



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Planned Parenthood consolidates five Northeast Ohio organizations

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Planned Parenthood consolidated its Northeast Ohio organizations this month in an effort to strengthen its influence in the region.

Board members from the five independent affiliates decided to create Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio to increase efficiency and reach more people, said Tara Broderick, chief executive officer of the organization.

"We knew we could achieve more together than we could separately," she said. "This is a great example of regional cooperation."

The merger is the largest Planned Parenthood consolidation in the country. It includes 17 health centers spanning 21 counties, with another center to open this fall in Lorain.

The decision - made over the course of 18 months - combined the Planned Parenthoods of Greater Cleveland; Mahoning Valley; North Central Ohio; Stark County; and Summit, Portage and Medina counties.

A goal of the consolidation is to eliminate duplication of efforts and reduce administrative costs, Broderick said. Instead of five separate boards, there will be one 24-member board.

Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America and daughter of the late Texas Gov. Ann Richards, came to Northeast Ohio to announce the consolidation, which became official July 1.

She said the merger is important because Ohio still has a lot of work to do.

Planned Parenthood in Ohio suffered when the state cut \$1.7 million in 2004, Richards said.

According to a 2006 study by the Guttmacher Institute - a nonprofit research group - Ohio is ranked 48th in state efforts to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Richards gave a speech at the City Club of Cleveland on Friday in which she praised the efforts of Gov. Ted Strickland and Sen. Sherrod Brown, both Democrats.

She also said it was important to elect a pro-choice president in 2008.

"It's just great news," Richards said. "I think it means Planned Parenthood is going to be stronger."

"It's a new day in Ohio."

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