, North Central Ohio and Summit, Portage and Medina counties.

“About three years ago, all of us in Ohio lost state family planning money and funding,” Hackenberry said. “By reducing some redundancies, it allows us to, over time, put more money in direct service and spend less on administration.”

Administrative funds will be saved, Hackenberry said, by sharing resources and allowing medical experts to move among several locations, offering services and information to larger geographic areas. Internal personnel positions, such as those in information technology and human resources, are also likely to be shared.

Hackenberry also emphasized that the sharing of resources will not result in the closing of any service locations.

“This is not about closing health centers,” Hackenberry said. “We can do more as an \$11-million corporation than we could as \$1-or-2-million corporations, and that is a pretty phenomenal growth of capacity.”

Barbara Singhaus, former board president for Planned Parenthood of Stark County and current chairwoman of the PPNEO board of directors, said that the sharing of resources will come primarily on an administrative level and that services at Stark County’s health and information center will not be compromised.

Continuing to provide quality health care information and resources to the Stark County community will hinge primarily on a solid volunteer base that has already been established in the area. Singhaus said that a community leadership council will be established to help reorganize

and focus the volunteers the health center already has.

Quarterly meetings will be held and newsletters will keep the volunteers up-to-date on activities, programming and efforts made by the Stark County center. That communication, Singhaus said, is most important to Stark County's direct services.

"We sincerely believe," Singhaus said, "that maintaining a strong connection to local volunteers will ensure the success of the consolidation."

In the weeks ahead, the PPNEO's newly-organized board of directors, which includes representatives from all five formerly-independent organizations, will begin assessing the needs of the organization and developing a vision for the future.

Singhaus is one of four local representatives on the PPNEO board. Karen Flynn, Ph.D., Judy M. Hoover, R.N., and Rabbi John H. Spitzer are also on the board.

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