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Spring 3-1-2003

## News from Mabel (Spring 2004)

Mabel Wadworth Health Center Staff

*Mabel Wadworth Health Center*

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**Pickers Perplexed: Propaganda Promotes Pro-Choice Position**

A few anti-choice activists picket the Mabel Wadsworth Center on a regular basis. Rather than letting their presence interfere with our work, we have found a creative way for pro-choice individuals to promote – and financially support – peace, civility, and women’s right to control their own bodies.

The Mabel Wadsworth Women’s Health Center started the Pledge-A-Picket program in 1995 to give our supporters a positive way to channel their frustration at the pickets. Little did we know that eight years later, those weekly pickets would generate nearly \$20,000 in contributions.

You select how you want to pledge – for a particular picketer, every picket, weeks with pickets, per each picketer, etc. Then you choose how much you would like to pledge. For example, you might decide to pledge \$1 for each picketer who is documented during the pledge period.

To give you some context for making a pledge, on average, we are picketed twice a week by two or three people per picket – less in bad weather and more in the summer. In all seriousness, picketing activity depends on the weather, time of year, or something big happening on the reproductive rights front nationally.

Donors receive a letter every other month letting them know what new at the Center, what the picketers have been up to, and their pledge total for the previous two months of activity.

The Pledge-A-Picket Program is a civil yet satisfying way to stand up for women’s rights, support the work of the Center, and “stick it to those who picket.” The genius of this innovative program is that every time a picketer attempts to negatively impact a woman’s right to choose, they have the opposite effect. They end up acting as catalysts for choice because they generate contributions to the Center.

**Sign me up!**

I want to channel my frustration at picketers.

I want to pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ for every picket
- \_\_\_\_\_ for each picketer
- \_\_\_\_\_ for each week there is a picket
- \_\_\_\_\_ for each appearance by a female picketer
- \_\_\_\_\_ for a particular picketer (describe or name picketer: \_\_\_\_\_)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (day): \_\_\_\_\_ (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer my gift to remain anonymous and not be included in any publication.

Please mail to:  
Mabel Wadsworth Women’s Health Center  
P.O. Box 918  
Bangor, ME 04402-0918

**Did you know ...**

- we accept all major insurances?
- we welcome Medicare and Medicaid (MaineCare)?
- we set up convenient and individualized payment schedules?

**Health Services**

- Abortion care
- Adoption referrals
- Annual exams
- Breast exams
- Colposcopy
- Contraception
- Lesbian health care
- Menopause consultation
- Pap smears
- Pregnancy testing and options education
- Prenatal care
- Postnatal care
- STD testing and treatment



**Professional Training**

- Abortion care
- Contraception
- Lesbian health
- Menopause
- PMS
- Prenatal care
- Sexuality
- STD education

**Political Advocacy**

- Abortion rights
- Lesbian and gay rights
- Women’s sexual and reproductive health care

## Vital Volunteer

Anne Johnson's connections with the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center are long and varied. She joined the Board of Directors in 1992 when she was a graduate student in Public Administration at the University of Maine. In 1993, Anne completed an internship with the Center, helping to research and set up abortion services. Later, Anne was hired as our first Administrative and Clinical Assistant. In that position, she was responsible for working closely with volunteers, assisting in clinical services, and providing individual women's health education to our clients.

Anne left her staff position with the Center two years later to work with

the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, but she rejoined the Board of Directors and became the chair of the Development Committee. After her term on the Board expired, Anne



Anne Johnson

"I was drawn to the Center by the women involved: strong, passionate, and driven. It is fulfilling to be part of an organization that is so needed, so empathetic, and so supportive to all women of Maine".

began volunteering in our clinical services and conducted a year-long organizational assessment to assist in the Center's strategic planning.

According to Anne, she has "enjoyed

having the opportunity to be a real part of the health care community at the Center. The best part of working at and with the Center is that I learned just how varied women's life experiences are, strengthening my belief that they must have choices available. This firsthand, frontline perspective further emphasizes that no one other than a woman should make decisions about if and when she will have a child."

Anne is a wonderful example of selflessness and commitment to improving the health of women in our area. Her willingness to volunteer her time and plentiful skills has helped the Center to become a premier health care provider.

## Center Spearheads Meetings with Congressional Delegation

Advocating for women is a powerful part of the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center's mission, so we are proud to have convened this year a consortium of Bangor area women's leaders to engage in high-level issues advocacy.

The Center organized colleagues from the fields of law, medicine, sexual assault, domestic violence, labor, social work, welfare, and housing to consult individually with Congressman Michael Michaud and Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins. We addressed the current political environment's impact on women's economic status, safety, access to health care, housing and legal services and the vitality of their right to choose.

In December 2003, Congressman Michaud met with us for more than an hour. He was open and gracious, discussing areas on which we strongly agree, like his long-standing support of family planning and his focus on economic issues affecting women and

working families. We also frankly discussed issues on which we have differed. We were very pleased about the Congressman's extensive consultation and careful analysis with respect to upcoming federal legislation that will impact our women constituents. Thank you, Congressman Michaud, for your sincere and courageous willingness to listen, your prompt accessibility, and your encouragement to use your office as a resource.

Our January 2004 meeting with Senator Collins covered subjects ranging from choice to affordable housing. We commend Senator Collins' courageous pro-choice votes on the Senate floor and appreciated her reiterating at our meeting her reservations about confirming to the federal bench nominees whose extreme opinions could inappropriately influence their interpretation of the law. Inviting the consortium to maintain contact and submit specific requests and examples of Maine women's needs to her office, the

Senator offered to meet with us on an ongoing basis. Thank you, Senator Collins, for laying the foundation for continuing dialogue.

Soon afterwards in January, we also met with Senator Snowe. It was a great pleasure to converse with Senator Snowe about her strategic and philosophical overview of economic and social matters impacting women and families. We respect her long history of championing women's issues in Congress, the practicality and vision of her current fight for equitable insurance coverage for women's contraceptives, and her brave pro-choice floor votes. Senator Snowe invited us to continue communicating about judicial nominees and strategies for protecting the right to choose. Thank you, Senator Snowe, for your insight, your gracious, direct discourse, and for reaching out as an ally.

We look forward to strengthening our relationship and common ground with our representatives in Washington, D.C.

### Demystifying Lesbian Health

When we talk about the Center's Lesbian Health Project (LHP), people always ask, "Given that lesbians are women, don't they have the same health care needs as everybody else?" The simple answer is yes.

However, lesbians face unique obstacles in accessing health services.

"Because we are a part of the lesbian community, LHP volunteers are familiar with the barriers lesbians face educating each other about health care or attempting to encourage each other to participate in the health care system," according to Suzanne Brunner, Co-Chair of our Lesbian Health Project. "The Project is an effort to change both the system in which we need to seek care and improve the care that we receive."

Initiated in 1992, the LHP promotes non-homophobic health services that provide lesbians with the ability to make the best possible health decisions. Supported by the Maine Equity Fund, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, and individual contributions, activities include:



LESBIAN  
HEALTH  
PROJECT

- providing clinical services at the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center;
- educating lesbians about the need for routine gynecological examinations;
- offering workshops and training for direct health care providers on improving their practices so that lesbians can be more comfortable making full disclosure of their sexual orientation and receive appropriate care and advice; and
- developing a sexually transmitted diseases brochure focused on transmission, prevention, and treatment for lesbians.

By speaking to lesbians and addressing their particular health care needs, the Center draws attention to the invisibility they frequently feel when seeking sexual health care. As a result of the LHP, informed communication between women and their health care providers has improved and lesbians in Eastern, Central, and Northern Maine are healthier.

### Collaborating to Stop Sexually Transmitted Diseases

For more than 28 years, the Bangor Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic has been working to stop the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) in Northern and Eastern Maine. Part of Bangor's Department of Health and Welfare, the Bangor STD Clinic does a remarkable job of educating the public, diagnosing and treating STDs, and stopping the spread of infection.

Director Katie Lewis reports that her clinic has been collaborating with the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center (MWWHC) since the Center opened its doors in 1992. When MWWHC diagnoses women with gonorrhea or chlamydia, the staff refers the cases to Bangor STD Clinic for sexual contact follow-up. MWWHC is also pleased to be able

to refer women who prefer anonymous HIV testing to the specially trained counselors at the Bangor STD Clinic. In addition to offering sensitive and confidential support for MWWHC clients who are dealing with STDs, the Bangor STD Clinic also provides the Center with testing materials, requisition and laboratory slips, and special biohazard mailing packages.

Collaboration goes both ways between these two organizations. Although the Bangor STD Clinic offers diagnostic and treatment services for most STDs, MWWHC is able to accept women they refer who need essential follow-up services Bangor STD does not provide, including: Pap Smears, colposcopies (see related article), advanced treatment for cervical Human

Papilloma Virus, and ongoing sexual and reproductive health care. Why is this collaboration important? Women ages 15 to 24 are at the highest risk for contracting STDs. MWWHC is an ideal setting to identify, treat, and help stop the spread of diseases because of the high number of young women it serves annually.

"So many people who come to the Bangor STD Clinic do not receive any other health care whatsoever. So, having a low-cost provider like the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center that will treat low-income women is vital," according to Lewis. "I know that the women I refer there will receive great care. The staff members at the Center are wonderful in their effectiveness, sensitivity, and diplomacy."



### Health in Our Hands Conference

The fall conference was a great success. Trish Riley, the Director of the Governor's Office of Health Policy and Finance delivered the keynote address. She answered questions posed by participants. During the afternoon, multiple workshops were held addressing, holistic family health care and energy medicine, yoga's impact on health, and empowerment in the health care community. A panel of activists also discussed the political environment for reproductive choice and the challenges of the future.

Thank you to our sponsors:

**Sustainer:** Jane Laeger, MD, Evergreen Associates

**Community Advocate:** Miller Drug

**Sister Supporters:** Sharon Jackiw, Kudra Maccaillech, Betsy Weiss, MD, and the University of Maine's Women's Resource Center and its Women in the Curriculum/Women's Studies Program

*"The extremely professional and caring providers are the biggest reason I go to the Center."  
- client*

### Calendar of Events

#### Annual Dinner 2004 – Invitations on the Way!

**Date:** Thursday, May 27

**Time:** 5:00 – 9:00 p.m.

**Location:** Spectacular Events

**5:00** – auction preview and cocktails

**6:00** – dinner

**6:45** – program

**7:30** – silent auction, dessert, and coffee

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