



What's New at Choices - November 2016

Message from Merle Hoffman

As Thanksgiving approaches, and especially in the midst of an intense and upsetting political atmosphere, it's important to take a long view of just what we have to give thanks for in our personal, professional and political lives. I am profoundly grateful for the support that Choices' extended family and community have given to me personally, and especially for your enthusiasm for the new paths of health care services Choices has embarked on.

Choices' commitment to women's reproductive health remains at the core of our services and will continue despite whatever challenges are thrown at us, nationally or locally. When I started Choices in 1971, two years before Roe, my first patient was from New Jersey because abortion was illegal in that state. I held her hand during her abortion, and that intimate personal connection bound me to the issue of Reproductive Justice and the struggles to achieve it that I have devoted my life to. The movement for women's civil and human rights demands that women are the agents who alone possess the profound moral obligation and legal right to decide when and whether or not to be mothers.

Throughout the 45 years that I have led Choices, I have fought many battles – faced many diverse opponents – so I am not afraid, depressed or withdrawn as a reaction to this Presidential Election. I am energized, challenged and ready for war.

I say – Do not mourn, Organize!!

And not only do we face a major oppositional force but we have to keep moving forward. We cannot stand still – and in that context, the next year will see Choices initiating exciting new programs, including Family Health, Telemedicine, and expanded counseling services. Our innovative TransCare program will be launched early in the New Year as Choices once again stands in the forefront of serving patient and community needs.

I am so privileged and proud to have been on the front lines of women's health, braving attacks from many directions, for over 45 years. With your support and commitment, Choices will continue to chart new paths and play a leading role in healthcare services for many years to come. Thank you.

Merle Hoffman, Founder/President Choices Women's Medical Center



Merle Hoffman, pictured center with fist raised, leads march down 5th Avenue to defend women's right to choose, 1988



Choices Outreach Team at a local community event

Choices Community Outreach Program

Education and Services Coming to YOU, Where You Are!

Patients come to Choices from many different neighborhoods and communities throughout New York City (and beyond) for many reasons, all based on our reputation for offering the highest quality of care with the deepest compassion. At the same time, we have always been attuned to new health needs that arise in society, as well as committed to reaching communities and

sections of people who do not yet know about our services but need them. Our acclaimed Community Outreach program was started to bridge this gap and fill these needs.

Esther Priegue, Director of Counseling at Choices, visits a number of Spanish-speaking organizations and Consulates regularly, to reach newcomers to the U.S. with information about preventive health care, including family planning, and free or low-cost health services that are available to them at Choices. She and other members of the Choices Outreach Team also make presentations at homeless shelters and organizations that serve homeless women. Priegue has found that homeless women, many of whom have left abusive relationships, not only need services but basic education on how to care for themselves, including the need for gynecological exams, such as regular PAP tests, safe and easy-to-use birth control methods, and HIV testing and treatment.

Recognizing that homeless women as well as others without resources may have trouble getting to our doors for health exams or treatment, Choices now offers free transportation to and from Choices Women's Medical from homeless shelters as patients need it.

Reaching out to these communities is very important, Priegue says, "because one of the last things women do is look after themselves because they are so busy trying to care for their families, often under the most difficult conditions – no regular income, no permanent home and little or no support system. Choices offers these women – and all women – the knowledge they need to keep themselves as well as their families healthy, and the means to do it."

Outreach to Public Schools and Youth Organizations

Choices offers education sessions free-of-charge to public high schools throughout the NYC area. They include class-length interactive workshops on Family Planning – What it is and Why it's Important, including discussing various methods of birth control; Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) – Prevention and Treatment; and Healthy Relationships – What They Are and Aren't.

A Health Educator in Elmhurst, Queens, had this to say about the program:

Kelly and her team from Choices Women's Medical Center are an asset to our school community. I've scheduled presentations for Birth Control, Healthy Relationships, and STI's every semester for the past 4 years. My students truly enjoy Kelly's visits and the information she presents is invaluable to my students' health and lives. A number of my students have taken advantage of the services at Choices Women's Medical Center because of their professionalism, convenient location and free services. In addition, these presentations do a great job at supplementing NYC health curriculum for 9-12 grades.



The Bella Abzug Leadership Institute which organizes a summer program for young women, sent their thanks after our August, 2016 presentation:

We have just concluded all of our summer programming at the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute, and as per usual, your workshop was rated one of the most informative and relevant seminars all summer by our students. We cannot thank you both enough for coming to speak with our students every year - it means so much to us. The services Choices offers young women are absolutely critical. And so is the work that you are doing by going out into the community and educating us all!

For more information or to schedule a workshop, please contact Choices Outreach and Education Team by calling 718-349-9100, Ext. 119, or emailing Outreach@Choicesmedical.com.