

December 2012

From Our  
Counselors

Welcome to the CHOICE Winter 2012 e-newsletter. Continue reading for updates on CHOICE's work and programs. Forward this email to a friend. Please send feedback to: [info@choice-phila.org](mailto:info@choice-phila.org). And please visit our new website at [www.choice-phila.org](http://www.choice-phila.org).

## New Initiative: Need to Know Text Messaging Program

Beginning December 17, 2012 you can now reach the CHOICE Hotline by Text. Our new text-based hotline and public awareness campaign, "Need2Know," will offer free, confidential, medically accurate answers to hard-to-ask questions as well as referrals to a health care provider if needed. In some cases, CHOICE will suggest "texters" call and speak with a Hotline counselor directly for more detailed counseling, education, and/or referrals. Though

available to anyone in need, the program is specifically geared toward young adults. Teenagers in Philadelphia, as in most major metropolitan areas, can and often do face obstacles to reproductive and sexual health care, leaving them at greater risk for a wide range of sexually-transmitted diseases and infections including HIV and Chlamydia. Moreover, while overall rates of teen pregnancy have dramatically decreased nationwide - a 40 percent decline from 1990 to 2008 - U.S. teen birth rates are still far higher than the majority of developed nations. In Philadelphia, approximately 3,500 teenagers give birth each year: 82 percent of these pregnancies are "unintended" or "unplanned," and nearly one-third of these teens are infected with at least one sexually transmitted infection. All of us can help reduce these numbers - so please help us spread the word about this resource. [Click here](#) to read more.



"When I started working for CHOICE I was excited about the opportunity to help others, but particularly those who, like me, came to the U.S. without fully knowing the English language. As the only bilingual English/Spanish counselor at the time, I felt I was bringing a great set of skills to assist those who might otherwise be unable to get answers, whether because of a lack of understanding of the language, or because of differences in culture. I also understood the challenges these issues bring to discussing the subjects we cover at CHOICE.

Most of my Spanish-language calls come from Philadelphia and its surrounding counties. However, I will never forget the day I answered the phone, attending to the caller as usual, and immediately realized this call was different when I asked for the zip code. The caller stated that she was in South America and needed assistance accessing services in the US, 'anywhere in the US.\*' I proceeded with the call and while conversing with her learned that she was seeking an abortion procedure, a procedure that was illegal in her country and could send her to prison if performed. Her fetus was clinically

## Promoting Access to Emergency Contraception

A recent [New York Times article](#) highlighted the newly-issued recommendation by the American Academy of Pediatrics, issued in a November 2012 policy statement, encouraging health care providers to offer routine counseling and advance emergency-contraception prescriptions for their teen patients. CHOICE applauds the AAP for its statement, and the New York Times for covering the issue.

CHOICE hotline counselors and community educators regularly receive phone calls and questions from teens concerned about condom breakage, unprotected sex, and concerns about pregnancy after sexual assault. CHOICE offers all hotline callers and community education participants detailed information on ECP, including where to secure a prescription, how to use it effectively, and where to go for professional care. The morning after pill is an important tool in preventing unintended pregnancy, yet studies show that fewer than one-third of teenagers are aware of ECP; those who do know about it often lack accurate information on its use and effectiveness; and others continue to face barriers when trying to secure a prescription (in PA, anyone 18 and over may purchase ECP without a prescription). In 1998, when Preven was first approved by the FDA, CHOICE worked with health care providers, community groups, and consumers to raise awareness of ECP and continues to produce updated fact sheets, wallet cards, and "teen-friendly" resources that contain accurate information on this important option. To learn more, or to order CHOICE materials, please [click here](#) or call us at 215-985-3355.

### Bringing Sexy Back - Thank You!

On November 8, 2012, CHOICE was honored to present the Louis Gerstley Community Health Advocate of the Year Award to Liz Werthan, a long-time champion for women and children across Pennsylvania and former CHOICE Executive Director and Board Member. The event drew over 110 attendees, and raised over \$20,000 to support our efforts to ensure that anyone in need can access comprehensive reproductive and sexual health services, information, and education. The evening was a true testament to the enduring impact that Liz, and CHOICE, have had on the Philadelphia region over the years and we are so grateful for the strong turnout and support of friends, supporters, and agency partners. [Click here](#) to see photos of the event, and **THANK YOU!!!**



*And From All of Us at CHOICE, Best Wishes for a Happy, Healthy Holiday Season!*

#### OUR MISSION:

Founded in 1971, CHOICE increases access to accurate information and essential services concerning reproductive, sexual, and family health, empowers people through education and counseling, and provides all of these services with empathy and respect. CHOICE works to overcome and eliminate barriers that impede access to quality health care and information for all individuals - regardless of economic status, gender, age, race, religion, culture, or sexual orientation.

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dead, but according to law she would have to wait until her due date to remove it from her womb. She was in her 20th week of pregnancy and had already called places in Florida, but after a quick internet search found our number.

I took my time and gave her all the information she needed. She decided to go to a clinic in New York -- she was willing to fly the following day to JFK airport if she had to -- and at the end of the call thanked me not only for the service but also for knowing how to talk to her about such a taboo and "illegal" subject in Latin American societies. I'm glad I was here when that phone rang, and I wish more people like her could pick up the phone and dial and take the next flight if that was the only way to make their CHOICE."

**- Noel Aragon, CHOICE Counselor/Community Educator**

*\*Identifying details have been changed to protect anonymity.*

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