

The Newsletter of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England  
Serving Maine, New Hampshire & Vermont

REAL  
LIFE.

REAL  
TALK.<sup>®</sup>

Real Life. Real Talk.<sup>®</sup> (RLRT) is a bold, nationwide initiative designed to improve teen health by increasing open, honest, and balanced talk about sex, love, and relationships.

PPNNE is one of three test sites piloting this innovative approach that encourages adults to speak more comfortably and openly about these issues. With funding from the Ford Foundation, the initiative was shaped by research (conducted in Portland, ME; Tucson, AZ; Rockland County, NY; and Rochester, MN) that identified the fears parents have about media messages, their desire to talk to their teens, and their worries about discussing relationships and sexuality with their kids.

At the heart of RLRT is a social messaging campaign with the encouraging words "It's okay. You can say it." as well as a strong coalition of community partners invested in its success. Together, this diverse group (made up of St. Luke's Cathedral, Boys to Men, and Maine Medical Center — to name just a few) is working to create programs that increase communication, shed light on today's complex teen world, and give support to parents as they strive to raise sexually healthy adolescents in this sex-saturated culture.

Learn more at [www.RealLifeRealTalk.org](http://www.RealLifeRealTalk.org).

## THEATRICAL PRODUCTION ENCOURAGES REAL TALK BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEENS

By Catriona McHardy, *vice president of education and training*

Since mid-February, residents of Portland, ME, have had lots of opportunities to reflect on parent/teen communication about relationships and sex. Ads focused on the topic started appearing in newspapers and on buses, TV, and radio. Then, on March 1, PPNNE officially launched the Real Life. Real Talk.<sup>®</sup> (RLRT) program, with the theatrical premiere of *When Turtles Make Love*, which sold out six days after tickets became available.

The evening began with a gala reception at Portland's Museum of Art, where donors, city and state dignitaries, foundation representatives, parents, teens, PPNNE teen council members, influential community leaders, and RLRT coalition partners mingled among artwork and displays of pictograms and TV ads for RLRT. The crowd was excited and energized by the thought of launching an initiative as inclusive, as far-reaching, and as hopeful as Real Life. Real Talk.

Following the reception, people moved into the auditorium to experience the opening night of the RLRT-commissioned play. Written and directed by Cathy Plourde and Chiara Liberatore of Add Verb Productions, the play spoke to the real and emotional aspects of talking to teens about sex, love, and relationships. The audience howled at a turtle trying to help parents communicate, and were silenced by the honest and authentic thoughts the actors brought to light about the desires and the barriers parents and teens face as they try to understand each other. At strategic moments, choreographer Louis Gervais added a distinctive flare to the stage with his dancers showing the mix of emotions, pressure, desire, confusion, and independence adolescents face every day. When the play ended, a sense of openness and optimism prevailed in the hall.



BONVINI PHOTOGRAPHY

But the evening didn't end there — guests attended a "World Café" dialogue. With tables set for four, refreshments, and three expert facilitators, the discussions began. Parents, teens, community members, program directors, educators, policy makers, CEOs, donors, and funders sat together and talked about the issues that surround open and honest communication. Table members moved, new conversations began, and everyone "dug deeper."

The conversation has only just begun in Portland. RLRT and all the coalition partners will take it from here — offering *Sex Ed for Parents* programs, support, resources, and innovative approaches like *When Turtles Make Love*.

The RLRT project will continue throughout the next couple of years with new markets coming on board, and established programs continuing to work in their communities. Knowing that social change takes perseverance, we are dedicated to keeping the coalition energized and the community talking. We are off to a good start. Stay tuned; this initiative might be exactly what we are all looking for!

GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PPNNE'S SERVICES AND LOCATIONS AT  
**WWW.PPNNE.ORG** OR **CALL 1-800-230-PLAN**  
TO REACH THE HEALTH CENTER NEAREST YOU.

## Short Takes

### Peachy Keene

On March 25, close to 300 people in the Keene, NH, area joined internationally acclaimed author John Irving at a special event to benefit PPNNE. The best-selling novelist and Academy Award-winning screenwriter — and longtime Planned Parenthood supporter — read from a work in progress to raise funds for our health and education services in Keene.

The reading was part of a series of events in celebration of Women's History Month, including an EC giveaway at our Keene health center, a peace parade and open house, and a free workshop for parents.

### EC Update

Since early December, PPNNE health centers have been offering over-the-counter emergency contraception (EC) to women and men 18 and older. In addition, thanks to collaborative practice legislation in our three states (which allows women of all ages to get EC directly from a participating pharmacist), women under 18 can still get EC either with or without an office visit — and PPNNE is working to spread the word. Our new website — [www.PPforEC.org](http://www.PPforEC.org) — was created to help people understand what EC is and where they can get it. Check it out!



BONVINI PHOTOGRAPHY

PPFA President Cecile Richards (right) joined Nancy Mosher for the official launch of Real Life. Real Talk.® in Portland, ME.

## Choice Remarks

In our fast-moving culture, it seems like the divide between adults and teens has never been greater. Teens live in a world of constant media stimulation, communicating in ways that are often unfathomable to the rest of us. They negotiate their relationships in a world with a high prevalence of binge drinking and access to drugs; a host of STIs, including the life-threatening specter of HIV/AIDS; and the possibility of having a “rape drug” slipped into their drinks at a party.

As part of our landmark Real Life. Real Talk.® (RLRT) project featured on the cover, PPNNE conducted extensive research with adults and teens in Portland, ME, to learn more about social norms related to talking about sex. What we found was not surprising. Parents are increasingly anxious about how irresponsible media messages about sex are affecting their kids — but they are also uncomfortable talking about sexuality and relationships with them. The misconception that talking openly with kids about sexuality will be seen as giving permission to have sex is still alive and well, not just in Portland but throughout our culture.

Teenagers report that they aren't getting what they need from the schools, and what they really wish for is an adult in their lives they could talk openly with about their questions and the dilemmas they face in their relationships.

The data confirms PPNNE's decision five years ago to make breaking down the silence between adults and teens one of our primary organizational goals. Too often we think there is only one big conversation to have with

### Too often we think there is only one big conversation to have with our kids when it comes to sex.

our kids when it comes to sex. But kids build trust and confidence when the conversation begins early and continues throughout adolescence. Parents need to talk about their values and they need to acknowledge that sexuality is a normal and healthy part of life — for each and every one of us.

I couldn't be more pleased about launching RLRT with the world

premiere of *When Turtles Make Love*. Funny, heartrending, and real, it was undeniably a smash hit! After the performance, the audience participated in dialogues that sparked rich conversations about teen reality and how adults can support their kids with a more direct and honest approach. While the play was truly extraordinary, I was most struck by a sense of group yearning on the part of parents — to DO better, to connect more authentically with their kids, to communicate their love and support, and to share strategies to break down the silences in their families.

I'm convinced that the silence between adults and kids about sex is a root cause of many of the health problems American adolescents face today and I'm looking forward to seeing how the Portland community responds to the challenge to take on this topic in a more open and honest way. We'll be doing follow-up research to measure RLRT's success, so I'll keep you posted!

*Nancy*

Nancy Mosher  
President/CEO



## Dive in to PPNNE's Summer Sexuality Institute!

Spend June 22–28 on the shores of Lake Champlain (Grand Isle, VT) exploring current issues in the field of sexuality, learning from the collective wisdom of other youth-serving professionals, and developing strategies to counter the professional, personal, and environmental barriers that limit our ability to promote a sexually healthy culture.

Learn more at [www.ppnne.org/trainings](http://www.ppnne.org/trainings).

# NEW VACCINE OFFERS PROTECTION FROM CERVICAL CANCER

ANTONIO NUNES



According to the National Cancer Institute, about 10,000 women in the U.S. were diagnosed with cervical cancer last year — 10 died from it every day and thousands more underwent expensive and invasive testing and treatment. With recent approval of a new vaccine, this could be a thing of the past.

Last year, the Food and Drug Administration granted approval for Gardasil®, the first vaccine effective

against the strains of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) known to cause most cervical cancer.

PPNNE Medical Director Dr. Cheryl Gibson encourages mothers to bring in their daughters for this three-dose immunization. “For the first time, we have the opportunity to control a virus known to be responsible for a significant disease. This is an exciting development for women’s health.”

“The fact that cervical cancer is essentially a sexually transmitted infection is still largely unknown,” adds Dr. Gibson, “and this vaccine opens the door to important conversations about sexuality and reproductive health. Helping facilitate these conversations as well as offering the vaccine is part and parcel of PPNNE’s prevention work.”

In studies of females ages 9–26, Gardasil® was shown to be nearly 100 percent safe and effective against the four strains of HPV known to cause the majority of cervical cancer. While it is most effective in young girls who haven’t yet acquired any of the targeted HPV types, it may also benefit sexually active young women who have already been exposed to HPV and perhaps have even already

acquired the virus. (More study is needed to measure this as well as the vaccine’s effectiveness in older women.)

Gardasil® is a vaccine, not a treatment, and it will not entirely eliminate the need for Pap tests. However, Dr. Gibson explains, “a vaccine against cancer is a medical milestone and making it available to young women will decrease the need for invasive tests and treatments for thousands of women and give future generations the promise of health, safety, and peace of mind.”

Gardasil® requires three injections and at approximately \$130 per dose plus office visit costs, the vaccine is an investment — not an inexpensive one, but a bargain when compared to the cost of cancer treatment or the testing a woman must undergo to rule out cervical cancer after an abnormal Pap test. Many insurance plans cover immunizations, but, because the vaccine is new, some plans might still be considering that decision. Check with your insurance provider before scheduling a visit.

To learn more about the HPV vaccine, visit [www.ppnne.org](http://www.ppnne.org) or call 1-800-230-PLAN.

*As seen in Good Housekeeping*

## State of the States

PPNNE staffers are putting in long hours to protect and advance access to reproductive health care in northern New England. In **Maine**, we’re supporting a bill that will help provide funding and education for the HPV vaccine. Our staff is also working in coalition to gain equitable access to abortions for all Maine women by reinstating public funds for abortion services for women eligible for MaineCare (the state’s Medicaid program).

In **New Hampshire**, PPNNE and other advocates for women’s health and safety are still celebrating the House vote to repeal the unconstitutional parental notification

law that has been in litigation since its passage in 2003. The House has also defeated bills that require licensing of abortion clinics and mandate that specific (and sometimes inaccurate) information be given to women seeking abortions. (At press time, the Senate has yet to vote on these issues.) We’re also working to defeat a bill that would require pharmacists to provide mandatory counseling for over-the-counter emergency contraception. On a more positive note, we’re hopeful that proposed legislation to seek a Medicaid Family Planning Waiver will eventually expand access to family planning services.

Our **Vermont** staff is continuing to work toward the implementation of the state’s pharmacy access law, which will make EC more accessible to women. We are also supporting legislation which will extend civil marriage to same-sex couples, as well as a bill that will incorporate gender identity or expression into the state’s category of protected classes. Unfortunately, we’re once again opposing a measure that would require parental notification for abortion.

Join our Action Network and stay up-to-date with political and legislative issues at [www.ppnne.org](http://www.ppnne.org).

## Short Takes

### What’s Your Story?

*“I have always found that the staff at Planned Parenthood takes time to offer the most personalized, compassionate, and high-quality care possible. Four years and a handful of doctors later, I still have never found an office that feels as comfortable and welcoming.”*

—PPNNE Patient

Do you have a story to tell about your experiences with Planned Parenthood and/or the choices you’ve made? Let us know! We’ve recently begun featuring personal testimonies in each issue of our monthly e-newsletter, E-CLIPS. Log on to [www.ppnne.org](http://www.ppnne.org) to share your story.

### “Expo-ditious” Help for Parents

Due to the overwhelming success of our Chittenden County Parent Expo in South Burlington, VT, we’ve partnered with agencies in Manchester, NH, to offer the 1st Annual Manchester Parent Expo! This family-friendly event will be held at the Mall of New Hampshire on May 19. Go to [www.ppnne.org/parents](http://www.ppnne.org/parents) for more information!

### Take Another Look

PPNNE has launched an effort to spruce up our publications and other materials to make them more inviting, consistent, and reader-friendly. This issue of *News Source* is part of our new look. Hope you like it!

# NEWS SOURCE

[If you receive more than one copy,  
please give this to a friend and notify us.]

## ABOUT US...

We welcome your ideas, contributions,  
and questions. Please write to us at:

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**Visit us on the Web:**

**[www.ppnne.org](http://www.ppnne.org)**

**Personal Care. Personal Choices.**

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## YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

PPNNE is the leader in providing  
and protecting high-quality, affordable  
reproductive health care and common sense  
sexuality education programs.

Last year, more than 60,000 women, men,  
and teens in Maine, New Hampshire, and  
Vermont received cancer screenings, family  
planning advice, and other health care services  
at PPNNE's 26 health centers. Our educators  
reached nearly 20,000 parents, teens, and  
professionals with over 1,200 educational  
programs offered online and across our region.

### We cannot do this work without your help!

Please use the enclosed envelope — or make  
a secure online donation at [www.ppnne.org](http://www.ppnne.org)  
— to support the health care and education  
programs that make it possible for people in  
your community to make healthy and informed  
decisions about their futures.

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