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UHPH is working with our national and state offices, as well as allied organizations, to develop a quick and targeted response to these new threats. Each rule is now in a review phase and our task is to prevent implementation.

It is difficult to get Congressional action in the months leading up to a major election. Still, it is critical that our supporters put pressure on their federal legislators to prevent implementation of these new regulations. It is also imperative that we ask candidates running for state and federal office if they are committed to preserving access to affordable family planning services and reproductive choice.

mental retardation and developmental disabilities clinic services. UHPH, according to the analysis, would lose an estimated \$750,000, while family planning providers across the state could lose a collective \$22 million!

*Continued from Cover*

# ANOTHER ASSAULT ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

# SAVE THE DATE JANUARY 22, 2009

## UHPH ANNUAL ROE V WADE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



**SARAH WEDDINGTON**  
*Featured Speaker*

Lawyer, Professor and  
Women's Rights Advocate

Successful lead attorney for the  
1973 Supreme Court case, *Roe v Wade*.

Watch our web site at [www.uhphp.org](http://www.uhphp.org)  
for further information.

# CHOICE *Remarks*

A Publication of Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood

Serving Albany, Columbia, Greene and Rensselaer Counties

## ANOTHER ASSAULT ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

When your loved one is taken to the hospital, should you have to worry that the personal beliefs of anyone at that hospital could interrupt or delay a life saving procedure? Most Americans believe that individuals who enter the health care field should leave their personal beliefs and prejudices at home. We assume that doctors, in particular, will abide by the Hippocratic oath and "keep the good of the patient as the highest priority." We assume that decisions regarding what medical procedures will be followed are based on sound medical research and experience, as well as a commitment to the common good, and that these decisions will be honored by those who provide our care.

But the Bush administration has a different agenda. Over the last eight years, that agenda has infected our federal agencies as the President placed in leadership positions people who make decisions based on ideology and not science. Now, his administration is bringing this infection into every health care entity touched by federal dollars.

**On August 28, Michael Levitt of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a draft 42-page "rule" that would demand freedom of conscience for any volunteer or paid staff member, from those who clean instruments to those who perform surgery.** The rule is written in the form of a clarification of previous regulations and focuses specifically on the provision of abortion and sterilization. However, the implications are wider. The rule forbids providers that receive federal funds from requiring "any individual to perform or assist in the performance of any part of a health services program...if such service or activity would be contrary to his religious beliefs or moral convictions."

Over the summer, another draft of this new rule was circulating within the White House administration. That draft included a new federal definition of abortion that included oral contraceptives and Emergency Contraception! Leavitt now states that it is not his intent to limit access to birth control. But while the new rule includes careful definition of many terms, it does not include a definition of abortion.

Patricia McGeown, UHPP President/CEO issued a statement the day after the proposed rule was announced.

"Through this proposed rule," asserted McGeown, "the Bush administration continues its relentless war on women. In a free society, access to the full range of reproductive health services and comprehensive, medically accurate information should be standard care. But this administration believes that a woman's access to health services should be limited by anyone's and everyone's religious or moral beliefs.

It's appalling how little regard the administration has for a woman's conscience and moral conviction."

**“Through this proposed rule, the Bush administration continues its relentless war on women.”**

**Patricia McGeown  
UHPP President/CEO**

**And there is more. Word of another proposed rule was conveyed recently from the Washington Office of the New York State Governor.** In a memo, the Governor's Office warned that a new CMS (Centers on Medicare and Medicaid Services, US Department of Health and Human Services) proposed rule on Hospital Outpatient and Community Clinic Services would "derail Governor Paterson's health system reform agenda" and pose a "potential loss of over \$350 million in Federal Medicaid dollars for New York State's clinic providers."

Those slated to lose significant funds under the new CMS rule include not only family planning centers but also renal dialysis services, mental health and drug rehabilitation programs, and

## CHOICE REMARKS

*is a publication of*UPPER HUDSON  
PLANNED PARENTHOOD

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# President's CORNER

## From **PATRICIA A. McGEOWN, President/CEO**

It is not possible to read the paper or listen to the news without learning of the dire circumstances confronting the state and the country. The mortgage and credit crisis, gas prices, food prices, layoffs, production slow downs, a weakened dollar - all have eroded our collective confidence.

While everyone is struggling to contend with the impact of these problems, perhaps no group is more at risk than those served by UHPP – the young, the poor, the marginally employed, the uninsured, the underinsured. With little or no income, these individuals rely on UHPP for access to needed preventive services.

Increasingly, the expanding circle of those in need touches each of our lives. A neighbor is laid off and loses their employee health insurance; a friend's son or daughter graduates from college and goes without health insurance until they can find full time employment; a family down the street is caught up in the mortgage crisis and is forced to move, disrupting jobs and health coverage. As we approach the Presidential election, access to affordable health care is among the top issues for most Americans.

In such uncertain times, without access to affordable care, too many people will delay or simply go without preventive health care—and be forced to handle much bigger problems as a result. Women who cannot afford birth control end up facing unintended pregnancies. Those who cannot afford an annual exam may discover cervical cancer only when it is too late for treatment. Those who cannot afford screening for sexually transmitted infections may pass that infection on to others. That's why, as other programs and services are cut, we must protect access to the preventive reproductive health services available through Planned Parenthood.

We are a safety net provider, assuring that people are able to maintain some control over their health while contending with the difficulties posed by the economy. We provide services to over 10,000 patients a year and know that access to family planning services is a critical component of staying afloat in tight economic times. As benefits are slashed, jobs are cut and women are forced to choose between birth control and groceries, we must all work hard to ensure that the greatest barrier to choice is not financial.

Yet, as you read elsewhere in this newsletter, our ability to be there for our patients in tough times is threatened. The current administration in Washington continues to propose rules and regulations to tie our hands and limit our capacity to perform our important functions. The NYS fiscal crisis is hurting us as well, slashing our already inadequate funding by 6%. In the final analysis, those people who are already suffering in these difficult times will be hurt the most if federal and state efforts succeed in reducing our funds, our reimbursement and ultimately our capacity to meet the needs of the least among us.

It seems almost impossible that the great strides women have made for their health and safety in this country: emergency contraception over the counter, easy access to birth control, the right to choose, could be undone not by political or social action but by simple economics. We must stand together and work to guarantee that the quality of healthcare that women receive is not based on the amount of money in their bank accounts, and that the rights and services we have fought so hard for are not taken away by dollars and cents.

## UHPP Now Offers the GARDASIL VACCINE

In May of 2008, thanks to a special grant from the New York State Department of Health, UHPP began to offer the Gardasil vaccine to female patients between the ages of 19 and 26. The vaccine protects against certain strains of the Human Papillomavirus or HPV that cause cervical cancer and genital warts, and was approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

According to UHPP Vice President for Patient Services, Christine Pluviose, "This is an important new service and one which we have worked hard to provide. Cervical cancer is a disease that affects far too many women, while genital warts has traumatized and disrupted the lives of many more. This vaccine is safe and effective and can provide protection from disease caused by HPV. We are proud to be able to provide it at an affordable rate to our patients."



Albany Center Director, Toni Stratman with Vice President for Patient Services, Christine Pluviose at our Albany health center.

About twenty million people in the United States are currently infected with HPV and an estimated 6.2 million people are newly infected each year. HPV affects both men and women who take part in any kind of sexual activity that involves genital contact, and often has no obvious signs or symptoms. Most types of HPV are harmless, and go away on their own.

The Gardasil vaccine protects against two specific types of HPV that are known to cause 70% of cervical cancer worldwide and two types known to cause 90% of genital warts in both men and women. The vaccine is administered in three doses given at specific intervals over a six-month time period. A booster shot may be required after five to seven years. It is recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

## Can't Juggle it All – SIGN UP FOR FPBP!

In August, a catchy image from our new marketing campaign began appearing on local CDTA buses and bus shelters, on the CW television network, on posters and postcards in our health centers and in selected print publications, such as Metroland.

The campaign slogan, "Can't Juggle it All? Call Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood" is designed to reach working women who do not have health insurance coverage and encourage them to contact us about the Family Planning Benefit Program (FPBP). FPBP is a special Medicaid program that covers birth control visits and supplies, as well as related family planning visits, for uninsured working women.

Julie Pierino, Center Director for the UHPP Latham health center and one of our two FPBP enrollment specialists, illustrated the importance of this program by sharing the experiences of two recent patients.

"I recently helped a 25 year old woman enroll in FPBP who had just had her third child," explained Pierino. "She wanted to prevent future pregnancies, but had trouble taking a daily oral contraceptive. She wanted an IUD, but was sure she could not afford it. When she found out she could enroll in FPBP and have the IUD covered, she was almost in tears.

"On another occasion, a 17 year old patient had an abnormal result from an annual Pap test. The UHPP clinician recommended a colposcopy for further diagnosis, but this is a very expensive service. The patient was too young to qualify for other free cancer screening programs, but she was able to enroll in FPBP, which then covered the full cost of the procedure."

Can't juggle it all?

Call Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood

for info on FREE exams and FREE birth control  
1-800-230-PLAN • www.uhpp.org

Upper Hudson  
Planned Parenthood®

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**NEW YORK STATE**  **NYS SENATE SWITCHBOARD: (518) 455-2800**  
**NYS ASSEMBLY SWITCHBOARD: (518) 455-4100**

## FAMILY PLANNING FUNDING – BUDGET CUTS TRIM GAINS

Many UHPP staff and volunteers communicated with state legislators this past session, making the case for increased funding for family planning services. The increase was necessary to meet the needs of a growing number of uninsured patients and rising costs for everything from lab tests to new contraceptives. Our efforts were rewarded when the budget was finalized. The original 2008-09 NYS Budget contained an increase of \$675,000 for family planning services as well as new, one-time funding grants for emergency contraception education, outreach and supplies, and for provision of the HPV vaccine.

But our victory was only temporary. Governor Paterson brought both houses of the state legislature back to Albany in August to enact budget cuts, based on the state's poor fiscal situation. Early signals pointed to major cuts for family planning services.

In response, we put out the message to both the Governor's office and the legislature that cutting prevention-oriented family planning services while citizens already faced huge financial burdens was exactly the wrong thing to do. When times are tough, women and families must have access to affordable, quality health care services.

While our efforts appeared to trim the level of proposed cuts, it did not save us from the chopping block. Family planning providers, including UHPP, can expect to see at least a 6% across the board reduction in family planning funding and new grant monies.

**Action: Don't forget to question candidates this fall about their commitment to adequate funding for family planning and comprehensive sex education, as well as their commitment to reproductive choice.**

## The HEALTHY TEENS ACT

The New York State Senate once again failed to bring this important bill that would improve and expand medically accurate, comprehensive sex education, to the floor for a vote. The State Assembly had once again passed the bill with overwhelming support during the early months of the year.



**NYS Senate Democrats called a press conference to push for passage of the Healthy Teens Act. Among the speakers was UHPP intern Claire Skotnes, who is pictured in the front row, second from the right.**

## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND PRIVACY ACT

The resignation of former Governor Spitzer delayed action on this bill which would bring New York State laws in line with the tenets of Roe v Wade and would ensure access to abortion services and reproductive choice in New York, in the event that Roe were overturned by an increasingly conservative Supreme Court.

 **IN WASHINGTON** **US CAPITOL SWITCHBOARD: (202) 224-3121**

## Birth Control STILL NOT AFFORDABLE

Congress has still not restored access to affordable birth control. Because of a legislative error, college students and low-income women in many parts of the country have lost access to affordable birth control. Here in the Capital Region, the Sage Colleges responded to skyrocketing birth control prices by switching to generic brands, but prices are still high. At R.P.I., birth control was no longer available on campus. UHPP worked with students on several local campuses to draw attention to this issue. Over 200 students signed petitions and joined our email network, so they could send Congress a message that still has not been heard.

**Action: Remind your member of Congress that birth control is basic health care that must be affordable.**

## New Regulations THREATEN ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

As the cover article explains, new proposed regulations from the Bush administration threaten access to affordable health care services, as well as the fiscal strength of providers.

**Action: Call on Congress to challenge the implantation of these new regulations.**

## Join UHPP at AIDSWalk 2008!



UHPP staff and volunteers at AIDSWalk 2007.

On Sunday, September 28, 2008, UHPP staff, volunteers, and supporters will join with thousands of Capital Region residents for AIDSWalk 2008 in Albany's Washington Park. Each year this event raises nearly \$200,000 for local HIV/AIDS programs. Best of all, half of all the money our team raises will be returned to UHPP for our prevention, outreach, and testing programs. To register to walk with UHPP, or to pledge a gift to one of our walkers, please go to [www.firstgiving.com/upperhudsonplannedparenthood](http://www.firstgiving.com/upperhudsonplannedparenthood).

If you need to speak with someone personally, please contact Emily at 434-5678 x 141 or by email at [emily@uhpp.org](mailto:emily@uhpp.org)

## Patient Escorts **NEEDED**

- Do you feel that women should be able to enter their local Planned Parenthood health center without fear of harassment or intimidation?
- Are you outraged that anti-choice picketers take photos of our patients and force pedestrians and their children to face photos of enlarged, bloody fetuses?
- Do you have a steady temper and an ability to deal calmly with sometime irrational and irritating people?

If you answered yes to these three questions and have at least an extra 2 hours to spare each month, please volunteer to be a UHPP patient escort.



Stancia Cramer, 2007 Volunteer of the Year, and patient escorts Anne Swarthourt (left) and Carol Stenger (right) were honored at the UHPP Annual Meeting. Other outstanding escorts unable to attend the event were Nora Adelman, Chris Bayley, Judith Karis and Jo Levinger.

Patient escorts stand in front of our health centers in Albany, Hudson and Troy on days when picketers are present. Escorts provide a warm smile, friendly greeting and calm presence to patients as they approach. Volunteers also inform patients of their rights and assist them in filing complaints if those rights are violated. With the help of our escorts, we document all picketer activity for use in possible legal prosecution.

If you are interested in becoming a patient escort, please call Rebecca at 434-5678 x137 or download a volunteer application from our web site at [www.uhpp.org](http://www.uhpp.org). Screening involves an application review, personal interview, background and reference checks. All patient escorts also receive training prior to taking a shift.

## Get Out the **VOTE!**

UHPP is pulling out all stops to get out the vote this November.

So much is at stake! The men and women we elect to state and federal office hold in their hands the power to increase or cut our funding; to promote abstinence-only or comprehensive sex education; to protect a woman's right to reproductive choice or make abortion illegal. That is why UHPP staff and



volunteers are taking every opportunity to promote voter registration and voter education this fall.

Would you like to help? There are many opportunities to do GOTV tabling at our health centers or at community events this fall. Please contact Blue Carreker, UHPP Vice President for Public Affairs and Marketing, at [blue@uhpp.org](mailto:blue@uhpp.org) or 434-5678 x133 for information on how to get involved.

## S.T.A.R.S. PEER EDUCATORS Ready for School Year



Our 2008-09 Columbia County S.T.A.R.S. peer educators include, in back, Myles Shepard, Brendon Monk, Letycia Tillman, Ej Napier, and staff member, Nicole Dallas. In front are Jena Castano, Sabrina Soares-Kern, Danielle Gilleo, Angela Mathews, and staff member, Celeste Steinke. Other members, missing from the photo, are Amber Markham, Shannon Markham, Courtney Stalker, Cordero McCall.



Our 2008-09 Albany S.T.A.R.S. peer educators include, in back, Johron Lee, Darian Henry, Emmanuel Laury and JaQuess Wynn. In the front are Krishona Denise Brown, Brihan Ford, Shakima Alexander, Tiffany Ford and Althia Boutrin.



S.T.A.R.S. members distributed voter registration packets, safer sex kits and information at Albany Latin Festival.



Angela Mathews, Courtney Stalker and Letycia Tillman carry the Columbia County S.T.A.R.S. banner at Hudson Black Arts Festival parade.

Summer is training time for the UHPP S.T.A.R.S. (Seriously Talking About Sex) peer educators. New high school students recruited, screened and hired at the end of the past school year, join with continuing S.T.A.R.S. members and begin to learn the information and skills that will allow them to be effective educators.

Beginning in July, the students alternated training sessions on topics such as Anatomy and Physiology, Sexual Reproduction, and Birth Control and STIs with activities including a health center tour, a workshop on creative dramatics and a service learning program provided by a local environmental organization. The Albany peer educators also began to learn the basics of creating a newsletter, while those in Hudson started to learn how to plan and create short videos.

Community fairs and events provide a great vehicle for pairing old and new peer educators in an activity that involves one-on-one interaction with the public, as well as opportunities to be visible and to share pride in their program. The S.T.A.R.S. peer educators passed out information at the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, marched in the Hudson Black Arts Festival, talked to participants at Albany Latin Festival and staffed tables at

both the Columbia County Fair and the Black and Latino Gay Pride Day.

The new school year will bring additional education and training sessions, development of media campaigns promoting teen pregnancy prevention and responsible sexuality, college visits and an opportunity to attend a major out-of-state conference focused on youth development and peer education.

Nicole Dallas will continue to work with the Columbia County S.T.A.R.S. peer educators and will be joined by Celeste Steinke of Selkirk, our new Columbia County Youth Facilitator. Maureen Murphy, former Teen Choices Coordinator, will be assuming the position of Albany County Youth Facilitator, serving as the primary staff person responsible for the S.T.A.R.S. program in Albany County.

Be sure to look for our S.T.A.R.S. peer educators and Education staff at local events. If you are interested in programming related to sexual health, or want more information on the S.T.A.R.S. program, please call 434-5678 x137 in Albany or 828-7818 in Columbia County.

# Welcome to Our New Board Members

UHPP welcomed four new members onto the Board of Directors at our Annual Meeting in May. Beginning two year terms with the Board are: Tricia Asaro of Delmar, an attorney with Greenberg Traurig; Anne Lauren Barba, also of Delmar, a Neuropsychologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Neurology at Albany Medical College; Sherry Gold of Slingerlands, a registered nurse and retired Director for Treatment Services at the Capital District Psychiatric Center, New York State Office of Mental Health; and Beth Scher of Albany, a self-employed artist and owner of BES Art Studio, LLC.

## WHY I JOINED THE BOARD

*In each issue of Choice Remarks, we ask one or two of our current Board members to share their reasons for volunteering in a leadership role at UHPP. Our thanks to Anne Barba and Tricia Asaro for their contributions to this issue.*



Anne Barba

*“I joined the UHPP Board because I believe that a woman has a right to make choices that affect her own body. I also believe in affordable health care for women who wouldn’t otherwise have access to services.”*

*“I joined the UHPP Board in order to play an active role in ensuring access to reproductive health services and education in our community.”*



Tricia Asaro

## Board Members ON TOUR



On August 27, members of the UHPP Board of Directors joined the management staff in a bus tour of our health centers in Hudson, Latham and Troy. Board members, who often have committee meetings at the Albany health center, enjoyed a box lunch and tours of each site.



The Troy health center was still open for services when we stopped and Walkino Howard, the Center Director, provided a tour of the facility. Rabbi Don Cashman, Board Chair, remarked on the “terrific opportunity to get a close look at the character, possibilities and challenges of each site.”



At the UHPP Annual Meeting in May, UHPP President/CEO Patricia A. McGeown honored Gerald Katzman, J.D., for his many years of outstanding and devoted service as our agency attorney.

## Gifts in Tribute

*Giving tributes is a special way to remember or honor someone special, while helping others in our community. If you would like more information about tributes, please call 434-5678 x141.*

The following tribute gifts have been received since our last issue of *Choice Remarks*:

**In Memory of Sarah McGeown**

*by Kathleen Tanner, Patricia A. McGeown and Donald J. Walker*

**In Honor of Jennifer French**

*By Penny Axelrod*

**In Honor of Donna Peterson being a “survivor”**

*By Robert and Linda Peterson*