

RESPONSIBLE SEX ED: PARENTS WANT IT. YOUTH NEED IT. WHY THE DELAY?

By Nikki Madsen and Amy Marsicano

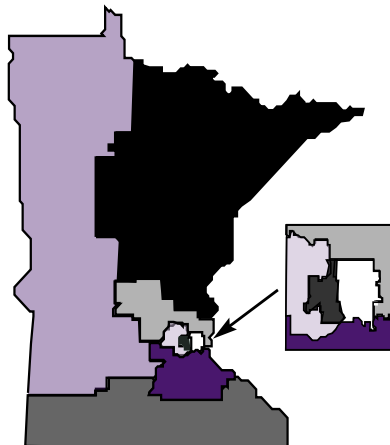
For the first time in 14 years, teen pregnancies are rising. Sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates have reached an all-time high in Minnesota. An average of 19 girls in Minnesota become pregnant every day. There is overwhelming evidence of the need for and effectiveness of comprehensive sex education. Additionally, a recent study by the University of Minnesota showed that regardless of political affiliation, a decisive majority (89%) of Minnesota parents believe that comprehensive sex education should be taught in our schools.

Isn't it obvious that the time is right for the legislature to pass a comprehensive sex education bill that protects youth, this session?

The comprehensive sex education bill, known as the "Responsible Sex Ed Bill," has once again been introduced and is now being considered in the current legislative session. If passed as currently written, Minnesota schools would be required to provide age-appropriate and medically accurate comprehensive sex education to students in grades 7-12 and the state would be required to provide funding to schools to develop and implement the new curriculum. If enacted, this legislation will help reduce STIs and teen pregnancies by providing youth the comprehensive and medically accurate information and resources they need to make healthy decisions about their sexuality and bodies.

Currently, youth in our state receive different sexuality education content based completely on chance. For example, 15-year old Fatimah learns only about abstinence in

Percentage of Parents Who Support Sex Education by Minnesota Congressional District



Information provided by the Healthy Youth Development Prevention Research Center – University of Minnesota, Division of Adolescent Health and Medicine

district 1...94%

district 2...90%

district 3...89%

district 4...89%

district 5...89%

district 6...86%

district 7...89%

district 8...89%

her health classes, while 15-year old Sarah gets both information on abstinence and on how to protect herself from contracting STIs, while 15-year old Jackson is taught comprehensive sexuality education – which includes information on abstinence, healthy relationships, reproductive anatomy, STIs, sexual abuse and more. The content these three youth are exposed to completely depends on the district, the school, and often the skill and comfort level of individual teachers. Content aside, the average Minnesota youth receives less than 20 hours of sexuality education from 7th to 12th grades. That's one-half of an average adult work week spread out over six years of an adolescent's life, a critical time of development. In short, sexuality education in Minnesota doesn't live up to what parents expect or medical professionals recommend. This bill will ensure that increased time is spent on sexual health in the classroom and that the information provided is based on proven standards.

Last year, the Legislature came closer than ever to passing legislation promoting comprehensive sexuality education. The bill enjoyed bi-partisan support but was rejected by Governor Tim Pawlenty at the 11th hour. Until bills like "Responsible Sex Ed" succeed, youth will continue to lose out on the life-changing impact of accurate sexual health information.

With your help, 2008 could be the year that Minnesota passes this essential legislation (House Bill 3131 and Senate Bill 3349).

How you can help: write a letter to the editor about the importance of comprehensive sex education; contact your representatives; and encourage the youth you know to register for Youth Lobby Day on April 8th (www.sexedforlife.org). Additionally, consider leading a Bowl-a-Thon team or joining our PCR Spare Bowlers team (more information on the back page). This fun community event raises money to support PCR's Birds & Bees Project providing high quality, medically accurate sexual health education and resources for youth, parents, and teachers in Minnesota. **Together, we can make a difference for our youth!**

Celebrating 35 Years of Legal Abortion

"Opportunity is like an old man's hair: it only comes around once." These were the wise words of Dr. Joycelyn Elders, keynote speaker at the Minnesota Choice Coalition's 35th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* dinner and celebration in January of this year. Dr. Elders reminded the crowd of over 400 supporters that to sustain a meaningful pro-choice movement, we must seize the opportunities that present themselves, and we must be unified. The crowd was also entertained by author and feminist blogger Jessica Valenti, who emceed the program.

Thank you to everyone who joined the Choice Coalition in celebrating the 35th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. The event was an enormous success, drawing pro-choice supporters from across the state. Donors, volunteers, activists, and community leaders came together to celebrate the many victories the pro-choice movement over the last 35 years and to inspire each other to keep working toward reproductive freedom and equality.

The dinner event was part of the Five Days of Action, a larger series of events orchestrated by the Minnesota Choice Coalition that also included a book signing by Jessica Valenti, an art event, a movie screening and panel discussion, participation in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day march, and a preview of the upcoming legislative session. The Coalition consists of the Midwest Health Center for Women, Minnesota NOW, the Minnesota Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, the NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota Foundation, Planned Parenthood of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, Minnesota's chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, womenwinning: Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund, and Pro-Choice Resources.

4th Annual Art for Choice a Resounding Success

On November 9, 2007 pro-choice supporters from around the metro area celebrated Pro-Choice Resources' 40th anniversary with an evening of fine art, performance, and live music at the 4th annual Art for Choice. Proceeds from the sale of original art, raffle tickets and donations benefited the reproductive and sexual health education and access programs of Pro-Choice Resources. During the past four years, Art for Choice has turned into one of the most talked about events in the pro-choice community.

Pictured to the right: PCR staffers Sasha Aramalay (L) and Amy Marsicano (R) are enjoying a moment with event attendees.



Pictured to the left: PCR Board members Migdalia Loyola-Melendez (L) and Sara Beth Mueller (M) pose for the camera with Interim Executive Director, Jane M. Skogstrom.

Volunteer Spotlight: Emily Gerteis



Emily is currently a senior at Macalester College.

We recently caught up with former Hersey Abortion Fund intern, Emily Gerteis, to discuss her intern and volunteer experiences.

When did you start volunteering at PCR?

"I started volunteering at PCR in September 2007. I had been an intern and volunteer at the Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention & Parenting, and they told me about PCR. I looked into volunteer and interning options on the PCR website, and found the Hersey Internship application."

What did you enjoy about volunteering at PCR?

"I enjoyed being able to directly assist women. It was very powerful for me because the majority of the women I spoke to were my age. In addition, I enjoyed the sense of community and staff at PCR; their friendliness, inclusiveness, and advice made me feel like a part of the team."

What's the best thing about volunteering with PCR?

"As a young woman, I am not sure what career path I want to take after college. Volunteering has given me the opportunity to work in an office setting and determine what kinds of work I would enjoy. Volunteering at PCR helped me confirm my values and reshape my understanding of the role I can play in the pro-choice and women's movement."

If a friend asked you why they should volunteer here, what would you tell them?

"Well, first I would say that the women who work at PCR are inspiring and motivated. I would tell fellow students that volunteering there would help them gain important experience and connections within the non-profit world. But in general, working within a small organization, you really get to know the people you work with, and you feel that you are making quite an impact being one more set of hands around the office. Your work will never go unappreciated!"

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

PCR expresses our deepest gratitude to the following businesses and artists who supported our 4th annual Art for Choice. Please support these businesses and artists by patronizing them.

*A complete listing of contributors will be included in the Annual Report.

Artists & Individuals

John Alspach
Teri Anvid
Yuri Arjas
Pamela Belding
Michael Birawer
Allen Brewer
Dan Buettner
Mike Carina
Jamie Carrera
Angela Cho
Tara Costello
Amy Crickenberger
Jennifer Davis
Matthew Doubek
Laura Drabant
Christi Furnas
Ed Hamilton
Kristen Hasler
Nick Howard
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Shawn McNulty
Ruben Nusz
Carolyn Payne
Terrence Payne
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Robert Roscoe
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Digital Crush
Photography
Joe's Garage
Mitrexbox
Olive Salon
Smitten Kitten
Spot Spa
The Grave 601 Hotel
Tweak Studios
Walker Art Museum

PCR Launches Cafe Press Store

Searching for the perfect gift? Well, look no further! Pro-Choice Resources is proud to announce the launch of our Cafe Press store. Now you and anyone in the world can purchase our original and witty pro-choice designs. You can find the charming and hilarious rooster design that says, "pro-choice guys protect their peckers" or the chuckle-winning hen image stating "pro-choice chicks lay wisely" on shirts, sweatshirts, mugs, magnets and buttons. We've also made available an adorable chicklette on bibs and onesies that say "hatched by choice." Bring one of these onesies as a gift to your next baby shower and the conversation promises to be engaging. Before you check out, throw one of



PCR staffers, Sasha Aramalay and Melissa Winship, model the "Kiss me, I'm pro-choice!" t-shirts.

our newest "Kiss me, I'm pro-choice!" shirts in your basket. When you wear this shirt, you'll never be short on love. Visit www.cafepress.com/pcronlinestore to check out all our great gear.



Welcome Kristen!

Pro-Choice Resources is proud to introduce our new Development & Communications Director, Kristen Denzer. Kristen started working for PCR in November and loves it so far! Outside of work, she spends her time serving on the Board of Directors of Pet Haven, a nonprofit animal rescue, or at the Minnehaha Creek Dog Park with her two puppies. When asked what she liked best about PCR she responded, "I love the passion that everyone brings to their jobs. It's so refreshing to work in an environment where everyone is so committed to reproductive justice."

APEP Offers Workshops on a Non-Surgical Abortion Option

When the FDA first approved mifepristone for use in the U.S. in 2000, pro-choice advocates boldly predicted that the drug would open new avenues of reproductive healthcare access. For example, women could obtain abortions much earlier in pregnancy and have more autonomy over the process and abortion could be performed without surgical equipment. Perhaps most significantly, as a safe and private option administered in primary care clinics, this method would allow clinicians and their patients to avoid the intense public scrutiny and stigmatization endured by abortion clinics, their staff, and the women who need their care. Women could seek treatment and physicians could dispense it without fear of being targets of terrorism: abortion could be mainstreamed.

Nearly a decade later, it is still too early to fully measure the impact of medication abortion, but a report issued in January 2008 by the Alan Guttmacher Institute maps some interesting trends. While this method has been slow to live up to its initial promise, its use appears to have played an important role in halting the decades-long decline in abortion providers. As an early abortion option, medication abortion accounted for nearly

12% of all abortions in Minnesota in 2006, up from just 2.4% in 2001. At the same time, the percentage of abortions performed very early in pregnancy increased by about 3%. However, the new method did not result in new providers. In fact, the overall number of sites offering abortion remained essentially unchanged during this period, trends that are mirrored nationally.

Mifepristone, or medication abortion (once called RU-486 or "the abortion pill"), offers women a safe, private, and non-surgical option for ending an early pregnancy.

To encourage more healthcare providers to offer this method to their patients, PCR's Abortion Provider Expansion Project (APEP) teamed up with New York's Reproductive Health Access Project last fall to offer an interactive workshop on medication abortion for community healthcare providers. This training, attended by over 40 primary care clinicians, prepared practitioners to expand services in a variety of settings. With basic and advanced tracks, faculty covered

hypothetical patient cases and engaged in a brainstorming session identifying many of the common barriers to implementing medication abortion in a clinic setting. These barriers range from resistance from support staff who are concerned about community backlash, to the prohibitively high cost of malpractice insurance or reimbursement refusals for abortion providers, to the lack of resources to purchase the necessary supplies and equipment.

This spring we plan to offer a supplementary workshop focused on a step-by-step approach to surmounting these barriers and supporting providers dedicated to offering full-spectrum reproductive healthcare in communities throughout Minnesota. 95% of Minnesota's counties have no abortion provider, although 62% of the state's women live in these counties. Increasing the capacity of healthcare providers to offer an early abortion option to their patients would alleviate some of the burden experienced by women who must currently travel to the Twin Cities or Duluth to access abortion care.

APEP is a collaborative project of PCR and the NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota Foundation.

Agents of Social Change Wanted

Creative, charming idealists seek likeminded companions (new board members) to help save the world. We are compassionate and reliable Board Members of a fun, friendly, comprehensive reproductive health nonprofit 501(c)(3) searching for skilled soul mates (i.e., new Board Members) to love, honor and cherish (through good times and bad) this wonderful organization and its mission. If you have the talent and passion for changing the world and have always dreamed of using your skills and knowledge to better your community, this could be your dream volunteer experience! Although not extremely glamorous, you sure do sleep well every night - no, not because you're so exhausted - because you feel great about what you are doing.

You must be: financially minded OR have a background in reproductive health care OR well-connected in the community OR able and willing to throw a great fundraising party OR motivated to shape the future OR all of the above, Ages: 15 to 105 encouraged to apply.

Please fax a statement of interest about why you would make a great board member to Jane at jane@birdsandbees.org or by fax: 612-825-0159

Pro-ChoiceResources

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PCR Staff:

Sasha Aramalay - Health Educator
Stacey Burns - APEP Coordinator
(shared with NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota)
Kristen Denzer - Development & Communication Director
Nikki Madsen - Associate Director
Amy Marsicano - Director of Health Education
Elsa Paris - Health Educator
Jane M. Skogstrom - Interim Executive Director
Melissa Winship - Office & Hersey Manager

Interns: Rachel Anderson, Norrie Brumm, Greta Fay, Felicia O' Brien, and Maggie Neck

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➡ I'm Pro-Choice and I Bowl!

15th Annual PCR Bowl-a-Thon

Where else can you win great prizes & bowl alongside teams like
The Gutter Queens, the Pin Up Girls & the Abnormal Paps?

It's So Easy to Bowl for Choice!

- Captain a Team! Put together your own awesome team (of 6).
- Just you? Join the PCR Spare Bowlers to bowl with other PCR supporters.
- Even if you can't bowl, you can still raise money for PCR and qualify for excellent prizes!

Go online today to register. Shifts are filling up fast!

Bowling shifts at:

4:00, 5:15, 6:30*, 7:45*, 9:00* and 10:15 pm

*Premium shifts with team fundraising goal of \$1,000.

Reserve your shift by registering online or by calling Kristen at 612-825-2000.

Businesses! Great promotional opportunities available. Contact Kristen for more information about how you can sponsor this year's Bowl-a-Thon!
kristen@birdsandbees.org or 612-825-2000



Thursday, April 24th
at the Bryant Lake Bowl

Donate or register online today!
www.prochoiceresources.org

Supporting education and access has never been easier or more fun.

Help us reach our \$50,000 goal and Bowl for Choice!