

Increase in pro-life activism spurs state-level responses

By Teresa A. Parsons

A new range of activist tactics against abortion has garnered headlines for pro-life advocates across the country. Prayerful candlelight vigils that were once a hallmark of their demonstrations have given way over the past several years to civil disobedience, sidewalk counseling and the opening of "life-oriented" clinics that encourage alternatives to abortion.

Those tactics may now be tested in both the New York state legislature and in the courts.

After a year-long investigation in response to consumer complaints, State Attorney General Robert Abrams plans to file a lawsuit later this month against three New York City clinics accused of fraudulently posing as abortion clinics, according to Nathan Riley, a spokesman for Abrams' office in Albany.

Meanwhile, New York Secretary of State Gail S. Shaffer is urging legislators to propose a state law that would prohibit anti-abortion demonstrators from coming within 100 feet of the entrances to hospitals and other medical facilities.

A spokesman for Shaffer's office in Albany

'Essentially, they are saying that if one has an abortion, the risks of serious lifelong health problems or sterility are much greater than they are.'

David E. Cruthis
executive director
Planned Parenthood

said Monday that last week's announcement drew plenty of press attention, but no response yet from legislators. Both the upcoming lawsuit and the proposed state law could eventually affect Project Life, a Rochester group that has infused the local pro-life movement with a new dose of activism. Project Life sponsors regular demonstrations at several Monroe County hospitals and doctor's homes, and operates the Problem Pregnancy Center at 3254 Lake Avenue in Rochester.

'They are taking women who are upset about finding out the truth and using such euphemisms as "disturbed" and "traumatized."'

David Long
director, Project Life

In the meantime, Project Life director David Long last week announced a new economic attack on hospitals that perform abortions.

"We have a document signed by 25 to 30 local pastors," he said at a news conference during the group's weekly demonstration at Genesee Hospital, Saturday, January 31. "With their support, we are going to examine ways of removing Godly support from this institution."

Signers of the document included Father

Anthony Mugavero of St. Theodore's in Gates, Long said.

The attorney general's investigation was prompted by complaints from individuals and agencies such as Planned Parenthood throughout the state. These detractors claim that the three New York City clinics have used deceptive advertising and manipulative tactics to prevent clients from having abortions. All three clinics are affiliated with the St. Louis-based Pearson Foundation, which organizes and funds anti-abortion clinics across the country.

By focusing the lawsuit on three clinics — one in Brooklyn and two in Manhattan — the attorney general hopes to establish precedents that will apply to other clinics across the state.

"We are concerned about problems of deception, about people being led to believe that these clinics are providing a full range of services, including abortions," Riley said. "Our objective is to have people clearly describe what services they provide."

Long believes that the challenges from both Abrams and Shaffer have been inflated by "media hype," and do not pose any immediate threat to his group's activities.

"My personal opinion is that at least this first time around it (the legislation) won't pass," he said.

"If they do go ahead with the lawsuit and it sets some sort of court precedent in regard to advertising, then certainly it would apply here," he added. "But neither of the local centers incorporates any of the kinds of deceptive practices used by the Pearson Foundation clinics. Both are very, very upfront as far as advertising goes."

David E. Cruthis, executive director of Planned Parenthood of Rochester and Monroe County, Inc., doesn't agree. He has not filed a complaint with the attorney general against any local clinics, but hopes that the lawsuit will affect activities at both the Problem Pregnancy Center and the Crisis Pregnancy Center, located at 505 Chili Avenue.

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Final figures put Thanks Giving Appeal just over goal

By Karen M. Franz

The final tabulation is in, and diocesan leaders have proudly announced that the 1986 Thanks Giving Appeal is a success. Pledges exceeded the \$3.45 million goal by nearly 5 percent, or \$168,000.

The appeal's success is reflected not only in terms of the dollar amount raised. In addition, 127 parishes exceeded their quotas and more than 8,000 people who did not contribute last year made pledges to the 1986 campaign. The average gift (\$57.01), meanwhile, was virtually unchanged in comparison to last year's figure.

"I want to thank all the people who worked with me on this — the Priests Advisory Committee, the Operational Steering Committee and, certainly, all the priests and people in the field," said Father Moynihan, appeal chairman. "They made it happen."

"All the real hard work is done out there in the parishes," he added, thanking all of those who worked on the appeal at the parish level. He also thanked the donors throughout the diocese, especially those who were disenchanted with last year's appeal but returned in 1986.

Father Moynihan noted that the

8,000-person increase in the donor base well exceeds hopes that the 1986 appeal would regain at least half of the 13,514 donors lost in 1985. "People were willing to give us a second chance because we were working to correct our mistakes of 1985," he remarked.

According to Father Peter T. Bayer, diocesan chancellor, no analysis has yet been conducted to determine whether the 8,000 figure actually represents former donors who returned to the campaign after failing to contribute in 1985. Yet he emphasized that the increased donor base was very important, despite the demographic uncertainty.

"It is a tribute to the generosity of people throughout ... the 12 counties, in response to the needs of the diocesan Church," he said. "I think it is overwhelming; it's very impressive."

Appeal leaders point to the following factors as contributing to the success of this year's campaign:

- A return to the parish-based system of previous years, rather than the centralized format of 1985;
- reinstatement of the in-hall solicitation format, rather than the mail campaign conducted last year;
- the increased involvement of lay people

in the planning and implementation of the campaign. Special credit is given to Thomas Schoenwetter, lay co-chairman;

- the emphasis that each gift is important to the overall effort, regardless of the size of the gift;
- the establishment of the speakers bureau, through which diocesan personnel visited interested parishes to explain why contributions were needed; and
- the establishment of the Operational Steering Committee, a group of diocesan

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