

Anti-abortion activists eye inner city

WASHINGTON (AP) - On a street once known as Murder Row, a teen center founded to steer youths away from drugs and crime has become an outpost in another crusade — a nationwide push by anti-abortion activists to expand their foothold in heavily Black and Hispanic inner cities.

The campaign involves crisis pregnancy centers, whose counselors seek to dissuade women with unplanned pregnancies from having abortions. There are more than 2,300 centers across America, yet relatively few in inner cities where abortion rates are typically highest.

Now the two largest networks — Care Net and Heartbeat International — have launched initiatives to change that equation. Their sometimes awkward efforts rely on unlikely alliances, as an anti-abortion movement led mostly by conservative, White Republicans interacts with overwhelmingly Democratic, Black communities.

"This crusade has been very difficult — having to educate community leaders as to what's really going on

without being offensive, without having a political agenda," said Lillie Epps, the only Black member of Care Net's senior staff and director of its Urban Initiative.

In Washington, the key players say all has gone smoothly in a year-old partnership between a Care Net affiliate, the Capitol Hill Crisis Pregnancy Center, and a teen center in the tough Anacostia neighborhood called The House DC. During the school year, Capitol Hill volunteers come to The House to counsel girls from nearby Anacostia High School who are caught in the tide of teen pregnancies.

One reason for the harmony: The teen center's Black leaders and the Whites running the pregnancy center share an evangelical Christian faith.

Steve Fitzhugh, co-founder of The House, is a former pro football player active with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He's mentored boys later killed in gang shootings, and girls as young as 12 who carried pregnancies to term.

"I don't care if it's conservative dollars or liberal dol-

lars we get," Fitzhugh said. "We've got to save these kids."

Fitzhugh's program is in synch with the nationwide pregnancy-center movement not only in opposing abortion but also in advocating sexual abstinence outside of marriage and refusing to promote birth control.

"Others say, 'Let's pass out the condoms.' We're not on that page, and that's not always a popular stance," Fitzhugh said.

About two miles from The House, in a racially mixed neighborhood, the Capitol Hill pregnancy center is in its 21st year of operation. Its six-member board, executive director and most of its volunteers are White, but 89 percent of its clients are Black.

Yet the director, Janet Durig, said she and her White colleagues don't feel like outsiders. She evoked the image of a pregnant Black teen, abandoned by her boyfriend, coming in for counseling.

"When she breaks down and cries, do you think she cares if I'm White?" Durig asked.

Critics contend that preg-

nancy centers routinely mislead women seeking neutral advice on their options. A report in July from congressional Democrats said center counselors often overstate the medical risks posed by abortion.

Skeptics also argue that the same White conservatives supporting urban anti-abortion initiatives oppose other social policies that might help minority single mothers and their children.

"These predatory fanatics don't lift a finger to help the children who are born unwanted and unplanned," said Jatrice Martel Gaiter, head of the Washington-area Planned Parenthood chapter.

"In these centers of deception, they leave young parents, at best, with a box of Pampers and a prayer," she said. "They leave people even more vulnerable than when they walked through the door, without any information about how to avoid a future unintended pregnancy."

Durig acknowledged that her center recommends abstinence — not birth control — to clients, but said its services go beyond opposing abor-

tion. The center offers parenting classes; a basement storage room is stacked with bins of donated baby clothes.

Capitol Hill also is among hundreds of pregnancy centers that recently acquired ultrasound equipment, on the premise that a look inside the womb will deter many pregnant women from abortion.

A sign on the center's brick facade reads "Pregnant and Scared?" — the slogan Care Net has placed on 40,000 billboard and bus-shelter ads nationwide, promoting a hotline it runs with

Heartbeat International on behalf of their 1,900 affiliated centers.

Most of the centers are rural or suburban. The quest to open more in inner cities is fueled by statistics showing that nearly 90 percent of women who get abortions live in urban areas, and the majority are poor.

Care Net says it has opened 13 urban centers since 2003, with 15 more under development in Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit and elsewhere.

(See Abortion, Page 13)

Effort shows U.S. minority history

Special to Sentinel-Voice

All over America, there are movements to highlight the contributions of minorities. Below are some examples of efforts to recognize minorities in American history:

—In Colorado, a Civil War-era incident once called the Sand Creek Battle is increasingly referred to as the Sand Creek Massacre. In 1864, about 700 U.S. soldiers killed 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho people who thought they were under Army protection. A National Park Service site has been designated but is not yet open to the public.

—Last month in Topeka, Kan., a 10-foot-tall bronze sculpture of the Mariachi Estrella de Topeka — Topeka's Mariachi Stars — was mounted outside the city's Performing Arts Center in honor of local Mexican-American musicians who died in a Kansas City, Mo., building collapse 25 years ago.

—On Angel Island near San Francisco, thousands of immigrants, nearly all from China, were processed and often detained starting around 1910. It's been a California state park for decades, but parts of the historical grounds — including barracks with Chinese poems carved on the walls — now are closed pending renovations expected to be completed next year.

—A stretch of Los Angeles County's Manhattan Beach was renamed Bruce's Beach last month. Once owned by the African-American Bruce family, it was one of the few California beaches open to Blacks in the 1920s and '30s. "Sometimes you just want to make things right," said Mitch Ward, Manhattan Beach's mayor.

—In the South, investigations into several decades-old crimes against Blacks are being pursued for the first time. The FBI recently announced it is probing the unsolved 1946 lynching of four Black men on the Moore's Ford Bridge in Monroe, Ga.

—Next Saturday, a museum will open dedicated to the integration of Clinton High School in Clinton, Tenn., 50 years ago. The first Black students walked to the school past hundreds of taunting, angry White people.

Governor: Keep affirmative action

By Diane Bukowski

Special to Sentinel-Voice

DETROIT (NNPA) - Gov. Jennifer Granholm has thrown her support behind a federal lawsuit to keep affirmative action as state law. She joins the effort to keep the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative's anti-affirmative action proposal off the state ballot in November.

The lawsuit in opposition to the MCRI proposal was filed by Operation King's Dream, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, two union locals and signers of petitions for the proposal. The Detroit City Council, the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, and the Arab-American Anti Discrimination Committee among others have passed resolutions supporting the suit.

The MCRI has proposed to amend Michigan's constitution to ban all affirmative action in government and public school hiring, contracting and admissions. The group is funded by ultraconservative California businessman Ward Connerly and other wealthy right-wing supporters.

In a brief filed Aug. 14,

"But I was totally hurt that there were hundreds, hundreds of people that had signed the petition, totally 100 percent under false pretenses."

— Rev. Nathaniel Smith, Detroit, Mich.

Granholm asked Tarnow to conclude "that the MCRI campaign was designed to deceive targeted Michigan voters — especially African-American and Latino voters — into supporting an initiative they passionately oppose... To allow this initiative to remain on the ballot pollutes our voting system and undermines the freedom of political choice that necessarily accompanies the right to vote."

Granholm noted that Michigan courts had ruled that the MCRI initiative did not violate state law. She asked Tarnow to rule that it does violate the federal Voting Rights Act, under a section which says in part: "if, based on the totality of the circumstances, it is shown that that political processes leading to the nomination or

election ... are not equally open to participation by members of a class of citizens [protected under the act]."

She cited the testimony of hundreds of petition signers and circulators at four hearings conducted by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and authorized by her office, that they were deceived into thinking that the MCRI proposal supported affirmative action.

She noted particularly the testimony of Detroit pastor Nathaniel Smith. He testified in Lansing that he circulated MCRI petitions because he was told they were pro-affirmative action, until he discovered that he had been lied to.

"I'm very politically active," said Smith during that hearing.

"I started letting everybody know the true meaning of what the petition was about. But I was totally hurt that there were hundreds, hundreds of people that had signed the petition, totally 100 percent under false pretenses."

MCRI executive director Jennifer Gratz claimed that Granholm's action was calculated to help her with her base in the November election. Gratz has said she supports Granholm's Republican opponent, Dick DeVos.

One United Michigan, a broad-based coalition of business, labor, social and religious organizations, is campaigning across the state for a vote against the MCRI initiative if it remains on the ballot.

A similar anti-affirmative action initiative in California, also sponsored by Connerly, was successful. It has reportedly resulted in severe drops in the numbers of African-American and Latino admissions to that state's universities, although recent census figures show that Whites are now a minority in that state.

Diane Bukowski writes for the Michigan Citizen.

Janis Carter
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