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Introducing RHAP's New Interns

Welcome to the latest edition of the Reproductive Health Access Project's newsletter. Read on to learn about RHAP's projects.

Please send feedback to: [info@reproductiveaccess.org](mailto:info@reproductiveaccess.org)

SOME ALARMING STATISTICS

The birth rate for teens aged 15 to 19 rose by 3% in 2006, marking the first increase in 14 years. A recent report from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy notes that the rate of decline has slowed each year since 2003, suggesting that this increase may be a trend, not an aberration. For the full report, go to [www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/TeenBirths\\_ExamIncrease.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/TeenBirths_ExamIncrease.pdf)

Research by the Guttmacher Institute finds that family physicians, especially those in private practice, are not providing the full range of contraceptive options and are clinging to antiquated clinical practices that restrict patients' access to contraceptive care.

See [www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2008/05/09/ImprovingContraceptiveUse.pdf](http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2008/05/09/ImprovingContraceptiveUse.pdf)

Below are updates of some RHAP projects that are steps in the right direction.

WOMEN'S HEALTH FREE CLINIC PROJECT



NYU MEDICAL STUDENTS AT THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING



POSTCARD CAMPAIGN

RHAP's groundbreaking Women's Health Free Clinic, which provides full-spectrum reproductive health care to New York City's uninsured women, is thriving. Phase 2 of the project, promoting replication of this unique training model, is now under way. RHAP has developed a toolkit, with resources needed to establish a own free clinic, which is available online. RHAP has also developed materials promoting the online toolkit. Email [info@reproductiveaccess.org](mailto:info@reproductiveaccess.org) to request a supply!

Residents, medical students and RHAP's supervising faculty have made presentations at key national and regional meetings to promote the women's reproductive health free clinic model.

EXPANDING ACCESS IN MASSACHUSETTS

In September 2008, RHAP convened a meeting of 22 primary care clinicians who work at Massachusetts community health centers and are committed to integrating medication abortion into their practices. Participants identified obstacles they are facing and identified strategies for moving forward. In addition to providing individual technical assistance to identify malpractice and training resources, RHAP is developing new materials on our website to support clinicians who are integrating early abortion into their practice.

A NEW DAY

November's election was momentous in many ways – not the least of which is that we will have a pro-choice president for the first time in 8 years! What this will mean in terms of the work we do is still unclear. There is so much to be done, not just to move forward, but to undo the damage done to reproductive health and rights. We look forward to joining forces with colleagues, advocates, and supporters across the nation to work with the country's new leadership to ensure that all women can access the care they need from clinicians they know and trust.

FALENCKI FELLOWSHIP IN REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ADVOCACY



REBECCA SIMONS

The Falencki Fellowship in Reproductive Health Advocacy was inaugurated in 2007 to provide a family physician with intensive training in full-spectrum reproductive health care and in becoming an advocate for expanded access and training. Rebecca Simons is the 2008 Fellow in Reproductive Health Advocacy.

Rebecca graduated from Jefferson Medical College in 1999 and obtained a master's degree in public health at John Hopkins University in 2000, with an emphasis on community health and family planning/contraception. She completed her residency in family medicine at Brown University's family medicine program.

Rebecca has long been committed to reproductive rights issues. One of her first jobs after college was at the Aradia Women's Health Center in Seattle providing post-abortion counseling. During medical school she worked at the Elizabeth Blackwell Women's Health Center doing options counseling and was co-president of her medical school's Medical Students for Choice chapter. "The Falencki Fellowship is allowing me to add abortion skills to my practice of family medicine; I feel so fortunate to have the unusual opportunity to learn a totally new skill set five years after my residency training."

STRENGTHENING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

While much of RHAP's training and education work is very visible, we are working hard behind the scenes to ensure that RHAP continues to be a strong, efficient and effective organization. In the fall RHAP's staff and board participated in a strategic planning retreat to map out programmatic and organizational priorities. RHAP is also getting support and guidance from Community Resource Exchange, the National Executive Service Corps, the United Way of New York City and consultant Tracy Salkowitz (through the support of the Mary Wohlford Foundation) on board development and recruitment, fundraising and capacity building.

RHAP is looking for new board members who are passionate about our mission and have expertise in public relations, communications or finance. Interested in learning more? Email [info@reproductiveaccess.org](mailto:info@reproductiveaccess.org).



RHAP BOARD MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

FOCUS ON A PROVIDER: DARCY THOMAS



DARCY THOMAS

Darcy Thomas is a third year resident at the Lawrence, Massachusetts, Family Medicine Residency Program. She wanted to be able to provide abortions to her patients, but her residency program does not offer abortion training. That didn't stop Darcy. She contacted RHAP, which helped her find a training site, identified sources of funding to support her during training, and mobilized the Center for Reproductive Rights and the ACLU to assist her and other residents in her program to obtain abortion training. "As a physician I want to be able to provide abortions for women who need them. I believe it is a choice and whatever a woman chooses is right for her and her situation."



**NOTES FROM THE FIELD**

A posting to the Access Listserv by Linda Prine, Medical Director of the Reproductive Health Access Project and family physician.

Subject: How to tell your children you are an abortion provider  
Date: October 12, 2008

...I started really early with my kids. Luckily, because when mifepristone got FDA approval, I agreed to be interviewed by a local TV network. Somehow, that interview got replayed on national NBC the next day, just before the olympics, and all of my relatives and many friends, as well as our doorman, the principal of my kids' school, and several teachers saw it. Even though I live in NYC, that freaked me out a bit. But there was no fallout, the people who agree with women's rights said supportive things to me, and I guess the rest kept quiet.

My children (two sons) have had to defend abortion rights many times in school discussions over the years. The way I have helped them frame it is by telling them the stories of my patients. Many of our patient's lives are so difficult, that one could hardly take a stand that "that woman should have be forced to have a baby." In real life contexts, being anti-choice is downright cruel... Providing abortions is not my full-time job. So, I usually can put it in the context of taking care of the whole person, or even the whole family. A woman whose prenatal care I did do, when she wanted to be pregnant, later becomes someone who was laid off, found herself pregnant, and cannot make the sacrifices she would have to make for the child she already has, to bear

another. So, I do her abortion. And tell my kids about it, and about the tearful choice she made to give all she had to her two year old.

By now, my sons have come to Med Students for Choice meetings with me, seen papaya workshops in our dining room, marched in the March for Women's lives with signs like "Keep the Gov't out of my Exam Room". And it's not that they haven't wavered, we have had heated discussions about many of the nuances (they are now 19 and 17 years old) of abortion: how late in a pregnancy is it OK, should a doctor have to provide abortions, can you vote for a candidate that is anti-choice if they are good on other issues... It is so rich, actually, to have all of these discussions with them, and to watch how differently they respond at different developmental stages. There are times when they only want to see two dimensions - right and wrong. And they can become tough little defenders of the right of abortion. Then, other times when they love to delve into complexity. I look at these conversations as a wonderful opportunity to help them develop their critical thinking skills and their sense of morality, community, and respect for individual's (especially women's) autonomy.

**INTRODUCING RHAP'S NEW INTERNS**

This fall, three young reproductive health activists joined RHAP as interns: Savitri Seupersad is a master's in public health student at Hunter College. Liz Bodman is a social work student at the Columbia University School of Social Work. Molly Gaebe recently graduated from Wesleyan College and is studying acting in NYC.



SAVITRI SEUPERSAD



LIZ BODMAN



MOLLY GAEBE

Support these projects with a tax-deductible donation!  
[www.reproductiveaccess.org](http://www.reproductiveaccess.org)

## THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

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The Aida Miranda Fund

The Brush Foundation

The Compton Foundation

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The Glickenhau Foundation

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The Mary Wohlford Foundation

The National Institute for Reproductive Health

The Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund

**The Reproductive Health Access Project (RHAP)** seeks to ensure that women and teens at every socioeconomic level can readily obtain birth control and abortion from their own primary care clinician. Deciding whether and when to have children allows women to take charge of their lives. Clinicians who treat entire families recognize the importance of preparing for parenthood, and can understand that reproductive services help all family members reach their full potential. RHAP provides training, advocacy and mentoring to help family physicians and other clinicians make birth control and abortion services a part of routine medical care.

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reproductive  
health  
access  
project

PO Box 21191

New York, NY 10025

[info@reproductiveaccess.org](mailto:info@reproductiveaccess.org)

[www.reproductiveaccess.org](http://www.reproductiveaccess.org)