

Centers continue work despite fraud charges

Continued from page 1

another national group, also sponsors hundreds of centers, including facilities in Auburn, Corning, Ithaca and Rochester.

In addition, pro-life activists operate more than 1,500 telephone hotlines nationwide, providing information about alternative-to-abortion services.

According to Harriet Lewis, vice president of the CAC's Crisis Pregnancy Center Ministries, the broad range of services shows that rather than just being concerned about stopping abortions, the pregnancy centers offer women the support they need to carry a child to term.

Lewis estimated that CAC affiliates alone helped 300,000 women in 1990.

The various Rochester-area pregnancy centers cumulatively assist thousands of women each year, according to figures supplied by the centers.

According to its year-end report, the Problem Pregnancy Center — an independent, non-affiliated facility — saw 465 clients between Nov. 8, 1990, and Dec. 31, 1991.

Meanwhile, Birthright of Rochester sees 1,200 to 1,500 clients a year, estimated executive director Deborah Galvin.

In addition, the two CAC-affiliated Crisis Pregnancy Centers in Rochester and Greece assist more than 1,000 clients a year, according to executive director Kathryn Hildebrand.

Hildebrand noted that approximately 4,000 abortions a year are performed in Monroe County. "One of our goals at CPC is to see 4,000 people a year," she said, adding that she hoped satellite centers could be established in such areas as Fairport, Chili and Webster over the next few years.

Even as the staffs of these pregnancy centers seek ways to reach more women, however, they are forced to deal with persistent rumors about deceptive methods some centers have allegedly used in dealing with clients.

Among the allegations against some of the centers are that they use false

advertising in the Yellow Pages; imply to callers that they can provide abortion services; conceal their pro-life connections; "preach" at women who come in for counseling; and trick clients into listening to or looking at graphic depictions of abortions.

Such allegations have prompted numerous media reports, at least three lawsuits by the New York state attorney general's office, and even a Sept. 20, 1991, congressional hearing.

During the mid-1980s, Marvin Olasky, a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin, investigated the source of some of these allegations.

In a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Olasky said he conducted the investigation because "I saw a lot of articles attacking the pregnancy centers all over the place, and wanted to see if there was anything behind it. Coincidences rarely happen."

Olasky's results — published in the fall, 1987, edition of *Public Relations Review* — indicated that public-relations workers from a number of pro-choice groups had disseminated many of the allegations.

In the article, he detailed how Amy Sutnick of Planned Parenthood's New York City branch began one such campaign as early as 1985. Her approach was then shared with other Planned Parenthood affiliates nationwide, he wrote.

In interviews with Olasky, Sutnick detailed her approach, which he described in his *Public Relations Review* article. According to that article, Sutnick found women who had been deceived by pregnancy centers and then asked a pro-choice reporter at the *New York Daily News* to interview the women and write an article about activities at certain centers. Olasky reported that she subsequently used that article to spread the story to other media outlets in the New York City area.

Olasky told the *Catholic Courier* that his investigation did isolate one group of centers — affiliated with the Pearson Institute of St. Louis Missouri — that

Agencies offer women help throughout diocese

The pregnancy center is only one type of facility offering abortion alternatives for pregnant women.

The following is a partial list of centers, programs or agencies within the Diocese of Rochester. Although services vary from agency to agency, ranging from support groups to clothing and housing, all listed agencies provide referrals to groups that offer other services.

- Catholic Family Center, Rochester, Single Parent Services, 716/456-7220.
- Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, 315/789-2686.
- Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, Elmira, 607/734-9784.
- Tioga Teen Pregnancy Program, Owego, 607/687-6164.
- Problem Pregnancy Center,

Rochester, 716/865-0360

• Birthright, Auburn, 315/252-7865

Canandaigua, 716/394-8737
Rochester, 716/328-8700, or 442-7000

Ithaca, 607/272-9070

Corning, 607/962-6857

• Crisis Pregnancy Centers:

Rochester, 716/232-2350

Greece, 716/227-3410

Palmyra, 315/597-2233

• Crisis Pregnancy Center of the Southern Tier, Elmira, 607/732-2111

• Ithaca Pregnancy Center, 607/273-4673

• Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley, Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Program, 716/546-2595.

did engage in deceptive practices. Repeated attempts by the *Catholic Courier* to contact officials of the Pearson Institute were unsuccessful.

Olasky concluded that the great majority of centers did not engage in blatantly deceptive practices. Nevertheless, he wrote, campaigns by Sutnick and other critics succeeded in implying that "centers in general are deceptive."

Steve Plever, a spokesman for Planned Parenthood of New York City, defended Sutnick's actions. "It's normal media relations work," he told the *Catholic Courier*.

Plever charged that deception did occur — and continues to go on — at pregnancy centers, and that Sutnick explained to Olasky that her campaign arose from women's complaints to her about what had happened to them at various pregnancy centers.

"The main problem that we feel strongly about is that women deserve to know what they are getting into when they go in for services," Plever said.

That sentiment was echoed by Lynn Taliente, press secretary for Rep. Ronald Wyden, (D-Portland, Ore.), who conducted a Sept. 20, 1991, hearing on the issue of deceptive practices.

Taliente noted that Wyden "was emphatic that we are not condemning all of them, we are not even condemning the majority of them." In fact, she noted, some of the centers — including those affiliated with Birthright — were praised for their practices.

Nevertheless, Taliente said, the congressman was concerned about centers that engage in deceptive advertising — implying either in print or verbally that they offer abortion services.

She cited ads, for example, stating that a pregnancy center provides "abortion education," but failing to indicate the type of information or the center's position on abortion.

"They are not really giving complete abortion information," Taliente explained, "because they will not refer a woman to where she could obtain an abortion."

Wyden's press secretary added that she had called a number of centers in the Washington, D.C., area to ask about getting an abortion. She claimed that some pro-life pregnancy centers attempted to let her believe that they per-

formed abortions. Several other centers, Taliente stated, said they could not perform abortions, but could provide information.

"A woman who is upset about the possibility she might be pregnant could easily be misled," Taliente said, asserting that the centers should be up-front about their abortion stance.

Some women have gotten so upset about their experiences with pregnancy centers, that their complaints have led to lawsuits. But the number of such suits in New York state suggests that the problem is not as widespread as some critics of the centers imply.

According to Leslie Gersing, spokesperson for State Attorney General Robert Abrams, the office has been involved in only three lawsuits against individual centers in recent years.

Lewis noted that CAC-affiliated centers do not engage in deceptive practices, and that her office had recently issued revised guidelines to ensure that council policies concerning honesty are emphasized.

"We mandate honesty and integrity with all our counseling centers," she said.

In addition, Lewis countered claims that ads stating the pregnancy center provides "abortion education" are deceptive. CAC's Rochester affiliates use that term in their telephone directory ads.

"They stretch the definition," Lewis said of the pregnancy centers' critics. "They use the definition to suit their own purposes."

Staff members of CAC's local affiliates said they do discuss abortion with clients, but only if the clients agree to receiving the information. And in all cases, staff members maintain, they warn clients about the nature of the material with which they will be presented.

"I have never shown a client a film," noted Mary Ann St. John, assistant director of the Ithaca Pregnancy Center, which saw 320 clients in 1991. "We talk about the landmarks of fetal development. We will talk to them about abortion techniques, and the risks women may face."

"We are here as a support, and as a ministry," St. John continued. "We're not here to twist their arms."

Lovejoy, for one, was so pleased with the care and support she has received through the Problem Pregnancy Center that she would like to volunteer at the agency someday.

"It's nice to know there are some nice people out there," Lovejoy said.

Graduation '92

To recognize the achievements of seniors at both public and Catholic high schools throughout the Diocese of Rochester, the *Catholic Courier* will present a special Graduation '92 supplement in its issue of June 11.

This annual section includes feature articles, listings of graduating seniors, information on commencement exercises, and photographs of class valedictorians and salutatorians.

This annual supplement has long been among our most popular, and local companies and organizations should find

it an ideal opportunity to promote their enterprises while applauding the scholastic efforts of diocesan youths.

To place an advertisement in Graduation '92, call:

(716) 328-4340



CATHOLIC COURIER

1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624

Advertising Deadline: May 29

Special Rate: \$17.35/col. in.

Publication Date: June 11

Please patronize our advertisers