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CHOICE

PPSFL Sends 23 to Lobby in Albany

by Casey Martinson

New York State's legislature officially convened in Albany on January 10 this year, and Planned Parenthood was there to show lawmakers that reproductive health and rights demand their attention. 23 PPSFL staff and volunteers joined a crowd of over 340 supporters from Family Planning Advocates (FPA) and sister affiliates throughout New York for the day of action.



Family Planning Advocates members and supporters rally in the Well at the Legislative Office Building

“In light of the state’s fiscal crisis, it was especially important to show legislators—many of whom are new—the strength of our movement and the value of adequately funding family planning health care services in New York’s 2011-2012 budget,” said Tracey Brooks, President and CEO of FPA. “Overwhelmingly, New Yorkers support family planning services, which is evidenced by the state’s long and proud legacy of access to reproductive health care services for all.”

Our Southern Finger Lakes delegation was the largest contingent we have sent in several years, and it was an inspiring event for all. “Day of Action was an empowering experience!” said Kelly Woodard-Longwell, our RCST Community Affairs Coordinator. “I was very proud to be part of the entourage of family planning and rape crisis advocates that crammed into our state Senator’s office to communicate the importance of our work!”

If you would like to participate in a lobby visit with your legislator, e-mail action@ppsfl.org.

LETTER FROM JOE SAMMONS, CEO

Dear Friend –

As we begin the new year, 2011 threatens to bring severe budget cuts and renewed attacks on the critical programs and human rights that Planned Parenthood values so deeply. So we took up the call in early January, organizing an incredible contingent of more than 20 activists to take the long bus ride to Albany to make our voices heard.

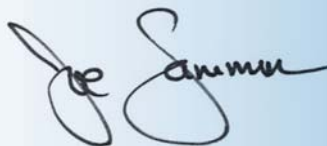
It was a special for moment for our agency, and for me personally; I started my own career as a young activist in the environmental movement in the days of Ronald Reagan and the Exxon Valdez. They seemed like grim times, the 1980's, when "greed was good" and progressive values were mocked and attacked at every turn. But I found great strength in organizing, educating, and advocating for what was right, and standing with those of all ages who shared those principles literally brightened my heart. It still does today.

I am grateful not only to those who joined us on our lobby day to Albany, and of course to Casey Martinson, our outstanding Public Affairs Director who organized the trip, but I am grateful to each one of you, whose voices, actions, and support literally make it possible to provide the exceptional care, the honest education, and the fearless advocacy that make Planned Parenthood such a special agency.

This will be a difficult year, to be sure. New York State is wrestling with a \$10 billion deficit, and devastating cuts loom. Our opponents are planning more clinic protests, and on the federal and state level they are planning more attacks on human rights and reproductive freedom. But all of us at Planned Parenthood are committed to advancing our mission, even in the most challenging of times. This means providing exceptional, compassionate services to everyone who needs them. This means honest education and critical community programming. It means that we fight darkness by adding light.

This newsletter features important information and stories about our work to forge connections and offer support throughout our region. You'll learn about emerging trends and research in aging and sexuality, our LGBT youth group, our Rape Crisis program's work for victims of elder abuse, and our growing clergy network here in the Southern Finger Lakes. I hope these stories will shed light on issues we grapple with and the important work we do everyday, and I hope you know that your incredible support and spirit makes that work possible. Thank you.

All my best,



Joe Sammons
President / CEO



PPSFL WELCOMES AMANDA GILBERT

Planned Parenthood is thrilled to welcome Amanda Gilbert to the Development team! Amanda, whose official title is Assistant Director of Development, joins us from the Food Bank of the Southern Tier where she worked as Grants Manager. Amanda lives in Elmira Heights with her husband, two cats, and tortoise. She enjoys winter sports, wine tasting, the NY Jets, and is in constant search of her new favorite cupcake recipe. In her role as Assistant Director, Amanda will be responsible for PPSFL's Annual Campaign. Welcome, Amanda!



PPSFL HOSTS NEW LGBT YOUTH GROUP

As the proud recipient of a New York State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Health and Human Services grant, PPSFL launched a new youth group this fall. Since September, Sexuality Educator Jennifer Mainville has been working with Bridges for Youth in Ithaca to host an LGBT youth group to help increase youths' quality of life, access to health information, support, services, and community connections. Young people from Watkins Glen, Ithaca, Lansing, and Dryden High Schools as well as New Roots and Lehman Alternative Community School gather together every other week at our Education & Outreach Office on Seneca Street in Ithaca.

So far, our group has engaged in discussions about bullying, Don't Ask Don't Tell, LGBT people in the media, safer sex, and what it means to be an ally. They've also watched the "It Gets Better" Project video from Ithaca College, played games, and were selected to participate in the Above the Influence campaign to photo-document things they strive to be "above the influence" of in their daily lives.



Supporting Survivors OF ELDER SEXUAL ASSAULT

by Kelly Woodard-Longwell

Many people believe that sexual abuse happens almost exclusively to children, teens, and younger adults. Yet, one in every 20 elder Americans is a victim of abuse, and older victims present many unique concerns that friends, family, and caregivers should be aware of. (*NYSCASA Fact Sheets, 2007*)

All forms of sexual assault are about power and control, and unfortunately, elderly people are subject to a wide variety of stereotypes associated with helplessness, diminishing power, and incompetence. General misconceptions about sexuality and aging, combined with incorrect assumptions about elders being unlikely to be assaulted contribute to the complexity of this issue. (*National Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 1993*)

Elder abuse remains hidden for several reasons including a lack of resources to encourage and support talking about elder abuse within the family and the unfortunate reality that elder sexual abuse is not often addressed or discussed by medical professionals or advocates. (*NYSCASA Fact Sheets, 2007*)

A person—of any age—who has been sexually assaulted may feel shock, embarrassment, confusion, denial, disbelief, sadness, fear, and/or anger. They may disclose the abuse immediately, or come forward much later, to service providers, family members, or other trusted resources.

In our Rape Crisis program, we train professionals and volunteers as well as educate the community about offering caring support to someone who may disclose current or past sexual abuse. We believe it is important to validate an individual's experience and recognize their courage to speak about the abuse. If someone discloses current or past abuse to you, do not dismiss them, and remember that past abuse, no matter how long ago it may have occurred, can impact their current emotional and mental well-being.

GET SUPPORT

» If you or someone you know is the survivor of sexual assault in the Southern Tier area, contact Rape Crisis of the Southern Tier for free and confidential services at 1-888-810-0093 or visit www.rcst.org. For crisis services in Tompkins County, please contact the Advocacy Center at 607-277-5000 or visit www.theadvocacycenter.org for more information.

RCST AWARENESS-RAISING PERFORMANCE COMING SOON

On April 8th and 9th, Rape Crisis of the Southern Tier (RCST) will perform *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer: Writings To Stop Violence Against Women and Girls*, a collection of funny, angry, heartfelt, tragic, and beautiful monologues that create a profound portrait of how violence against women affects every one of us.

Shows begin at 8:00 p.m. at 171 Cedar Arts Center in Corning, and admission is \$15 for advance ticket sales, \$20 at the door. For more information, please contact RCST Community Affairs Coordinator Kelly Woodard-Longwell by calling 1-888-810-0093 or e-mailing kelly.woodardlongwell@ppsfl.org.

Sexuality and Aging

by Maureen Kelly

When you think about a Planned Parenthood educator getting up in front of a group to talk about communication and sexual health, you most likely imagine a group of eager, young people waiting for honest and useful information. Youth are indeed an important and frequent audience for Planned Parenthood's sexual health programming. However, sexuality education and information for adults in mid-life and beyond are becoming more frequent requests.

Don't be fooled or alarmed — sexuality, both as a broad concept and the act of sex, is alive and well for seniors. Sexuality is experienced throughout the lifespan; it just may look and feel differently as the body ages. However, talking about sex and sexuality is still challenging for many people in the United States, including seniors and their care providers.

In 2007, *A Study of Sexuality and Health Among Older Adults in the United States* was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and overturned some of the stereotypical ideas about sex and older adults. Of note, the survey that provided the data on which these findings are based had a remarkable 75 percent response rate. Aging adults want to talk about sexuality!

Yet, seniors are still not talking to their health care providers about their sex lives. Only 22% of women

and 38% of men had discussed sex with a doctor since age 50. We know that the higher percentage of men discussing sex with a doctor can be directly traced to discussions about Viagra and other drugs.

The Center on Aging at the University of Chicago revealed similar findings about sex and aging in a recent study:

- * Three out of four men ages 75 to 85 consider sex an important part of life. About half the women in that age range also consider sex important to life. Younger seniors value sex even more strongly.
- * On average, about three out of four men and women ages 57 to 87 said satisfactory sex is essential to maintaining a good relationship.
- * When seniors have sex, it is most often pursued with interest rather than out of a sense of duty to

Key Findings from the 2007 Study:

- * Sex and interest in it do fall off when people are in their 70s, but more than 1/4 of those up to age 85 reported having sex in the previous year.
- * When we do see a drop-off, it has a lot to do with health or lack of a partner, especially for women.
- * Sex with a partner in the previous year was reported by 73% of people ages 57 to 64; 53% of those ages 64 to 75, and 26% of people 75 to 85.
- * Women at all ages were less likely to be sexually active than men. But they also lacked partners; far more were widowed.
- * People whose health was excellent or very good were nearly twice as likely to be sexually active as those in poor or fair health.
- * Half of the people having sex reported at least one related problem. Most common in men was erection trouble (37%); in women, low desire (43%), vaginal dryness (39%) and inability to have an orgasm (34%).
- * One out of seven men used Viagra or other medications to address erectile functioning.



“Throughout our lives, the need for touch sends us searching for satiation. Although the skin shows the most visible signs of aging...our need for touch does not diminish. If anything, it tends to increase.”

-Older, Wiser, Sexually Smarter

their partner. Only 25 percent of women and 20 percent of men ages 75 to 85 with partners said they had engaged in sex over the previous year because they felt obligated.

Some other important facts about sexuality and aging should also be noted:

- * As people age, the amount of sexual activity generally decreases. However, the amount of sexual interest and ability remains fairly constant.
- * If sexual activity (with self or others) is constant throughout life, the biological changes associated with sexuality and aging are often less pronounced and sexual activity is usually less affected. The quip “use it or lose it” does have some truth to it.
- * Sexual activity is normal and natural in old age, and furthermore, sexual health can be beneficial to the overall health of an elderly individual.
- * There is more to sexual behavior than vaginal intercourse. There are many other forms of intimate expression ranging from holding hands, to kissing, to masturbation, to oral sex. Understanding that these options are available and acceptable can enrich sexual expression greatly.
- * As gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people face the same aging issues as their heterosexual peers, they may also face discrimination and bias from caregivers and health care providers that can impact their relationships, their pursuit of sexual health, and their sexual activity.

Enjoying an active, healthy sex life is not a pleasure reserved for the young, and many seniors value their sexuality. However, emotional, social, and physical issues revolving around sex and aging can sometimes hamper a senior’s ability and desire to remain sexually active. Among the challenges the elderly face are natural changes in the body that occur as we age, the loss of a beloved, long-term sexual partner, and a host of emotional difficulties that can hamper sex. But sex and aging don’t have to be mutually exclusive if the issues are understood and then addressed.

Talking about our questions and concerns about sexuality is important, empowering, and the key to a healthy sexual life—at every age. Whether talking with a health care provider, therapist, friend, or partner, having a conversation about sexuality is still, after all these years, a revolutionary act.

As Baby Boomers gear up for the second major sexual revolution of their generation, we’re learning a lot, seeing more research specifically about sexuality and aging, and finding new resources and organizations specifically addressing this important topic.

GET INFORMED

- » Contact the PPSFL Education & Outreach Office if you would like a copy of *Older, Wiser, Sexually Smarter: 30 Sex Ed Lessons for Adults Only* by our colleagues from the Center for Family Life Education at Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern New Jersey. Call Maureen at 216-0021 ext. 134 or e-mail education@ppsfl.org.

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Elmira 734-3313

Hornell 324-1124

Ithaca 273-1513

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Sexuality Education & Outreach

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Chemung County 962-4686

Rape Crisis of the Southern Tier

888-810-0093

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Sept. 18, 2010 - Dec. 31, 2010

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VOLUNTEER GROUPS ARE GROWING

by Casey Martinson & Jenn Foy

Last year, Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes expanded volunteer opportunities through two exciting avenues.

In June, we launched *Mixed Company*, a volunteer program that focuses on periodic short projects while connecting staff, students, and community members. The group has convened to assemble safer sex kits, paint the porch of our Ithaca health center, and staff our information table at Cass Park in Ithaca during the final roller derby bout of the 2010 season.

At the start of the 2010/11 school year, we revitalized our work with student activists through *Vox: Voices for Planned Parenthood*, a student-run group that works to promote Planned Parenthood's campaigns on college campuses. Student supporters in our area have helped advance our mission through three separate chapters of PPFA's *Vox* program. In addition to the Cornell University *Vox* chapter that began last year, the Elmira College chapter was brought back to life after a year of dormancy, and Ithaca College officially recognized its first chapter in December. These committed student advocates are helping to get the word out on issues of reproductive rights, sex education, and sexual health.

If you are a college student interested in working with *Vox* on your campus, e-mail action@ppsfl.org. If you would like to join *Mixed Company*, e-mail jenn.foy@ppsfl.org. Help us make 2011 the best year of volunteer engagement ever!



Elmira College Vox members
Briana Serafino & Nicole Morse



Shelby Cook
painting with *Mixed Company*



KNIT TOGETHER PROGRAM SENDS WARMTH TO HOMELESS LGBT YOUTH

For four weeks in October and November several LGBT and allied knitters and crocheters gathered together at our Ithaca Education & Outreach Office for evenings of creating fiber arts and discussion about our hopes and concerns for LGBT youth. We reached out to a small 10-bed homeless shelter for LGBT youth in New York City and have sent some warmth from Upstate down to youth in need.

WHY I SUPPORT PLANNED PARENTHOOD

continued from page 8



Rev. Jane Winters
Elmira, NY

I support Planned Parenthood because it is important for everyone to receive accurate information, young people as well as adults; male as well as female. People seeking Planned Parenthood's counsel get that information and can use it to make informed choices about their health care according to their own values and beliefs. The right of each individual to make those choices for himself or herself is important to me.

It is also important to me that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning individuals have a safe place to go for help with their medical inquiries. As a person of faith, I feel called to reach out to all in need, and Planned Parenthood provides a way for me to reach out to those who might not otherwise have a place to turn. Thank you for the great work you do, Planned Parenthood!

WHY I SUPPORT PLANNED PARENTHOOD



Rev. Rich Rose
Ithaca, NY

In my personal experience, I have seen the staff of Planned Parenthood show great respect for my individual needs while upholding the dignity of my family. Our questions were answered compassionately. It is this kind of care that is so necessary in our communities today. We all need a place to go where our deeply personal questions are knowledgeably answered with understanding and kindness.



Rev. Gary McCaslin
Horseheads, NY

Sexual orientation, identification, expression, clarification and education and are only a few of the topics on the minds of young people these days. In a world of competing religious and political views it is so important to have a place where young people, their parents, and supporters can come for honest and compassionate information and services. Planned Parenthood is one of those places and an invaluable resource where the truth is spoken, each life is cherished, and each voice is heard. I am proud to be a supporter.

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