

the advocate

summer 2014

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts

Celebrating the Counseling & Referral Hotline All-Volunteer Program Turns 40

For volunteers on PPLM's Counseling and Referral Hotline, there is no typical shift. Volunteer counselors help callers with topics ranging from the risks of unprotected sex and symptoms of sexually transmitted infections, to how and where to get a pregnancy test and answering questions about abortion.

"Some calls are quick and easy to answer," says Jen, a volunteer since 2013. "Others involve in-depth counseling. Recently, I was able to help a caller who just started a relationship with a partner who has a sexually transmitted infection. We talked about how the infection is transmitted, symptoms, and various other concerns for over an hour. The caller said after speaking with me, he could now have an educated conversation with his partner and decide how to safely proceed in the relationship."

Volunteers have been having meaningful conversations like this one for decades. In fact, we're celebrating the hotline's 40th anniversary this year. Since 1974, volunteer counselors – who complete a 50-hour training program – have been providing

medically-accurate, comprehensive, nonjudgmental information about sexual and reproductive health care.

The Counseling and Referral Hotline grew out of an independent organization called the Pregnancy Counseling Service, which was established in 1969 to help Massachusetts women facing unintended pregnancies.

In 1974, the service joined Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts and expanded to become the Counseling & Referral Hotline. Today, the hotline is staffed by a core of 50 highly-trained volunteers who accept more than 20,000 calls per year.

"We have so much more information to share now," says Pat, who has been a hotline volunteer for more than 30 years. "We get lots of questions about sexually transmitted infections, or medication abortion, which didn't used to be available.

But the community of volunteers remains the same – we are all here to provide callers with the information they need to make decisions about their health care."

Our trained counselors answer questions about contraceptive options, sexually transmitted infections testing, and HIV/AIDS. Counselors also offer



assistance with pregnancy options, and may provide the caller with information about adoption agencies, parenting resources, or where a woman can obtain an abortion. Our goal is to support callers by providing them with the support and information needed to make decisions regarding their sexual health.

"It is such an amazing feeling when a patient says that I am the reason that he or she feels much better about the situation and is thankful for the opportunity to speak with me," Jen says. "It truly touches my heart that I have been able to put the individual's mind at ease by spreading my knowledge of sexual health."

Are you a former Hotline volunteer? We're planning a 40th Anniversary celebration! Contact hotlineparty@pplm.org to learn more.

viewpoint



Over the past few months, there have been times when I've had trouble distinguishing between what I read in the news and in *Woman of Valor*, the biography of Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger I recently finished. After all, access to birth control is again in

jeopardy as the Supreme Court deliberates whether it will allow private companies to refuse to offer insurance coverage for certain types of birth control. It is astounding to me that birth control access for millions of women is at risk in 2014, nearly 100 years after Margaret Sanger opened her first clinic.

But there are positive parallels as well. Seeing news coverage of Planned Parenthood supporters gathered on the Court steps to make their voices heard the day of the oral argument in *Hobby Lobby v. Sebelius*, I was reminded of the passionate advocates who stood with Margaret Sanger to legalize birth control.

As you'll read in this newsletter, birth control options have expanded in ways I'm sure Margaret Sanger couldn't have imagined. Along with a broader range of monthly birth control options, women now have access to long-term contraceptives that are effective for up to ten years and completely reversible. We're proud to offer this full range of birth control options for all of our patients – and to stand up in the fight for birth control access – with your generous support.

Thank you!

Martha M. Walz

Want to Help Us Protect the Buffer Zone?

As of this newsletter going to print, the Supreme Court ruling on our state buffer zone law hadn't been announced. But with your help, we can be prepared for any outcome. Sign up to take action at <http://bit.ly/ProtectTheZone>.

We're also recruiting clinic escort volunteers at our Boston health center. If you'd like to volunteer, helping patients access health care, apply at pplm.org/volunteer.

Image by Fayfoto/Boston

advocate spotlight: Kanisha Hans

Kanisha Hans got involved with Planned Parenthood after an overwhelmingly positive patient experience, at a time when she did not have access to other resources. "It was the first time someone treated me as an adult who could take responsibility for my own health," she says. "I wanted to be a part of giving someone else that experience."

Kanisha has been a Planned Parenthood intern since January, 2013, and recently attended the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) National Conference as the co-chair of PPFA's Young Leaders Advisory Council, a position she was nominated for because of her work at PPLM.

Kanisha cites Planned Parenthood as her most positive internship experience to date. She has gained

Encouragement from Planned Parenthood gave me courage to tell my personal story, and use it to reach out to lawmakers and other potential supporters.



communication skills and real-world advocacy experience, including using her own experiences to highlight to members of Congress the need for continued Title X funding. Kanisha says she is constantly moved by her work with Planned Parenthood, especially "the experience of having someone tell you how much they appreciate the work we do."

program spotlight

Effective, Convenient, Affordable Birth Control Thanks to Your Support

We've come a long way since Margaret Sanger traveled to Worcester, Massachusetts, where the birth control pill was invented in 1960.

Today, women can choose from numerous contraceptive options their mothers could only have dreamed about. At our health centers, women are increasingly choosing long-acting, reversible contraception. These options are among the most effective birth control methods available: intra-uterine devices (IUDs) and contraceptive implants (inserted just under the skin of a woman's arm) last for years and can be removed at any time. We also offer a range of monthly birth control options, including the pill, the ring, the shot, and the patch.

The principles that brought Margaret Sanger to that Worcester, MA laboratory remain the same today. We believe women's preventive care – including birth control – is basic health care, and at Planned Parenthood, we believe every person should have access to health care, no matter what.

Thanks to support from our generous donors, our doors are open to everyone, no matter who they are, where they live, or whether they need help paying for health care. All of our birth control options are offered to low-income and uninsured patients on a sliding fee scale, as well as to those with private or public insurance, or who pay out of pocket.

It's not just options that make Planned Parenthood different from other health care providers. The extra time we take with our patients to fully understand their needs sets us apart. For every woman who comes through our doors, we provide confidential, nonjudgmental care. We work with her to figure out the best way to stay healthy and prevent unintended pregnancies and sexually-transmitted infections.

Thanks to you, we can deliver our promise of care, no matter what, and offer the full range of birth control options to all our patients every day.



Expanding Birth Control Access Through Clinical Research

Our Research Department is advancing women's health and birth control options! For example, the Quickstart study, sponsored by Gynuity Health Projects, is currently enrolling patients at our Boston and Springfield health centers. Patients who decide to have a medication abortion (when pregnancy is terminated using a two-pill regimen of mifepristone and misoprostol) and want to start using the birth control implant or the birth control shot after their abortion can participate. Study participants are randomly assigned to receive their desired contraception either at the time of their abortion or at their two week follow-up. The goal of this study is to show that administering progestin-based contraceptives at the time of medication abortion is safe, effective, and acceptable. Through this and other studies, our Research Center is making it more convenient for women to access their desired method of birth control.

faces & places



Planned Parenthood supporters gathered at events this winter and spring to support our health care, education, and advocacy work. Celebration of Choices raised over \$340,000 for the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund, while the Young Friends Big Bash, Newton House Party, and Winchester House Party additionally raised a combined \$99,000 for PPLM.



Images: **1.** Co-chairs Mark and Maria Shepherd with Hosts Sandra Urie and Frank Herron at the Winchester House Party, **2.** PPLM CEO Marty Walz with co-chairs Jean Kilbourne and Kay Khan, and host Betty Sudarsky at the Newton House Party, **3.** Event Co-Chairs Sabrina Dunlap, Caitlin Taylor Reiche, Chloe Gotsis, Kate Lewandowski, Elizabeth Schaul, PPLM Events Manager Lucy Eilbacher, Amy Deveau, and Danielle McCourt at the Young Friends Big Bash, **4.** Rodolfo Vega, Dharma Cortés, Tom Payzant, PPLM CEO Marty Walz, Ellen Payzant, and Mary Nada at Celebration of Choices, **5.** Co-chairs Joanne and Paul Egerman at Celebration of Choices, **6.** Alexis Egan and PPLM board member Johanna Longnecker at Celebration of Choices.

Images courtesy of Natasha Moustache Photography.



Learn about the Advocacy Fund's work on Beacon Hill, in this year's elections, and more! www.pplmvotes.org