



Delaying Abortion Services at Planned Parenthood: Quad Cities, Iowa

Five Years of Saving Babies and Counting

PROBLEM: *Planned Parenthood identified the Quad Cities area around the Iowa-Illinois border as “one of the largest metropolitan areas in the US that lacks an abortion provider.”²¹ Claiming to be “desperately needed in Scott County, where teen pregnancy is the highest in the state,”²² Planned Parenthood of Greater Iowa announced in 1995 that it would construct abortion facilities, and purchased land in the quiet, well-kept Bettendorf community.^{3,4}*

RESPONSE: To fight the proposed clinic, Quad City Right to Life and other concerned pro-lifers formed the Life and Family Coalition. With the support of thousands of citizens, this group delayed the construction of the clinic and the initiation of abortion “services.”

Local leaders believe that the Quad Cities’ most effective response to the proposed clinic was the sheer number of dedicated pro-life people that joined the effort.⁵ Thousands were involved. Pro-life citizens prayed, attended a pro-life concert, and signed a petition opposing the clinic. Community members inundated local officials’ offices with pro-life commentary and packed the Bettendorf City Council meeting on the night of its crucial vote.^{3,4}

Useful Tool: Planned Parenthood’s Own Words

Quad Cities pro-lifers educated the public on Planned Parenthood’s agenda by using Planned Parenthood’s own material.



RECIPE FOR ENDURANCE

Quad Cities, IA

Ingredients

- ◆ Visible, tenacious pro-lifers
- ◆ Promising zoning ordinances
- ◆ Strong church involvement
- ◆ Appropriate medical regulations
- ◆ Supportive municipal officials
- ◆ Contributions from professionals

Preparation

Maintained presence at city council meetings. Educated the public with Planned Parenthood’s own material. Challenged abortion with city zoning laws. Presented data showing abortion facilities’ effect on property values. State health department required “certificate of need.”

Result

Fought clinic for three years; now building a free medical center.

Pro-life clergy wrote letters, hosted prayer breakfasts, and signed churches onto a Declaration of the Sanctity of Life.^{4,5}

From the beginning, local professionals contributed to the effort. After talking with local clergy, a bank president decided not to sell his property to Planned Parenthood. Local construction companies refused to work on Planned Parenthood’s building, forcing the hiring of out of town contractors for most of the work. A group of realtors produced a study revealing that property values have fallen in other communities after the arrival of an abortion clinic.^{4,5}



Why
Delay
is
NOT
Failure

Pro-lifers in the Quad Cities and elsewhere have often invested much time, money, and energy into opposing abortion, only to have a clinic eventually open. Their efforts, however, are not failures. Petitions, town meetings, zoning appeals, and litigation all delay the performance of abortion even if they do not prevent it entirely.

Delay translates into three powerful accomplishments. When challenging Planned Parenthood's abortion agenda, pro-lifers publicly call into question the organization's rhetoric about "trust," "compassion," and "values."⁹ The opening of abortion facilities further inspires a local pro-life presence, especially in the form of crisis pregnancy centers that provide caring alternatives to abortion. Further, every day that Planned Parenthood spends defending itself is a day when babies are not being killed by abortion.

Significantly, Quad Cities activists used Planned Parenthood's own materials, straight from a Des Moines clinic, to educate the community on the organization's true values. The Life and Family Coalition hosted a press conference and advertised on the radio and in the newspaper about Planned Parenthood. In an interview with

Innovative Idea:

A group of realtors presented the City Council with data showing that abortion clinics lowered surrounding property values.

a Des Moines newspaper, a Planned Parenthood executive projected the annual number of abortions she expected at the proposed clinic. After carefully confirming the number with the reporter and other sources, Quad City Right to Life posted 6 startling billboards stating, "Planned Parenthood plans to kill 4,000+ by abortion per year in Bettendorf."^{4, 5}

According to Planned Parenthood, pro-life "extremists" allied with the state constructed a "Berlin Wall" against abortion in the Quad Cities. A troublesome obstacle for the proposed clinic was the "certificate of need" the Iowa Department of Public Health required of all health organizations that were new to the area or undergoing changes. Designed to hold down health care costs by barring the construction of unneeded facilities, this provision kept the abortion facility on the drawing board until the law was eventually defeated in court.^{2, 6}

Meanwhile, Bettendorf municipal officials twice denied Planned Parenthood's site plan application, arguing that the clinic would devalue neighboring property and that abortion facilities would not be appropriate in an area zoned as a planned unit development district. It also placed a moratorium on all re-zoning decisions pertaining to the clinic while it investigated health and safety issues. In 1998, a federal court prohibited the city from enforcing its zoning laws, and rezoned the property so that Planned Parenthood could begin construction.^{3, 5}

The story, however, ends hopefully. The Life and Family Educational Trust purchased the property across from the clinic and is building the Women's Choice Center, a free medical clinic for pregnant women. A sign reading "Mommy, please let me live" outside of the temporary office has already saved babies from abortion.^{7, 8}

Notes 1. Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), Press Release, 2/12/98. 2. Obradovich, *Quad-City Times*, 5/21/96. 3. DeWitt, *Q-C Times*, 12/4/96; 11/7/96, 2/13/98. 4. Mendenhall and Hess, *Citizen*, 11/97. 5. Schwartz, Dec. Telephone interview, 6/22/00. Fax, 7/25/00. 6. Santiago, *Des Moines Register*, 5/21/98, 9/15/98. 7. *Washington Times*, 11/15/99. 8. Bohn, Kathryn. Telephone interview, 7/26/00, 6/14/01. 9. PPFA Annual Rpt, 1997-98; 1995-96.



NATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE
Educational Trust Fund
www.nrlc.org