

Abortion protest spirited, not violent

By Tim Smith
staff writer

Taking up sides on Good Friday morning in a protest outside West Bloomfield's Women's Center were pro-choice activists and pro-life counterprotesters.

Township police were the first ones to get to the clinic at 6765 Orchard Lake Road and managed to keep the two sides apart throughout the 7:45-11 a.m. protest, said Lt. Dan Pittos, who added there were no arrests.

"We beat them to the doors," Pittos said. "That's the trick."

A smaller protest concurrently took place at the West Bloomfield home of a Women's Center employee, said police Chief Ronald Cronin. The police did allow Operation Rescue activists and protesters of the pro-choice National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition a chance to vent their anger.

WITH THE religious holiday serving as a catalyst, a large gathering of about 200 Operation Rescue supporters turned out to block the clinic doors and prevent any abortions from taking place.

"Good Friday is the best reason of all for this," said Operation Rescue activist Sharon Hytinen of South Lyon. "Christ gave his life for us. The least we can do is give our lives for the babies."

After finding out Operation Rescue was planning to stage a rally outside the Women's Center, about 70 pro-choice activists gathered in

protest, beginning at about 9:30 a.m., Pittos said.

When the pro-life group dispersed between 10:30 and 11 a.m. to travel to another protest site at Eight Mile and Gratiot in Detroit, so too did the pro-choice faction.

"They follow us wherever we go," said Operation Rescue supporter Pat Albani of Oxford. "They know the message. You can't deny life."

Walking back and forth along Orchard Lake Road in front of the clinic, members of the National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition and Independent pro-choice groups thrust their fists into the air and chanted a united refrain to northbound motorists:

"Not the church, not the state, women must decide their fate."

ACCORDING TO one of those protesters, Kelley McGuinness of NWROC, they wanted to send messages to Operation Rescue and the U.S. Supreme Court that "we're willing to fight O.R. in the street and if the Supreme Court overthrows Roe vs. Wade they'll have a riot on their hands."

Meanwhile, McGuinness said the women's rights coalition also turned out as a show of support for Buffalo abortion clinics — where, she said, a movement now is afoot by Operation Rescue to close clinics, similar to a shutdown last summer in Wichita, Kan.

Good Friday protests similar to the one in West Bloomfield were

expected in Buffalo and elsewhere around the United States, McGuinness said.

Another coalition member, Paula, who would not disclose her last name, also said the group is against Medicaid funding cuts and opposes the parental consent bill.

"We're trying to get the message across to them that we won't let Roe vs. Wade be overturned. We think everyone should have the right to a free abortion, the right to choose."

The Supreme Court, on April 22, will begin hearing a Pennsylvania abortion case that could reverse the historic Roe vs. Wade decision that gives women the constitutional right to have legalized abortions.

IN RESPONSE to McGuinness, Operation Rescue's Mills said the pro-life faction will do everything to defend its position — except tangling with pro-choice advocates.

"We've never been aggressive," Mills said. "We are not willing to fight them in the streets."

Mills, who said she recently was threatened by pro-choice protesters, said Operation Rescue has a strategy — working with the police to put abortionists out of business.

But Pittos and Cronin said "keeping the peace" was the only reason a number of patrol units were stationed at the clinic.

"As long as they (pro-choice) stay over there and they (Operation Rescue) stay over here... they all can express their rights," Pittos said.



GUY WARREN/staff photographer

Operation Rescue supporters kneel in a circle to pray during the Good Friday abortion protest in West Bloomfield.

THEIR PROTEST temporarily impeded the progress of at least one family, however, because the abortion clinic shares an entrance with a pediatrician — a doorway blocked by police and activists — one family required a police escort to find a pediatrician who happens to have his office at the same address.

Dentist George Seligman, who also has an office in the building, said the protest had no bearing on his practice.

"As long as they don't interfere with my business everyone has a right to voice their opinion," Seligman said. "That's America."

During Friday's protest, Opera-

tion Rescue activists practically turned the Women's Center parking lot into a place for religious services.

"This is our church for us today," Mills said.

To illustrate her point, a group formed a circle, kneeling to pray on the asphalt. Hymns were sung and speeches were made over megaphones by people such as Bob McFarland.

"I hope the Lord can turn the hearts around of people who are performing these things," McFarland said to the crowd.

He later said he's "pro choice in a way. But I want people to make the right choice. For life."

on the agenda

Below are highlights from the agendas of government meetings this week. All meetings are open to the public.

Farmington Hills City Council
Council chambers
31555 11 Mile
Monday, April 20
6 p.m. — study session
7:30 p.m. — regular meeting

A 6 p.m. study session was scheduled, but no agenda was available. At the 7:30 p.m. meeting, the following public hearings are scheduled:

- Cost hearing for sanitary sewer improvement for Quaker Valley Road.
- Cost hearing for water main improvement for Quaker Valley Road.

- Cost hearing for sanitary sewer improvement for Lyncroft Road.
- Cost hearing for water main improvement for Lyncroft Road.

- Determination of special assessment district for water main installation for Westmoreland Drive.
- Introduction of rezoning from B-1, local business, to B-3 general business, at 29528 Orchard Lake Road. Proponent and owner: A. J. Scarchilli.

- Introduction of ordinance to amend definition of fast food/drive-in restaurants and redefine carry-out restaurant.
- The council also will enact a solicitation ordinance, as well as one to control the growth of noxious vegetation, and another to control the storage of recreational equipment, as well as outside storage of firewood.

Farmington City Council
Council chambers
23600 Liberty
8 p.m. Monday, April 20

The Downtown Development Authority director will make an annual report. Reports from the city manager include the 1992-93 recommended budget, Drake and Freedom Road highway improvements, a road salt contract and contractor and engineering paymaster improvement project.

Farmington Hills Planning Commission
Council chambers
31555 11 Mile
7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 23
Call 473-9543 for agenda.

Enrichment center closed for zoning violation

Continued from Page 1

Board of Appeals in March — where Phillips and Wolf went to get a variance to continue running the program — that he counted 35 cars at one time in the street, some blocking his driveway and his mailbox (on Phillips' side of the street).

Phillips and Wolf dispute the complaint, as do other neighbors who signed a petition supporting the program. "There are 12 kids at one time and most come in car pools," said Phillips, who has an extra-wide cir-

cular driveway where most parents park their cars. Parents also were asked to park in the street.

But the petition and letters from parents did little to move the ZBA.

Both are holding out hope for Democratic state Sen. Jack Faxon's bill that would mandate local municipalities to allow day care as a residential use. The bill passed the senate and is now in a house committee.

"This bill would have prevented her (Phillips) from being put out of business," Faxon said.

Farmington Hills city councilman Ben Marks, who is opposed to Fax-

on's bill because it would remove local control, spoke against Phillips and Wolf.

"I was in shock," Phillips said, about the ZBA hearing and denial.

Both women take exception to comments made before the ZBA that they are operating a lucrative business out of a single-family residence.

"I couldn't support myself or my family on this," Phillips said.

They aren't giving up. The women — along with parents whose children attend the program — believe in what they are doing. Right now they can stay at Shaarey Zedek Syna-

agogue in Southfield — where they moved when denied a variance — until June. Then they have to find somewhere else.

"I appreciated it being in a home. It was a warmer atmosphere than in a building," said Nancy Einstein, whose five-year-old daughter attends the program.

Wolf and Phillips say the hunt is new on and they are willing to take suggestions on where they can find another building. "We're trying to find a church or synagogue to give us some rooms — with an outside for play," Phillips said.

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WAYNE'S WORLD (PG-13)
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