

Family Planning Advocates

of New York State

April 2007

17 Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207-1002

www.fpaofnys.org

Memo

FPA Celebrates 30 Years!

Eight of Family Planning Advocates' founders received accolades at a dinner celebrating FPA's 30th Anniversary on March 25 in Albany. These courageous women, who were key to preserving abortion rights in the state and the nation, were presented with gifts by members of FPA's Young Leaders Advisory Board.

Family Planning Advocates was the brainchild of these forward-thinking activists and Al Moran, who served as Planned Parenthood of New York City's executive director. They recognized the need for an organized statewide presence to preserve laws that protected safe and legal abortion in New York State, and worked with Planned Parenthood CEOs around the state to create FPA in 1977.

Although the New York State Legislature had passed a law making abortion legal in 1970, anti-choice forces made several unsuccessful attempts to overturn the state statute. After the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, they redoubled their efforts to deny women the right to choose.

The urgent need to protect a woman's right to abortion was clear to those who came together to form Family Planning Advocates. Their success established a strong foundation, enabling FPA to expand its mission to many aspects of reproductive health care over the past 30 years.

FPA's founders generously shared their stories and reminded advocates of the need to continue to address many of the same challenges undertaken in the 1970s. Their wisdom inspired both experienced activists and a new generation of impassioned youth to carry on their important work with Family Planning Advocates.



FPA founders Phoebe Bender, Wendy Mackenzie and Mary Lindsay reunited with Margie Van Meter at FPA's 30th Anniversary Dinner. FPA founders Fiona Burde, Ruth Klepper, Esther Lewis and Carol Reichert also were on hand to share stories about FPA's early days.



FPA's first Executive Director Shirley Gordon was presented with a token of appreciation by Wazina Zondon of New Paltz, a member of FPA's Young Leaders Advisory Board, at the 30th Anniversary Dinner.



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Assembly Passes Healthy Teens Act by Widest Margin Yet

For the third year in a row, the New York State Assembly passed the Healthy Teens Act. The landslide vote of 130-11 came on March 27, the day after Speaker Sheldon Silver announced at FPA's Annual Conference that the Assembly would again advance the bill. Hundreds of FPA Conference participants made visits to their elected officials' offices to remind them of the urgent need for comprehensive sex education in New York.

The Healthy Teens Act will provide grant funding for schools and community-based organizations to provide age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education. Currently, there is no designated funding in New York State for comprehensive sex education.

In order to become law, the bill must now be passed by the New York State Senate, where it is sponsored by Senator George Winner, then signed by Governor Eliot Spitzer. Urge your Senator to bring the Healthy Teens Act to the floor for a vote by going to the Legislative Action Center on FPA's website at www.fpaofnys.org. Look for the "Take Action" box to send an e-mail directly to your Senator.



President's Column

Dear Friends,

Three decades of achievement were celebrated in style at FPA's 30th anniversary.

The night before our Annual Conference, we were graced by the presence of eight of FPA's founding members and more than 25 members of our Young Leaders Advisory Board at our 30th Anniversary Dinner.

The exchange between these two generations of reproductive rights leaders was a thing to behold. The energy in the room was palpable, as experience and enthusiasm melded to propel a movement that builds on the strengths of its members.

That feeling continued into the Annual Conference the next day.

Elected officials from the Governor of New York State to the Mayor of Albany cheered FPA's work on behalf of women. State legislators promised to promote reproductive rights legislation and protect choice in New York. International experts spoke of the renewed fight to preserve women's health and rights abroad.

The reason for all of our efforts was beautifully displayed in the stories of women's reproductive lives featured in *Under the Aprons*, an interactive art exhibit created especially for FPA's 30th anniversary that lined the halls of the Empire State Plaza Convention Center.

The day concluded with a gala reception in the historic Treaty Room of the New York State Capitol. More than 250 advocates and legislators donned pink feather boas in celebration of 30 years of activism. Pink feathers floated around the Capitol for days after the event, persistent reminders of the passion of FPA's advocates and New York's strong pro-choice commitment.

Thank you for making this year's conference a celebration to remember. More pictures and information about FPA's 30th Anniversary Conference can be found on our website at www.fpaofnys.org.

Sincerely,

JoAnn M. Smith
President and CEO

FPA's 30th Annual Conference Attracts Heavy Hitters

More than 1000 pro-choice advocates participated in FPA's 30th Annual Conference on March 26. They heard from reproductive rights leaders including Planned Parenthood Federation of America President Cecile Richards and Cynthia Nixon, of *Sex and the City*, at the Annual Conference Luncheon. Governor Eliot Spitzer made a strong statement about the need to protect a woman's right to choose - marking the first time in more than a decade that a New York State Governor attended FPA's Conference. Senator Liz Krueger received FPA's Margaret Sanger Award and Loretta Ross was honored with the Champion of Reproductive Justice Award. State, national and international women's health advocates also participated in this inspirational and educational celebration in the State Capitol.



Teens Speak Out at Youth Leadership Conference

High school students participating in the Get the Facts NY Youth Leadership Conference were entertained by poet and performance artist Lenelle Moise, and practiced their interview skills with WRGB investigative reporter Rene Marsh. These savvy young people are sure to enhance access to reproductive health care and education as they embrace leadership roles that will take us into the next 30 years of Family Planning Advocates!

FPA's Education Fund Sponsors Conference on Language Access

More than 3.9 million New Yorkers are foreign born and 1.5 million residents do not speak English well, leaving many health care agencies struggling to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive services.

To address these challenges, the "New York State Conference on Increasing Language Access to Healthcare: Toward Effective State and National Policies" will be held on April 25 in Albany. The day-long gathering is sponsored by the Education Fund of Family Planning Advocates, the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society at the University at Albany, and the Center for Immigrant Health at New York University's School of Medicine. To register, please contact FPA at 518.436.8408 or info@edfundfpa.org.

Around New York

State Budget Funds Family Planning Services

For the first time in 12 years, New York's Executive Budget did not reduce funding for family planning services. Governor Spitzer's investment in family planning was supplemented with a \$675,000 addition from the State Legislature to help cover the cost of contraceptives and diagnostic tests so that uninsured and low-income women can have access to the same high-quality health care as other women in New York.

Spitzer Makes Plan B Available OTC for Medicaid Clients

As of February 1, New York State Medicaid clients are able to receive coverage for over-the-counter (OTC) Plan B without a fiscal order from a health care provider. Since last year's federal decision allowing Plan B to be dispensed over-the-counter, Family Planning Advocates worked to ensure that Medicaid clients would be able to obtain this safe and effective emergency contraceptive in a timely manner, without unnecessary paperwork. Governor Spitzer finalized this important change in policy shortly after taking office. FPA has developed fact sheets for consumers and pharmacists on how to get and use Plan B emergency contraception. These fact sheets are available on FPA's web site at www.fpaofnys.org.

Assembly Health Committee Advances Emergency Contraception Legislation

The New York State Assembly Health Committee favorably reported two pieces of legislation that would expand access to emergency contraception in New York State. The Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act, sponsored by Assemblymember Amy Paulin, will authorize pharmacists and nurses to dispense emergency contraception. The Public University Emergency Contraception Act, sponsored by Assemblymember Steven Englebright, would require each college and university in the SUNY and CUNY systems to disseminate informational materials to students regarding emergency contraception and make EC available at college health centers.

Campus Connection

Hofstra University's Women of Action sponsored a presentation entitled "Fill My Pills - Increasing Awareness About Emergency Contraception" on Back Up Your Birth Control Day, March 20.

Vox at SUNY New Paltz is preparing for "OUT LOUD - VOICES IN THE PARK" on May 12, at noon at Hasbrouck Park. The event will focus on how students and the community can work together to support comprehensive sex education for youth in New York schools. Food, entertainment, skits and speakers will be provided by high school peer educators and Planned Parenthood of the Mid-Hudson Valley.

SUNY Brockport, SUNY Geneseo, Syracuse University and University of Rochester Vox Chapters participated in International Women's Day events - collecting petition signatures, coordinating visibility events and hosting screenings of "Crossing Borders" and "Access Denied" - to shed light on international family planning issues.

Planned Parenthood Welcomes New Staff

Geoffrey Cook, Corporate Director of Marketing, and Erin Grant, Regional Marketing Communications Manager at Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/Syracuse Region

From the Hill

Prevention First Act Introduced in Both Houses

On the first day of the new Congress, the Prevention First Act was introduced in the U.S. Senate. This bill will expand access to preventive health care services that help reduce unintended pregnancy and improve women's access to health care. The bill includes proposals by Senator Hillary Clinton and Representative Nita Lowey to expand Medicaid coverage and comprehensive sex education. Representative Louise Slaughter introduced the companion House Bill on February 5.

Congress Gets REAL

The Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act was introduced on March 22. The intent of the REAL Act is to provide funding to states for age-appropriate, medically accurate comprehensive sexuality education in schools. Currently, no federal funding exists for comprehensive sex education in public schools. However, three separate federal programs, totalling \$176 million this year alone, support unproven abstinence-only programs.

President Bush Tries to Cut Funding for the Office of Women's Health

The Bush Administration attempted to slash funding for the Office of Women's Health, a division of the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), by 30 percent. The Office of Women's Health produces valuable health information and funds research to ensure that women receive the most appropriate drug doses and treatments. The office was at the center of the debate to allow Plan B emergency contraception to be available over-the-counter. Appeals by the FDA and Congress have resulted in a commitment to restore funding to the Office of Women's Health.

Pro-Choice People of Faith to Gather in Albany on Clergy Day

Clergy from across New York State will meet with elected officials in Albany on May 2 to offer pro-choice perspectives on family planning issues. The Rev. Penny Willis, director of the National Black Church Initiative of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and co-author of *Faith and Healthy Sexuality Curriculum*, will speak at the day's policy briefings. Clergy Day is co-sponsored by the New York State affiliate of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. For more information, contact Concerned Clergy for Choice at 518.436.8408 or info@fpaofnys.org.

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Legislators Welcome Irish Family Planning Association IFPA Attests to the Public Health Benefits of Sex Education

A delegation from the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) met with some of New York's top legislators on reproductive health issues in March. The Irish were strong advocates for making age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education available to young people.

"Ireland has had comprehensive sex education for some time," said Niall Behan, chief executive of the Irish Family Planning Association. "The rate of teen pregnancy in Ireland is half that of the United States."

The Irish Family Planning Association is involved in an advocacy partnership with Family Planning Advocates of New York State, which is supported by Planned Parenthood Global Partners.

The delegation from Ireland was on hand to see the New York State Assembly pass the Healthy Teens Act. Assemblymember Patricia Eddington honored Niall Behan and his colleagues, Karen Griffin and Richard Keane, with introductions in the Assembly Chamber. Senator Neil Breslin introduced the group in the Senate Chamber.

Assemblymember Cathy Nolan hosted a breakfast for the Irish Family Planning Association that enabled them to discuss local and global health policies with more than 50 legislators.



The IFPA delegation - Niall Behan, Richard Keane and Karen Griffin - were engaged in a workshop on capacity building conducted by Joan Coombs of Noble Work Consulting, and JoAnn Smith, president and CEO of Family Planning Advocates of New York State, at Planned Parenthood Federation of America's office in New York City.

IFPA Chief Executive Niall Behan (second from left) sat on an international panel on Women's Health and Reproductive Justice at FPA's Annual Conference. The panel confronted pressing global issues with International Planned Parenthood Federation Director Carmen Barroso, Sister-Song Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective National Coordinator Loretta Ross and Ana Quiros of the Women's Autonomous Movement in Nicaragua.



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