



Greater Memphis Region
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A Word from Ashley

Ashley Coffield, CEO

On April 8, I assumed the role of CEO that Barry Chase very capably filled for almost a decade here at Planned Parenthood Greater Memphis Region. As a former PPGMR patient and member of the Board of Directors (2001-2009), I already knew a lot about the very important work that Planned Parenthood does here in the Mid-South. But in the past few weeks, as I have gained a deeper knowledge of what each staff member does at Planned Parenthood, I am even more impressed than before.

I have shadowed nurse practitioners during patient visits in the health center, sat in on pre-abortion counseling sessions, and on HIV testing and prevention counseling sessions. Through all of this, I have gained a new respect for the highly-trained personnel who've dedicated their lives to providing the highest quality reproductive health care and non-judgmental sexual health information to people in our community who need it most.

Planned Parenthood was the first agency to bring free, rapid HIV testing to the Memphis public. Planned Parenthood's HIV "Master Trainers" train more new community HIV testers every year than any other agency in the Mid-South. And now, as you'll read in this newsletter, Planned Parenthood is breaking new ground again by establishing the first wide-scale free condom distribution program in Memphis.

The more I learn about PPGMR, the prouder I am to be a part of the Planned Parenthood team. You're a part of the team, too. Without your generous support, we could not do the important work we do, both in the health center and in the larger Mid-South community.

Free Condoms Memphis

On Valentine's Day, February 14th, Planned Parenthood officially launched a county-wide program known as "Free Condoms Memphis" to make free condoms available to the general public in accessible locations around Memphis and Shelby County. It started with 30 condom distribution sites at government agencies, non-profits, churches, and small businesses, like barber shops, nail salons and tattoo parlors. The network has grown to 40 condom sites to date, and new organizations want to be condom sites nearly every day.

"Previously, there were a few agencies and community groups that made free condoms available in the Memphis area, but they were individual efforts. There was little coordination and no organized effort to publicize the availability of free condoms, or where to go to get them," said Elokina CaPece, Planned Parenthood Vice President of Education. "No one has ever provided free condoms on this scale and advertised their availability like this before."

Free condom distribution programs have been implemented in a number of cities primarily to combat the spread of HIV. Such programs have been run with great success in Chicago, San Francisco and New York City, and there's a lot of evidence they actually work. A number of academic studies indicate free condom distribution is an effective intervention

and can demonstrably increase the use of condoms and decrease the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. "Because Memphis has an HIV infection rate twice the national average, we thought, 'Why not do it here?'" said Ms. Capece.

PPGMR pitched the idea to the Shelby County Ryan White Program, which funds services for HIV positive individuals and HIV prevention efforts. They liked the plan so much, they chose to fund it with a sizable grant that is renewable for up to four years.

Planned Parenthood organized the program, provides the condoms, locates and screens new distribution sites, restocks the sites each week, and provides support and social media promotion.

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Condom Man (Zach Pepper) and PPGMR staff member Clarissa Walker.

Support reproductive health care for the women of the Mid-South
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(901) 725-1717

Planned Parenthood Greater Memphis Region (PPGMR), founded in 1938, is an affiliate of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Our mission is to ensure broad public access to reproductive and related health care through health center services, education, advocacy, and community partnerships serving 42 counties in West Tennessee, North Mississippi and East Arkansas.

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Left to right: University of Memphis students April Brooks, Meliqua Pillard, and Jasmine Watts



PPGMR CALENDAR

National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month
MAY

National Women's Health Week
MAY 13-19

National HIV Testing Day
JUNE 27

National Men's Health Week
JUNE 11-17

Planned Parenthood Organizing and Policy Summit Washington, D.C.
JULY 9-11

World Population Day
JULY 11

Women's Equality Day
AUGUST 26

PPGMR Loses Supporter, Former Board Member Susan Clark

On April 30th, PPGMR lost a staunch advocate and supporter when Susan McEwen Clark passed away after a long struggle against cancer.



Susan McEwen Clark

Ms. Clark served on the Board of Memphis Regional Planned Parenthood-as PPGMR was then known-from 2001 to 2004. Even after leaving the Board, Ms. Clark remained a generous donor and supporter. Barry Chase, CEO during Ms. Clark's Board service, said, "Susan was a wonderful Board member and continued to lend incredible support to me and to PPGMR after she left the Board."

PPGMR counsel Doug Halijan was a close friend. He said of Ms. Clark: "Susan was an outstanding lawyer, community leader and, most of all, friend, who was a supporter and tireless advocate for all causes and organizations she believed in."

"We are so glad that Planned Parenthood was one of the causes that Susan believed in, and we are grateful for her contributions and support over the years. Her passing is a loss not just for PPGMR, but for the entire Mid-South community," said PPGMR CEO Ashley Coffield.

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FIGHT HIV AND STDs. FOR FREE.

The grant funds a website FreeCondomsMemphis.org. Visitors can input their address and other information and the site lists nearby condom distribution locations. The funding also pays for advertising, including bus ads seen all over town.

The star of social media outreach is Zach Pepper, who, wearing a mask and cape, is Condom Man, the program's superhero mascot. Pepper makes appearances at distribution sites, poses for photos and even helps identify and recruit new site

locations. "Zach is a great asset to the program," said Ms. CaPece. "He has a kind of charisma, loves to wear the costume and pose for photos, and has a genuine passion for HIV prevention."

"After this very successful launch, we expect Free Condoms Memphis to continue to grow, as more distribution sites join the program," said PPGMR CEO Ashley Coffield. "We think this program will markedly increase condom use among those most at risk and reduce the spread of HIV and other STIs in our community."

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Howard University students pictured above – Front: Alisha Howell, 20. Left to right: Imani Allison, 19; Shantal Rose, 19; Zuri Masud, 21; Briana Mason, 19; Javonne Alonzo, 19; Uri-Biia Si-Asar, 20; Dakia Davis, 30

PPGMR Partners with Howard University Students for Alternative Spring Break

In March, 24 students from Howard University in Washington, D.C. came to PPGMR for "Sexpert" training with Planned Parenthood sexual health educators. The students came to Memphis to participate in Howard University's Alternative Spring Break program that allows students to take part in service and volunteer activities during their Spring Break.

After two days of "Sexpert" training, during which they learned about safer sex, HIV prevention and healthy relationships, the Howard students used what they had learned to build an age-appropriate workshop for teenagers called "The College Experience," which they delivered to a group of high school students at LeMoyne-Owen College on March 14th.

The point person who brought the Alternative Spring Break program to Memphis was Howard junior and Memphis native Ayanna McFarland, an English and Secondary Education major. Ms. McFarland said she was determined to bring the knowledge and experience she'd gained at Howard University back to Memphis to benefit Memphis youth and spur them on to pursue higher education.

PPGMR was proud to partner with the Howard students to help make their Alternative Spring Break activities a learning experience not only for the Memphis high school students, but also for the rising community leaders from Howard University.



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