

Michigan Religious Coalition For Reproductive Choice

MI-RCRC

Spring 2007

Ready or Not...

...**Here I come!** It's a universally celebrated hide-and-seek game. Likewise, universal, is the arrival of spring. Are you ready? It's coming, whether you are, or not. Borrowing heavily from an April 15th, 2001 Lansing State Journal article by John Schneider, I recount the unfolding of this miracle before our very eyes----and our ears, and our noses.

"...Hungry for evidence of an all-encompassing power? Stranded on the spiritual sidelines...? Don't imagine the miracle will be lost because it's raining, or snowing, or because you live in the inner city, where the natural world fell into the cracks long ago.

For one thing, the transformation is not subject to the whims of weather. It is more solid than that. More irrevocable. More unwavering in its mission of total rejuvenation. You don't need a woodlot, or a pasture to show you the miracle. A single bud will do it. It tells the whole story; it holds all the essential information.

Consider the view two months ago, when life was frozen and the world was black, brown, and gray. We knew then that the Earth was destined to alter its relationship to the sun---which the dance of two spheres in an unknowable void would result in the warm breezes, running sap, mating birds, and the tender heads of crocuses defying the snow.

And it did! How? Why? In accordance with what plan? There are many possible answers. You can pick one, or several. You can make up your own. You can call it divine intervention, or

an accident of chemistry and physics. You can attribute the whole thing to random molecules.

The one thing you can't do is deny it. It fills your eyes, your ears, your lungs. Life is emerging from the soil and swinging from the trees. It's bursting from buds and falling from the sky. It's making the birds sing; the frogs croak; the rabbits hop..."

What will you do with the gift of all this awesome energy?

Faith, Choice and Action

Try putting some of that energy into participating in this upcoming event on April 24th at the State Capitol. MI-RCRC is co-sponsoring this event along with Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Michigan and several other pro-choice partners. This will be an interfaith prayer breakfast and pro-choice lobby day to commemorate the 3rd anniversary of the historic Washington, DC March for Women's Lives.

The breakfast program will feature Rev. Dr. Ignacio Castuera, Chaplain for Planned Parenthood Federation of America, who will give testimony to the fact that a majority of religious Americans are pro-choice and that a majority of the world's religions hold authentic pro-choice positions. Plan to participate to promote dialogue about sexuality and health and between various faiths, in order to achieve our mission of enabling reproductive self-determination.

Dr. Castuera's message will highlight the urgency of advancing proactive prevention

policies through the national **Prevention First Campaign**.

The Prevention First Initiative gives voice to our commitment to support healthy families through commonsense prevention measures. Improving access to preventive health care and supporting healthy families must be a shared statewide goal. If we are committed to reducing the number of unintended pregnancies in Michigan, we must get to the root of the problem: we must ensure reliable sexual and reproductive health education and information; increase access to family planning services; and help plan parenthood, healthy pregnancies, and healthy families.

A brief advocacy training period will follow Dr. Castuera's address, preparing participants to carry forward this important message to their legislators. Following is a schedule of events for the day and registration information.

Time and Location:

Tuesday, April 24th
9:30 AM Registration
State Capitol

10:00 -11:00 Interfaith Breakfast
State Capitol

11:00 – 11:30 Advocacy Training
State Capitol

11:30 Visit Legislators
State Capitol, Farnum Senate Office Building,
Anderson House Building

Celebrate Spring!

Spring into Action!!

For more information and/or to register for this event, email ppam@ppfa.org or phone (517) 482-1080 ext #3

Roe v Wade Commemoration

If you missed it, **you missed it**. An inspiring event on all counts! On January 21st we presented our annual lecture in observance of the 34th anniversary of the historic Roe v Wade decision. The Sunday afternoon time, the MSU Union Building location, the plentiful parking in the new ramp, the food, and the absolutely engaging keynote speaker all added up to a most memorable event!

The keynote address by Penny Gardner, Ph.D., MSU Department of Women's Gender Studies and Visiting Associate Professor was entitled "Reproductive Justice: Taking Up the Torch." Dr. Gardner related her own story as an abortion recipient prior to Roe v Wade, describing the difficulties women experienced at that time. She emphasized that a woman must be able to make medical decisions for her own body and in consideration of her own life circumstances. She articulated that being **pro-life** means being **pro one's own life**. A theme was the importance of people speaking up, of people being willing to tell their own stories, particularly to a younger generation so that they will be able to appreciate what it would be like without Roe v Wade.

State Representative Mark Meadows highlighted legislation at the state level that would affect reproductive health. He indicated that he would be working to protect access to legal abortions and to reduce restrictions that have been attempted by the introduction of the so-called "fatal pain" legislation and the limitations to access to the "morning after" pill.

Also among the issues he is hard at work on are those of contraceptive equity, embryonic cell research, and vaccination against human papilloma virus (which is linked to cervical cancer).

We're Getting Our Message Out!!

We're delighted to report on the important forum spearheaded by our co-chair Duane Dowell. In January, he participated in a forum on Sexuality Education, hosted by the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor. The forum included a segment on the importance of education in a global context, citing the lack of fulfillment of the promises of the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development. He referenced a recent series in the medical journal, Lancet, featuring a resurgent attempt to put reproductive rights back on the world agenda.

Also on the agenda was a description of the Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education curriculum from the viewpoint of teacher and parent. (This curriculum was developed collaboratively by the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ).

John Keserich of Planned Parenthood explained the educational resources and programs available to schools, groups, and individuals. Beverly Fish gave a personal account of her successful advocacy efforts with a committee to get comprehensive sexuality education introduced in the Ypsilanti school district.

Medical Students for Choice

We are so proud of the accomplishments of our local medical student group, the MSU Medical Students for Choice. Do you wonder how medical students have time for **anything** besides studying? We do! But our local group displays the passion and dedication that is so needed in our movement.

This year their activities included: hosting a dinner meeting with Renee Chelian (former president of MARAL); a showing of Boston Legal and discussion of the controversial issue of

prescribing emergency contraception when working in Catholic affiliated hospitals; attendance at medical student conferences in Raleigh and in Ann Arbor; and most recently, a pizza-lunch-showing of the film "Abstinence Comes to Albuquerque," which featured the issues of public school districts inviting private groups, with federal money, to teach abstinence-only education in the schools.

Our special thanks to Debra Smouse and Cheryl Peavler, out-going coordinators of the MSU Students for Choice. We welcome Theresa Chang and Katherine Cox, coordinators for the coming year. We look forward to another fruitful year!

All Options Clergy Counseling Training Event

Get it on your calendars! We're sponsoring a workshop for all clergy in the state who want to improve their knowledge and skills in counseling women confronting unplanned or problem pregnancies. **October 30, 2007** is the date for this six hour event to be held in East Lansing. Exact hours and location are yet to be determined.

It is our good fortune to have as trainer for the workshop Rabbi Bonnie Margulis who serves as director of clergy programming for the national RCRC. Clergy receiving this training will not only be better equipped for work in their own congregations, but also, if they so choose, be placed on the "referral list" for Planned Parenthood clinics in their part of the state who have clients with religious questions and concerns regarding their pregnancy options

We encourage our readers to invite their pastors to take part in this training.

Introducing

...Our very own MI-RCRC web site! Check us out at: <http://www.mircrc.org>

The site was designed and developed by Anson K. Smith, who will serve as webmaster. Our long-time dedicated supporter and former co-chair, Margo Smith, Anson's Mom, worked on the content with him and will be responsible for updating the site. Please send updates to Margo Smith at email: mircrc@mircrc.org

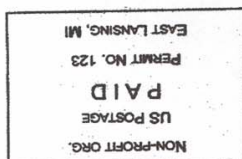
We hope other organizations will link to our website. Please pass news of our website to your member organizations as a resource to use. Feedback to date says the site is very user friendly. So, give it a try!!

Thanks for your Financial Support

To all who responded to our November appeal, a sincere **Thank You!** If that letter got past you, here's another opportunity Included in this mailing is a donation envelope. Note that the double-digit designation on your mailing label indicates the year of your most recent contribution (... according to our records. We're not always absolutely accurate! Please let us know if your records don't agree). Please help us get out our message of the importance of **Prevention First!!**

Comments and /or questions welcome:

Co-Chairs:



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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