

Dialogue

Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains

Fall
2009

visit our web site at
www.pprm.org

Back to School! PPRM Leads Sex Education Standard



We are pleased to announce that Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains (PPRM) is working with a diverse new coalition on implementing comprehensive sex education. The Campaign for Healthy Colorado Youth (CHCY) seeks to reduce rates of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, through science-based policies and positive youth development programs. PPRM is serving as a co-chair on the initial executive committee and our public affairs and education staff will bring PPRM's expertise to the campaign.

The Campaign builds upon momentum created by the passage of H.B. 1292 (Standards of Sex Education). This legislation requires school districts, family resource centers and teen pregnancy prevention programs that offer instruction regarding human sexuality to adopt science-based content standards. The legislation also states that the Colorado Department of Education, along with all interested

parties, "shall develop recommended guidelines for the implementation of local comprehensive health education programs."

While the executive committee is currently in the process

of creating a three-year strategic plan, the overarching focus includes implementing H.B. 1292 on three levels. The Campaign will assemble an advisory committee to work with the Department of Education on producing guidelines for comprehensive health education. The Campaign will also identify how to implement comprehensive programs within selected school districts and analyze potential follow up legislation to strengthen H.B. 1292.

The executive committee is comprised of five permanent members in addition to PPRM: ACLU of Colorado, Colorado AIDS Project, Colorado Organization for Latino Opportunity and Reproductive Rights, Colorado Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention and NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado. Three additional at-large members will eventually join and CHCY is currently building the coalition, reaching out to educators, parents, students, organizations and state departments.

In addition to PPRM's work in implementing H.B. 1292, the PPRM Action Fund is closely observing and participating in local school board elections across the state. The PPRM Action Fund advocates for school board members who understand that giving youth the necessary resources to make responsible, healthy decisions for themselves is essential to their overall education experience.

We also encourage PPRM supporters like you to vote in this November's school board elections, and ask you to visit pprm.org in the coming weeks for important voter education information.



Annual Report – Available Now

Our annual report is hot off the press and provides a snapshot of our major accomplishments. It is posted on our web site at pprm.org under "Who We Are." To request a printed copy, contact our Development department at 303.321.7526.

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The mission of Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains is to improve the quality of life by enabling all people to exercise individual choice in their own reproductive health.

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PPRM Pays Tribute to Dr. George Tiller

Dr. George Tiller, an abortion provider in Wichita, Kansas shot to death on May 31 by an anti-abortion extremist, was a man of great conviction and decorum.



To many, he was a hero who had the courage to stand firm against unbelievable adversity. He was a man who cared for his patients individually – knowing that every woman, mother and daughter who came to him had a compelling reason. He understood the difficulties many of his patients faced and provided care to women when others were unwilling to offer it. More importantly, he gave his patients dignity when they needed it most. Dr. Tiller provided life-saving, legal and safe procedures to women even

though the consequence was harassment and intimidation in his daily life. He was more than a pioneer in reproductive health care, he was a hero.

His loss underscores why many of us passionately work to preserve

reproductive freedom – to ensure women the right to exercise individual choice in their reproductive health. The right to “choose” is a hollow liberty without access. Providing access is what Dr. Tiller did best. His death represents a great loss to the reproductive health care community.

PPRM, along with many others, celebrates his life by paying tribute to a man who honored a woman’s right to be healthy and have a healthy family.

PPRM Takes Health Care Reform Message to Capitol Hill

Based on the request to Congress from President Barack Obama to pass health care reform legislation on an ambitious summer deadline, PPRM and Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) flocked to the nation’s capital this summer to host a Capitol Hill lobby day amid the ongoing health care reform campaign.

PPRM representatives joined more than 300 other Planned Parenthood staff, board members and volunteers from across the country to tell members of Congress that health care reform must include comprehensive reproductive health care and access to essential community-based providers.

PPRM representatives visited 11 congressional offices, receiving warm welcome at each. PPRM Board members Nea Brown and Christine Gardner Gould joined PPRM staff in House and Senate office visits with

Colorado and Nevada congressional elected officials. In total, the Planned Parenthood legion visited nearly 250 members of Congress.

The effort was part of the Planned Parenthood 2009 Policy and Organizing Summit, a three-day event with a focus on PPFA’s ongoing campaign to ensure that women’s health is a priority in health care reform.

While Congress was not able to meet the President’s original deadline, elected officials returned

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Flex Your Muscle

The Planned Parenthood Action Network (PPAN) allows you to reach decision makers with the click of a button for free. Join our network of over 70,000 activists by visiting pprm.org or by calling 303.321.7526.



Circle of Friends

GUARDIANS OF CHOICE DONOR SPOTLIGHT: DR. JOHN MCLEAN

Very often planned gifts come as a great surprise. The recent generous bequest to PPRM from Dr. John McLean was one such unexpected gift.

McLean, a dentist in the Fort Collins area, supported PPRM for nearly 15 years. His support for our work came from his deep concern for those less fortunate than himself. Marianne Doran, McLean’s sister, talks about how he loved leaving surprise gifts for people and organizations. “Even after his death, he was still leaving surprise gifts at people’s doors,” Marianne recalls fondly.

McLean included PPRM in his estate plan - unbeknownst to PPRM - because he was dedicated to our mission to educate people about sexual health and prevent unintended pregnancies. PPRM’s Education Endowment fund is a beneficiary of Mclean’s estate planning and is now better able to reach those in need of information for their reproductive health. Through this fund, our Education department receives a fixed yearly percentage to spend on critical programs that provide young people with the information they need to make responsible choices.

McLean’s gift will ensure that PPRM can expand our current education programs and meet additional

requests for comprehensive sex education for Colorado’s youth.

McLean is just one of 165 PPRM’s Guardians of Choice legacy society members. Guardians of Choice members make legacy gifts that allow for the continuation of PPRM’s mission to help people make responsible choices about their reproductive health.

If you wish to include PPRM in your estate plans, please contact Amy Keith at 303.813.7644 or amy.keith@pprm.org so we may acknowledge your generosity.

PPRM’s Tara Friedman named Fundraiser of the Year

The National Planned Parenthood Development Officers Council, the member organization of Planned Parenthood’s development professionals, recently presented the Rumpelstiltskin Fundraiser of the Year award to PPRM’s Tara Friedman.

The annual award recognizes individuals within the PPFA affiliate network whose fundraising efforts turned opportunities into resources or as the name of the award suggests, turned straw into gold. Candidates are judged on qualities that inspire donors to support the organization’s mission. Candidates must also demonstrate creativity, enthusiasm, team building skills, intelligence, vision, courage, perseverance, leadership and commitment. The award is the highest Planned



PPFA President Cecile Richards and Tara Friedman

Parenthood honor an individual can receive in the area of development.

“Tara exemplifies what the Rumpelstiltskin award stands for – that individual spirit and passion can literally impact entire communities,” said Keiren J. Havens, vice president of external affairs for Planned Parenthood of Maryland and chair

of the National Planned Parenthood Development Officers Council. “Tara’s impressive fundraising skills ensured the demise of a dangerous, sneaky ballot measure and allowed more Coloradans to access essential health care services.”

Based on outstanding service to the PPRM affiliate, the honor highlights Friedman’s accomplishment in leading the campaign to raise \$1.7 million to underwrite the “No on 48” 2008 ballot initiative in Colorado which aimed to define personhood. The award also acknowledges Friedman’s role in PPRM’s Building the Future campaign that resulted in a new flagship administrative building and health center in addition to funds for training, diversity initiatives, security and renovation upgrades at PPRM’s 29 health centers.

Foundation Funding Helping Teens Thrive in Cortez



Foundation funding furthers PPRM’s mission to assist medically underserved areas suffering from severe shortages of qualified health care professionals. PPRM’s collaboration with foundations to support teens in Southern Colorado offers an example of how grant funding positively impacts the daily lives of teens.

For the last several years, PPRM’s educators have facilitated short- and long-term comprehensive sex education programs at the Southwest

Open School (SWOS), an alternative public high school in Cortez. Our educational programs in Cortez have been supported by foundations and community organizations including the Bright Mountain Foundation and the Four Corners Gay and Lesbian Alliance for Diversity.

PPRM’s health center in Cortez fills an important role in our state’s health care continuum, as the majority of Southwestern Colorado is a federally-designated medically underserved area.

Earlier this year, PPRM’s Cortez health center was contacted by a SWOS administrator to begin a partnership offering reproductive health care free of cost to SWOS students. Funding for this program was made possible by an anonymous donation to SWOS for teen health services. This funding will complement PPRM’s education efforts at SWOS by ensuring that students receive age-appropriate information about sexual health and have access to free, confidential reproductive health care.

Research shows that greater access to contraceptives and reproductive health services in conjunction with comprehensive sex education (education that includes information about abstinence as well as pregnancy and disease prevention) works to decrease teen pregnancies and STDs.

Through our many community partnerships, PPRM reaches a wider audience across the state with essential public health services and information. We are proud to work with foundations, schools and community organizations to help teens thrive.

A Partnership Positively Changing Future Generations

“We can’t make change unless we educate people.”

These wise and profound words come from Vanessa Hoener, program services manager for ComCor, a non-profit community corrections facility in Colorado Springs.

ComCor’s clients typically range in age from 25 to 35. All clients who enter ComCor are evaluated for appropriate treatment. Depending on the individual’s needs, they participate in a variety of rehabilitative services.

ComCor’s goal is to prepare its clients for life after treatment.

Hoener, a therapist by training, always knew that ComCor’s audience was unique. Regardless of age, many clients come from backgrounds where they did not receive proper sex education and therefore did not always distinguish high-risk sexual behavior. Others may have participated in risky sexual behavior due to substance abuse or neglect. Some clients are parents themselves but don’t have the facts about sex to talk to their children about healthy relationships. A general

naiveté about birth control is also common among ComCor’s clients says Hoener.

“Even if they received sex education in junior high, this is a population that never thought about reaching out for additional information in adulthood,” said Hoener. “Things (birth control methods) have changed. This is one of those areas that people don’t re-educate themselves and within a high-risk population driven by addiction – this is the last component someone will think about.”

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Headquartered in Denver, Colorado The Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect is a world leader in the fight against child abuse and neglect. Kempe brings hope to children and families for healthy, happy futures.

Yet going “above and beyond treatment as usual” is the Fostering Healthy Futures (FHF) program for preadolescent youth (ages 9 to 11) who are placed in out-of-home care as a result of abuse or neglect. The program is designed to promote child well-being by identifying and addressing mental health issues, preventing adolescent risk behaviors and promoting competence. Participants enroll in a nine month prevention program, which includes mentoring and therapeutic skills groups.

In 2002 when the program was still forming, the professional team at Kempe began to brainstorm topics that they believed were crucial to incorporate into the curriculum. From the beginning, they recognized that the target population for FHF is a group prone to teen pregnancy or susceptible to misinformation or no information about anatomy and puberty. It would not be uncommon for a FHF youth to move between homes three to four times within a nine month timeframe. As a result, chances are high that the youth could miss puberty or anatomy education in school; or be with a caregiver not comfortable talking about such issues.

“It is easy for them to miss it (anatomy and puberty education) – so if they get it here – we know they’ll be informed and know where and how to get the care they need,” said Becky Gennerman-Schroeder, a clinical coordinator at Kempe.

Despite having in-house experts at Kempe qualified to teach anatomy and puberty, the program’s director and research director (Dr. Taussig and Dr. Culhane) decided to invite in Planned Parenthood educators

“We wanted to bring in experts so our youth could hear from people outside of our center. Then they would know that there are resources in the community for them when they graduate. That long-term connection was very important for us to make.” said Gennerman-Schroeder

PPRM’s educators offer Speakers Bureau presentations on anatomy and puberty, but sometimes questions fall outside those topics.



Becky Gennerman-Schroeder

“If we get (other) questions, we’ll answer truthfully,” said Gennerman-Schroeder.

She says that the questions that get asked reveal how much misinformation youth are getting from outside sources. To The Kempe Center, Planned Parenthood provides a forum for youth to get honest, truthful answers.

“Our youth can be challenging, but the (PPRM) educators who come in do such an awesome job at making the students feel okay to ask questions.

The children are giddy sometimes, which I think is normal and sometimes they’re just excited that someone is talking to them about this because no one else is.” said Gennerman-Schroeder.

On average, at least one student in a class has been victimized and/or experienced a form of sexual abuse. Planned Parenthood’s educators take this into account when facilitating. The youth in FHF share another special bond: they all live with someone other than their parents. Together they can distance themselves from the stigma they sometimes feel in comparison to their peers from “traditional” living arrangements.

“That is what is great about Planned Parenthood’s presentations – there’s an added sensitivity there and the kids feel respected,” said Gennerman-Schroeder.

In the innovative spirit of FHF, the program connects children with mentors to help bridge long-term resources. If a youth is seeking more information about Planned Parenthood’s services, the mentor can help the youth schedule an appointment.

“Sometimes our youth will come back with brochures after going to a Planned Parenthood health center and share them with the rest of the group,” said Gennerman-Schroeder.

Since the program’s inception, FHF has reached 140 youth. Gennerman-Schroeder is comforted knowing that wherever Kempe’s youth end up, a Planned Parenthood health center will be close.



Exemplary Student Leaps From Dollar-A-Day to University of Denver

Mercedes Hernandez-Queen, like fellow Dollar-A-Day participants, grew up watching many of her family members take on the role of “mom” or “dad” early in life.

Wanting to avoid a similar path, Mercedes joined Planned Parenthood’s Dollar-A-Day program.

Dollar-A-Day helps at-risk teenage females avoid unintended pregnancies by empowering them to be responsible when it comes to decisions about sex and relationships. The classes take place over a 30 week time period and participants are given \$7 each week – a dollar a day – for avoiding teen pregnancy. Participants are welcome to return year after year until high school graduation, which Mercedes chose to do.

Mercedes says it wasn’t uncommon to see classmates attending class while pregnant. The pressure to have sex in high school is real she says. She felt her school’s sex education didn’t go far enough and wanted to participate in Dollar-A-Day for the additional education.

“Planned Parenthood teaches that you can always say no,” said Mercedes. “If some of these girls had a bit more information, they could have been in a better situation.”

While the obvious goal of Dollar-A-Day is to prevent teen pregnancy, Mercedes says the impact is far greater.

“Planned Parenthood helped me set goals and stay focused on my school work. The communication skills I learned in Dollar-A-Day also helped me in other aspects of life ... how I communicate with my boyfriend, co-workers and peers.”

Mercedes says she also formed special friendships with other girls in the group. While some of them may have originally joined for the monetary incentive she says, they all stayed in the program for the education and sense of empowerment and, “Knowing how to protect ourselves when we decide to become sexually active.”

After four years of Dollar-A-Day curriculum, Mercedes now puts it upon herself to ensure young adults, particularly young women, have the information and education they need to stay healthy.

“If young people decide to have sex, I want people to be healthy about it and know how to protect themselves.”

Mercedes considers herself a mentor to her little cousins. Earning a Daniels Fund scholarship, Mercedes will attend the University of Denver this fall to study Spanish and biology with a pre-med emphasis – demonstrating how she leads by example.

Towards the end of the interview she jokes, “There should be a Dollar-A-Day for guys.”

While this is her way of wanting everyone to have the experience she did, it is also a testament to why programs like Dollar-A-Day are important for youth. Planned Parenthood is thankful for our many supporters who understand our youth are our future leaders.

Project Prevention links teens to educators and vital reproductive health services

“When I do have a kid, I’ll rock at it but I’m not ready yet,” said Amber Rose Black-Greening-Fleming.

Amber is an energetic, articulate high school junior with future aspirations to go to veterinary school and someday buy a farm and tend sheep.



Today she is a Project Prevention participant.

Project Prevention educates youth about sex and healthy relationships. The program also connects youth to affordable or free reproductive health care services; participants in the program do not have health insurance.

The educational component takes place at various Planned Parenthood health centers. Amber meets with her educator in Denver and each time they meet, they cover a different topic. Their first discussion was about birth control; then they discussed healthy relationships. Their next session will cover STDs..

“I look forward to the sessions because he (PPRM educator) talks to me like I’m a person, not a teenager,” she said. “I can ask him anything. He’s pretty cool.”

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PPRM Honors Volunteer Nadine von Storch

After 14 Years in a Blue Bib, Her Role in Advocacy Continues

On a sunny summer day this June, Nadine von Storch put on her blue escort bib for the last time after 14 years.

Though our client escorts may appear to take a behind-the-scenes role, they are actually the first to come in contact with a client; the first to comfort and console them. At PPRM, we and our supporters strive daily to ensure our clients can access us without fear, intimidation or harassment. Our escorts are greatly valued and due to the unique nature of the position, many escorts are driven to volunteer based on strong, personal convictions or past experiences.

Take von Storch, whose last day as an escort was just one milestone in her life dedicated to fighting for reproductive justice and equality.

Young, married with a supportive husband and two children only twenty months apart - the second conceived when she was using contraception – von Storch couldn't imagine the struggles of motherhood of women less fortunate than she.

So von Storch took matters into her own hands and began to work for her local Planned Parenthood (Planned Parenthood of Connecticut). Assuming numerous roles, she fundraised, held board positions and participated in political action work.

The time was in the 1960s, before Roe v. Wade, the 1973 landmark Supreme Court case that legalized abortion.

It was a time, von Storch recalls, when women lived in fear of getting pregnant; when women couldn't get birth control until marriage and a time when the only abortion clinic she had heard of was in Puerto Rico (at a cost of \$1,200). She recalls the opposition's successful move to hijack the term "anti-choice" and replace it with "pro-life;" and vividly recollects the 1995 New Haven abortion clinic shooting that injured two clinic workers.

Despite personal attacks from people hostile to her vocal views about a women's right to choose, von Storch says she never thought twice about working for Planned Parenthood.

This year's shooting of Dr. George Tiller was a sobering day for von Storch.

"When I heard the news I thought - what a shame, what a shock," she said

She describes the generations born after Roe v. Wade as somewhat apathetic when it comes to fighting for reproductive justice yet looks to the future with hope.

"I think President Obama will help the younger generation wake up and see reproductive health grow in importance on the national scene," she said.

For the thousands of clients von Storch has escorted for PPRM during her more than a decade long tenure, we look to the future with hope, because of people like her who don't back away from adversity, but who courageously open the door to it.

In her words, "We must fight every day."

And she still does through her volunteer work for PPRM in public affairs.

To volunteer with PPRM, visit us at pprm.org.

Thank You for Making Our Choice Affairs a Huge Success

PPRM's 22nd season of Choice Affairs raised \$50,000 to benefit PPRM's educational programs.

PPRM is a recognized regional leader in comprehensive sex education. Our short- and long-term programs target individuals of all ages and are continually evaluated for effectiveness. In 2008, our educators reached 19,557 people through 2,225 education sessions.

Funds raised during Choice Affairs directly impact our ability to educate people about sexuality and how to make healthy, responsible decisions. We thank our gracious hosts and hostesses who contributed to the success of all Choice Affairs parties including a bowling party, rooftop jazz party, private tour of the Denver Art Museum's Western American art collection, an intimate alfresco summer evening with Mayor Hickenlooper and an evening with Lannie Garrett.

We also thank everyone who attended the events and would like to recognize the 2009 Choice Affairs committee: Jocelyn Murphy (Chair), Holly Barrett, Tom Barrett, Sue Bickert, Melanie Buscher, Kris Fraser, Catherine Hance and Linda Poletti.

People like you, passionate about our mission, make Choice Affairs possible and successful; your support creates many possibilities for the thousands of people our education programs touch.

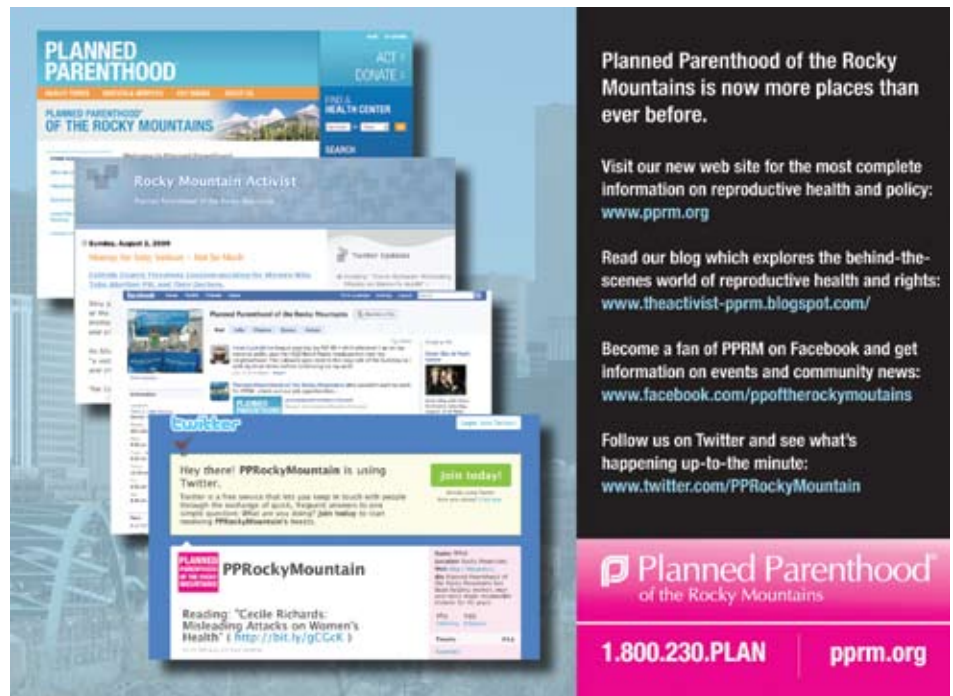


Committee member Linda Poletti, her husband J. Madden, and PPRM President and CEO Vicki Cowart at a summer Choice Affair.

Social Media Creates PPRM's Virtual Identity

Tweets, posts, bulletins, pokes, blogs, tagged photos, videos ... did you know that PPRM does all of these things? Social media has changed the way we access local and national news. In addition to having a presence on many of the major social networking sites, (MySpace, Facebook, Twitter), PPRM is one of the few Planned Parenthood affiliates to publish our own blog, Rocky Mountain Activist. We also have a YouTube channel, which is home to our favorite Planned Parenthood videos, as well as videos produced in-house.

Our social universe of over 1,700 loyal fans, followers and friends is comprised of elected officials, activists, volunteers, staff and numerous other PPRM supporters, and continues to grow daily. Our blog is featured on several local blogs, including Progressnow.org and squarestate.net.



For more information, please contact our Online Specialist Rob Mestas at rob.mestas@pprm.org or call 303.813.7724.

A Partnership continued from page 4

In 2002, Hoener was charged to develop an evidence-based intensive treatment program to enrich ComCor's continuum of care. Hoener knew sexual health had to be a program component.

"And I knew Planned Parenthood could help," said Hoener. "Having referred clients there myself, I called them and said, can we talk?"

Before long PPRM educators were invited to ComCor to present Speakers Bureau presentations on birth control and anatomy; the partnership has been growing strong since.

"It's easy to assume that because someone is an adult they understand their anatomy," said Hoener. "I'm pleased to see clients go through classes and then feel empowered to make better, wiser decisions. Especially for those who are parents, Planned Parenthood provides facts, which in turn allows our clients to

communicate facts, not myths to their children."

It's not just the facts that are appreciated. Hoener says a lot of ComCor's clients feel alienated by society. Not all clients have positive people to fall back on or a positive peer group to support them through rehabilitation.

"The energy the (PPRM) speakers bring in is amazing," said Hoener. "Planned Parenthood makes them realize positive change is possible, which reinforces a positive lifestyle. By bringing in Planned Parenthood, I'm connecting my clients to a resource in the community that is going to help them, not degrade or look down upon them."

I've had clients tell me that they tell their friends and children what they learned from Planned Parenthood. Together, we're changing the next generation."

Reform continued from page 2

to their districts during the August congressional recess to conduct town hall meetings with their constituents. PPRM mobilized activists across the region, encouraging them to attend these discussions and voice their concerns about how women's health will be treated under health care reform.

When Congress reconvenes in September, PPRM will continue to be assertive on health care reform through public policy advocacy including activist outreach to ensure women are part of the health care reform priorities.



PPRM staff and volunteers show support of the 22nd annual AIDS Walk Colorado.

Navajo Prep School Embraces PPRM Teachings



Located in Farmington, New Mexico is the Navajo Preparatory School (NPS), the only Navajo-sanctioned, college-preparatory school for Native Americans. It is one of two college-prep dormitory boarding schools in the nation to house an on-site health center.

Youth enrolling in NPS undergo a competitive selection process, requiring potential students to take an entrance exam, submit letters of recommendation and interview with faculty. Those who are accepted range in age from 13 to 18.

Rita Donaldson is the school nurse and coordinator of the McKenzie school-based health center on campus. Because of the school's prestigious nature and rigorous curriculum, she was aware that not all students are able to take a health class. After a handful of students came to her to talk about sex, asking basic questions like "how can you get pregnant" – she knew many students were not getting this information.

"What I heard from students sometimes was either wrong or misinformed. I knew we had to do something," said Donaldson.

When Donaldson called Planned Parenthood in 2007, PPRM educators discussed what Speakers Bureau topics would be most appropriate to meet the unique need of NPS. They chose topics ranging from sexual abstinence to anatomy to contraception. All programs emphasize prevention – a message that resonates with these motivated college-bound youth. Sessions are taught during mandatory after-school activities, as well as some evening presentations in the dormitories.

The dormitory nature of NPS creates a dynamic environment for the students. Some students are local, but most travel

up to three hours every Sunday to attend weekday classes. Even though there are strict rules in place in the non co-ed dorms, Donaldson says the skills students learn to resist sexual pressure are still important.

Adding to the school's dynamic is the students' heritage. Many come from traditional Navajo backgrounds, yet embrace mainstream views about sexuality. To Donaldson, it's important for her students to get medically-accurate information. Donaldson's colleague at the health center brings a background in traditional healing (i.e. plant and herbal remedies) as well as science-based health care.

"It's a nice meshing of both views," said Donaldson.

When PPRM educators first presented the Speakers Bureau, Donaldson sat in on the first few classes.

"I was curious to discover how to broach this topic with youth," she said. "I was amazed – just blown away by the ease with which the speaker engaged the students to educate them about these sensitive topics."

Donaldson was so impressed that she began encouraging nursing students from nearby San Juan College, who were there for clinical rotations at the school-based health center, to audit the classes as well.

According to Donaldson, the students seem to enjoy it as much as the adults.

"Kristin (PPRM educator) sets things up with ground rules – like it's okay to giggle, but we need to learn this and let's be respectful. It's a comfortable environment for the students and making parts of it (the curriculum) a game is a great approach," said Donaldson.

Donaldson is a strong supporter of PPRM's presentations. Even though last year was a pilot year for PPRM's speakers bureau, she has already seen the program's effectiveness.

"I saw more kids coming in (to the health center) asking follow up questions. The awareness is there – it's getting through to our students."

Amber continued from page 6

Amber says her check-ins with her mentor reminds her how important it is to be responsible with birth control.

"I feel someone is supporting me with this," she said.

Amber doesn't think she's wiser than her peers by being in the program but she does feel more self aware.

"I'm taking responsibility. I feel empowered when it comes to my sexual health. Since I have this knowledge, I need to share it with others."

And she does.

"I am the oldest of three (children) so I have to be the role model."

Amber doesn't think her own peer group is easily influenced by media or pop culture when it comes to sexual behavior, but she does see a lot of teens succumb to the sexual images they see on TV and elsewhere. To Amber, this is dangerous because "they (media) show stuff that can happen to you but they don't show what you can do to protect yourself."

Thanks to the generous donors who support Project Prevention, there are other Ambers out there with similar stories. While these young adults may not consider themselves wise in the traditional sense, what they learn in Project Prevention is helping them make healthy, responsible decision about their futures.

Donaldson looks forward to collaborating with Planned Parenthood this school year. She hopes for a Planned Parenthood speakers bureau about relationships from an inclusive perspective to be sensitive to the needs of gay and lesbian students.

"So far, parents, the school board and NPS executives are supportive of the speakers bureau program – this is very encouraging and I'll keep going forward," said Donaldson.

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