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Deceptive Crisis Pregnancy Centers in our Schools

Spring 2002 Newsletter

Deceptive anti-abortion so-called crisis pregnancy centers take their lies and deception into our public schools and how one parent exposed them and caused the school district to stop the deception.

There are approximately 45 antiabortion and so-called crisis pregnancy centers in Colorado and according to the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL) in April of 2000; there were more than 3,200 of these centers nationwide. According to the antiabortion organization Family Research Council they outnumber abortion providers by a 4 to 3 margin. We know these so-called crisis pregnancy centers are fundamentally Christian based, don't believe in abortion and their primary goal is to stop as many women as possible from having an abortion, which of course means they have to get women into their centers who are considering an abortion but don't know they are antiabortion and anti-birth control. These centers won't refer a woman, even if asked, to not only an abortion provider in the community but to a doctor for birth control. It's only been in the last few years that they've been required to advertise in the phone book under the title "Abortion Alternatives," because of their deceptive advertising practices that mislead women, including calling their center by names that don't sound like an antiabortion organization like, Woman's Resource Center "because it has a much higher appeal among abortion rights women..." says the antiabortion organization Family Research Council. You can view a list of so-called crisis pregnancy centers in your state by going to the web site, www.pregnancycenters.org.

In Fort Collins, Colorado this so-called crisis pregnancy center is called Alpha Center for Women. They have offices in Fort Collins and one on the Colorado State University Campus in Fort Collins. Their name would never indicate that they are antiabortion. I've known about them since I came to Fort Collins but it wasn't until the fall of 2000 that I discovered they'd been bringing their inaccurate and false information and deception into our public school system.

In October 2000 they were invited into my oldest daughter's ninth grade health class to do a three-day abstinence education presentation. I let the teacher know I would be observing their entire presentation (I was the only parent there) and I was concerned about many things including their abstinence till marriage message. The teacher told the Alpha Center they needed to speak to our children in terms of abstinence until they were in a committed adult relationship. The Alpha Center presenters placed their name and number on the board and told our children they were a 24-hour crisis pregnancy center, with free pregnancy testing and support groups for teens and could provide help if they kept their baby, but they never disclosed they were a Christian antiabortion organization. Their presentation troubled me because I wasn't sure of all the facts they were presenting to our children. On day two, a nurse affiliated with the Alpha Center claimed she was quoting the CDC in one instance when discussing STDS and I've since found out she lied.

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A recent letter to the editor of the Fort Collins Coloradoan said, "Does {Loonan} think the Alpha Center makes up these statistics and facts?" I replied in a letter of response, "Yes, I do." Bruce Mirken, Colorado Springs Independent Newspaper, August 16, 2001 discussing abstinence-only education programs said, "Sometimes the information is flat wrong...the curriculum, Choosing the Best, warns kids about syphilis, stating that over 100,000 new cases {are} reported each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) when in fact according to the CDC's STD Surveillance, only 6,657 cases of primary and secondary syphilis were reported in 1999." Alpha Center's 2000 presentation to my daughter's ninth grade class, quoted the CDC saying, "there are 101,000 cases annually of syphilis." I wish now that I had taken my concerns to the principal, the district, and my school board representative before they got the opportunity to speak in another one of daughter's classes but I didn't.

In October 2001 the Alpha Center was asked to make a one-day presentation in my daughters tenth grade health class. I also was the only parent sitting in on that presentation. This time their presentation was a little different. A volunteer gave the entire presentation and quoted no statistics or studies about anything she laid out there as fact. She also placed her name and Alpha Center's number on the board letting our children know that they were a resource for them if they ever faced an unintended pregnancy. I was again extremely troubled by that because never in that presentation did they disclose to our children they were Christian based, antiabortion and anti-birth control.

But that wasn't all that troubled me. The presenter said, "Condoms aren't meant to protect you from HIV, just from pregnancy." I was outraged. She also said, without any proof, that 50% of students in one of our junior highs was having oral sex, if you engage in premarital sex you will have difficulties in bonding in the future, and you will have a higher chance of experiencing adultery and divorce. At the end of the presentation, I asked the question that the

Alpha Center never wanted to answer. I asked them to confirm they were a Christian based organization that wouldn't refer a woman to an abortion provider or a doctor for birth control even if asked. They stammered, couldn't deny it but were very reluctant to admit to it.

After the presentation I went straight to the principal of my daughter's high school and expressed my concerns. He listened intently, understood and seemed as troubled by the inaccuracies and the failure to disclose the kind of organization they were as I was. I went home and contacted my school board representative who was outraged as well and began to call the proper district officials. Within a few weeks, the district had begun to investigate this organization and sit in on their presentations. They were troubled by what they heard too and they were troubled by the lack of disclosure. The district hadn't taken a look at and updated their health and sexuality curriculum in a very long time including the approved list of appropriate outside organizations that can be asked to speak in our classrooms. Many teachers and district personnel had no idea exactly who the Alpha Center was, they were that good at not disclosing even to teachers exactly who they were.

In the long term, Poudre School District officials have now begun the process of updating their curriculum that will be ready for next school year. In the short term they've set some guidelines if the Alpha Center is to present in our classrooms. Alpha Center must present an outline of their presentation that can be given to parents. The Alpha Center expressed reluctance to do that saying they're afraid some parents may then opt their children out of the presentation. It would seem that the parental rights sword has a double edge.

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The district also said they must disclose what kind of organization they are to our children. The Alpha Center is also reluctant to do that. In fact in a letter to the editor in the local newspaper the executive director defending the center's strategy not to disclose the truth about their organization to our children said, "{That} isn't what abstinence programs are about." But that is deliberately being deceptive because she knows perfectly well that her center presents themselves as a place our children can go if faced with an unintended pregnancy. That demands they disclose to our children they're Christian based, opposed to abortion and wouldn't refer a woman to an abortion provider or to a doctor to obtain birth control. So what is up with the Alpha Center's reluctance to disclose exactly who they are?

It's about getting unsuspecting abortion-minded women (a term used by a resource magazine for crisis pregnancy centers) into their center, including teens who come without parental knowledge or consent, so they can preach Christianity and guilt them into not having an abortion. The Alpha Center, as all other so-called crisis pregnancy centers, exists first and foremost to prevent as many women as possible from having an abortion. Alpha Center knows abortion-minded women aware of their opposition to abortion wouldn't likely contact them, so Alpha Center resorts to deception. Abstinence-only education gets them into the classroom where they deliberately choose not to disclose to our children the truth about their organization.

The so-called crisis pregnancy center Alpha Center will no longer be able to operate within the Poudre School District, in Fort Collins, Colorado under the radar, setting their deceptive sights upon our children. They will have to come clean about who they are and about the facts. It took only one courageous determined parent to bring to a halt their deceptive practices within our school district, their preying upon our children, their placing at risk our children's lives. It also took a school board and school district willing to do the right and moral thing for the sake of our children. We are lucky in this district. I am aware that others across the country aren't so lucky.

If you don't know whether the local so-called crisis pregnancy center in your area is making deceptive presentations in your school district find out, for the sake of all our children. Listen to their presentations at different grade levels, noting exactly what they say and whether they make full disclosure about what kind of organization they are and then take your documented concerns to your principal and school board representative. If they aren't responsive to you write letters to the editor and contact Life and Liberty for Women. We will help you.

Peggy Loonan, parent

Related letters to the editor

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