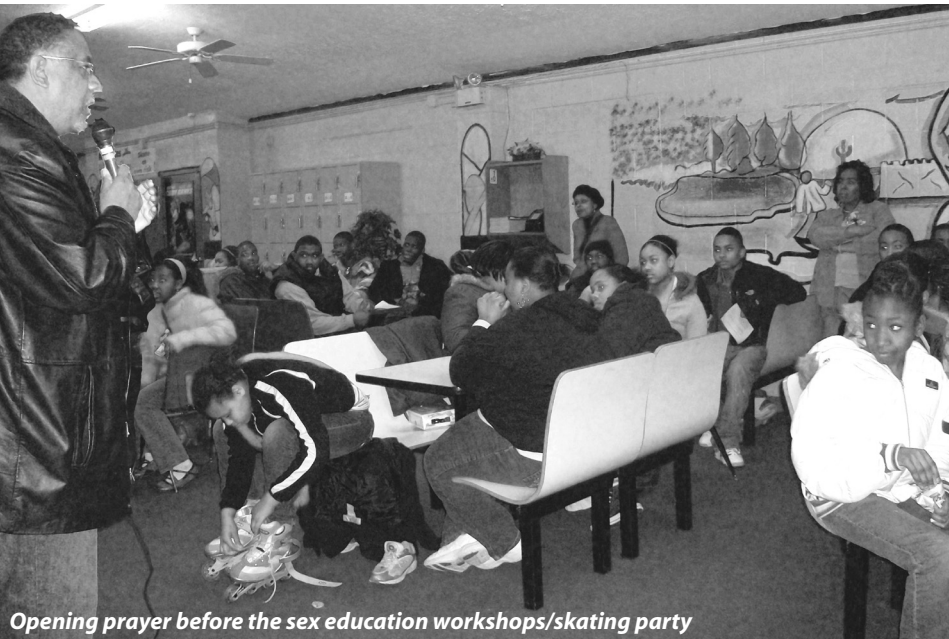




Faith Matters Cleveland was a success!



Opening prayer before the sex education workshops/skating party

For the past 27 months, Faith Matters Coordinator Rev. Tony Minor and Assistant Shelene Byrd encouraged congregations to adopt faith-based sex education programs aimed at reducing teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections among Cleveland youth.

Congregational Outreach. During the project, funded by the George Gund Foundation and Rev. Steve Clapp's Christian Communities, the Faith Matters staff surveyed over 100 congregations about whether they had sex education for their youth, and, if not, how they could help them develop one. Faith Matters helped 18 congregations start sex education ministries, starting some with sex ed workshops for parents and teens about teenage health issues. FM sponsored trainings for 15 facilitators of "Keeping It Real," RCRC's faith-based dialogue on sexuality for teens, resulting in five congregations presenting the dialogues to 90 participants.

National Black Religious Summit on Sexuality. Faith Matters organized trips to three RCRC's annual Summits on Sexuality for 40 youth and 10 adults. After the 2008 Summit, youth from Community of Faith Assembly developed a skit illustrating the dangers of unprotected sex, which was then used in sex ed workshops. This year in February, 70 youth participated in a sex ed workshop held at a skating rink. They watched the skit and then discussed how to cope with common teen "dilemmas," such as pressure to have early sex. Youth who participated in the workshop received a free pass to the skating party!

Clergy and advocate trainings. Faith Matters also sponsored two trainings for clergy in RCRC's *Pastoral Counseling for Reproductive Loss*, and three trainings teaching clergy and youth how to advocate.

End of Faith Matters. The Gund grant was not renewed due to the Foundation's loss of income, so the project ended on July 15. We hope to continue these vital and effective education programs in the future.

Support for clinic staff and women patients

Memorial Service for Dr. Tiller. On June 4, several pro-choice groups, including Ohio RCRC, held a memorial service for Dr. George Tiller. The service was organized by Rev. David Meredith at Broad Street Methodist Church in Columbus. Several clergy invited by Ohio RCRC, including our Board President, Rev. Richard Venus of First Universalist Church of New Madison, Rabbi Emily Rozensweig of Temple Israel (Reform Judaism), and Rev. Mark Belletini of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, offered meditations on Dr. Tiller's life and death. Barb Avery gave a "Call and Charge to People of Faith" encouraging folks to speak out about their religious pro-choice views. Clinic staff at the service stated their appreciation for the religious pro-choice support.

Colleagues and friends spoke about Dr. Tiller's great kindness to patients, his cheerful encouragement to his staff, whom he called "Team Tiller," and his generosity to other providers and clinics. When another provider died on vacation, Dr. Tiller paid air fare for his body to be returned home. When a clinic in a Southern state was temporarily without a doctor, he flew down regularly to provide services, without charge. For more information about Dr. Tiller's life, see rcrc.org, Resources, *Faith and Choices* newsletter, Summer 2009, p. 3. For Ohio meditations, see ohiorc.org, Memorial Service.

All Options Clergy Counseling Services. Twenty-two Ohio clergy trained in All Options Clergy Counseling and three trained in Pastoral Counseling for Reproductive Loss were available through our Hotline to women and families making difficult decisions about problem pregnancies or grieving a loss.

continued

All Options Counseling continued

What can you do now? Participate in RCRC's Weekend of Prayerful Affirmation and Action for the Safety of Clinic Workers on **October 16-18**. During this weekend, your pastor, rabbi, or congregation can participate by including a prayer in the worship service, inviting a clinic staff member to attend your service and say a few words about his/her work, giving a sermon about the work of the clinics and dangers of harassment, and gathering signatures on a petition to assure universal access to reproductive health services. To learn more, see www.rcrc.org/getinvolved/weekend.cfm.

Advocating as religious pro-choice constituents

Training advocates. Rev. Tony Minor, Karen Hackenberry of Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio, and Barb Avery trained clergy in Cleveland on how to lobby as a religious pro-choice person. Barb Avery conducted a similar workshop during Lobby Day.

Lobbying. Rev. Minor and other Cleveland folks lobbied their legislators on Lobby Day. In March, after the RCRC Board Meeting, Barb Avery lobbied for the REAL Act, which would fund comprehensive sex education, in the offices of Reps. Mary Jo Kilroy and John Boehner. In April, while in Washington for the RCRC Convening, Rev. Richard Venus and Barb lobbied in the offices of Rep. Kilroy, and Senators Brown and Voinovich.

What can you do now? Get folks to sign RCRC postcards supporting federal funding of comprehensive, medically accurate sex education and defunding of abstinence-only programs.

The Ohio RCRC Board of Trustees is expanding and diversifying, religiously, geographically and in every other way!

Since our movement to Board meetings by conference call, the Board has added 4 new members from across the state! Here are two of our new 2009 members:

Ed Sweeney. Ed is the Chief Financial Officer of the House of Hope, a home for recovering male addicts, and has had a career in financial management and accounting with a strong interest in social services. He has served on the Boards of a hospital, a Rotary Club, Homeowners Association, Risk Managers Association and the Alternatives to Violence Project. He describes himself as a Humanist and "an activist who would like to do what I can to make reproductive choice available to all." Ed has a B.S. degree from University of California, Berkeley. He lives in Upper Arlington with his wife Nita, a writer. The Board was delighted to elect Ed to the Board for his financial acumen, and to elect him Treasurer. He has been very helpful in cutting office costs and troubleshooting technology glitches.



Rev. Cynthia Heilman. Rev. Heilman is a Unitarian Universalist minister and the pastor for the Oberlin U.U. Fellowship. In 2003, she was a member of the Cleveland clergy committee which sponsored an All Options Clergy Counselor training. Since then, she has been an AOCC Hotline counselor. In 2007, she served on the screening committee hiring the Faith Matters Coordinator. This year, Rev. Heilman started graduate work at Bowling Green State University. She lives in Toledo with her husband, Rev. Edwin Heilman, a UCC minister. Rev. Heilman was elected to the Board for her knowledge of AOCC counseling, interest in college youth, and connection with the Toledo area.

New Board Members: Ed Sweeney (left), Cheryl Pentella (below), National Council of Jewish Women, Columbus (described in last newsletter).



Not pictured; Carmen Gray, Ohio Conference of United Church of Christ, Cleveland; and Rev. Cynthia Heilman.

Educating Buckeyes: speakers, e-newsletters, tabling

Speaker. In February Richard Venus spoke to the National Pro-choice Law Students Conference at the University of Cincinnati. His well-received speech, *It's All About Sex*, starts out with a famous excerpt from *The Vagina Monologues*. (See ohiorcrg.org, Education, Speakers).

Faith & Freedom e-newsletter. Ohio RCRC initiated its e-news last fall through *Constant Contact*, and sent notices of 2009 activities: Roe v. Wade Anniversary Celebrations, Lobby Day, and Comfest. This summer, we started sending out RCRC's informative alerts about national affairs.

Tabling. We increased tabling, with lots of RCRC literature teaching about pro-choice religious perspectives on comprehensive sex education and reproductive choice. We tabled at Democratic Health and Hunger events (Jan. & Sept.), Lobby Day in April, Comfest in June, and the Democratic Women's Caucus' Annual Luncheon in September.

What can you do now? Volunteer to staff tables with RCRC and Ohio RCRC literature at your denomination's regional meeting. Invite speakers or panels of speakers to your congregation or group. Facilitate a *Faith and Choices* workshop to learn about your denomination's pro-choice stance. Sign up for our *Faith and Freedom* e-newsletter by email or return card.

Pro-choice Buckeyes! Express your religious pro-choice views by taking effective actions!

Educate yourself with RCRC literature and *Faith and Freedom* newsletters.

Sign up for our online e-newsletter to receive our legislative alerts--and to help us save money!

Volunteer for the Ohio RCRC Board!

Clergy: offer to speak to student groups.

Contact us for postcards supporting federal funding for comprehensive sex education.

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