

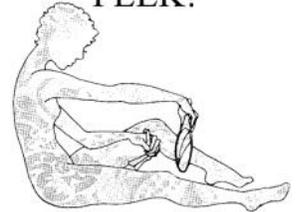
30 Years of Abortion Care in Yakima 1980 - 2010

1970's



Washington State legalized abortion by a vote of the people, Referendum 20 in 1970 followed in 1973 by the Supreme Court decision *Roe v Wade* that legalized abortion nationwide. Beverly Whipple and Deborah Lazaldi, founders of Yakima Feminist Women's Health Center (FWHC), learned about self-exam and cervical caps for birth control on a trip to California. Back home in Yakima, Washington, they sought out women's studies classes, NOW Chapters and traveled throughout the Pacific Northwest region introducing self-exam to women traveling to small and large towns in Washington, Alaska, and Idaho and fitting cervical caps for birth control as part of a national study that led to the eventual FDA approval of this new non-hormonal woman-controlled birth control method. They dreamed of opening a clinic "for women by women." By 1979, they had drawn up incorporation papers and began putting the pieces together to open a clinic even while they worked full time at other jobs. Beverly was 26 years old.

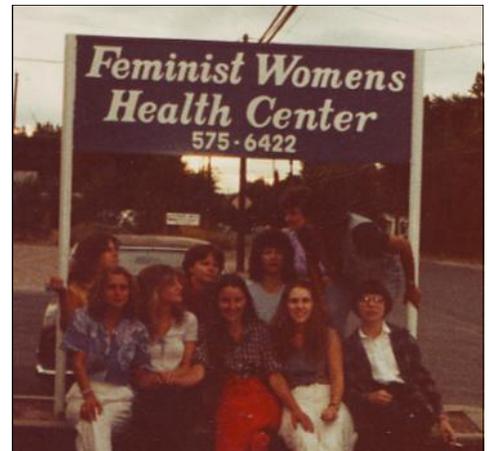
IT'S O.K. TO
PEEK!



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!
LEARN HOW TO DO A
GYNECOLOGICAL SELF-EXAM

early 1980's

Beverly and Deborah pooled their money - about \$3000, rented an office on Englewood Avenue in Yakima, brought in furniture from home, bought medical supplies, and hired a physician from Portland, Oregon because no local doctors were willing to work for "the feminists." Opening day of the clinic was delayed when Mount St Helens erupted covering the town of Yakima and most of eastern Washington in over two feet of ash. Although it was the middle of May, snow plows were needed to remove the ash.



Then these vehicles along with hundreds of cars broke down with ash clogged air filters. Airports were closed as the mountain continued to spew ash. No busses ran; the region was paralyzed. When the clinic was finally able to provide an abortion for their very first client (with a substitute doctor since their regular doctor still could not make it to Yakima), it was **the first victory of many at overcoming obstacles** to make freedom of choice possible in Yakima.

Yakima FWHC officially opened as an abortion providing clinic in Yakima in June 1980. (We even still have the same phone number.)

Beverly W. and Deborah L., co-founders, cut the ribbon with Kimberly looking on.

In 1983 with a key group of strong well-trained staff members, they decided to open a second health center, in Everett, an under-served region of the state. The **Everett Feminist Women's Health Center** became a focal point of attack by the violent anti-abortion fringe even before the doors opened. Staff suffered three fire-bombs in nine months, constant death threats and car bomb threats. Women had to walk through a gauntlet of screaming protestors to get from the parking lot to the front door. With assistance, the arsonist escaped to Canada, and later returned to Washington admitting guilt. Volunteer attorneys helped FWHC file the first-in-the-nation RICO lawsuit against individuals and groups who committed crimes against the clinic.



Lab Counter destroyed by one of the three fire-bombs counter at Everett FWHC.



New location: 106 East E Street, Yakima.

Some settled out of court; their insurance companies paid reparations. **These dollars, plus community donations, made it possible to put a down-payment on a building in Yakima** which, by then, was especially urgent because the property owner ended the lease and no one else would lease space to the clinic after the fire-bombs in Everett. In 1988, **Yakima FWHC moved to our present location at 106 East E Street.**

After Everett closed and Yakima moved, Deborah decided to go to law school. She then practiced law, subsequently became an administrative judge, and is now back practicing law in Seattle. Beverly became, and still is, the Executive Director. She testified before the U.S. Congress on the impact of anti-abortion violence on clinics.

late 1980's



By the end of the 1980's, the anti-choice anti-woman group Operation Rescue targeted the Yakima clinic. Dozens of people were arrested for blockading the doors. During the second blockade, antis parked a van in front of the main door and bicycle-chained their necks to the bumper. Police couldn't move them without risk of severe injury to the people.

Community response in support of the clinic was outstanding. People volunteered to be **clinic escorts**, to create a safe space between a client's car door and the clinic entrance, and to be legal observers documenting violations of law. Escorts wore blue vests; one time for fun, the vests read "Pest Control." Community support, volunteers in particular, made an enormous difference for the clients and the staff. The pro-choice coalition won a statewide injunction against blockades at clinics, fines were imposed on protestors. The passage of a new state law made it a crime to block access to a clinic in Washington and later, the federal **FACE Act, Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act** was passed.

Women's Health in Women's Hands

1990's

Community support was very important to the clinic when, at various times, large numbers of anti-choice people arrived in busloads to protest.

The community pitched in and raised the funds to buy the fence pictured here to keep protestors away from private property. When protestors circled the building, pro-choicers held silent vigils inside the fence.



Clinic escorts: A society without freedom of choice is not a free society.

For a time in the 1980's the clinic operated an onsite daycare for children of staff. It was eventually closed because of threats of the violence from the anti-choice "pro-family" protestors. Similarly, volunteer escorts played a vital role for years, but after physicians and receptionists were shot and killed, the organization hired professional security guards.

In 1990, six years after the fire-bombings and eventual closure of the Everett clinic, following a three week federal court jury trial, FWHC won the RICO lawsuit! They had proved a conspiracy and pattern of planned violence that damaged the clinic's ability to provide health care. The clinic was awarded nearly one million dollars in damages. The defendants appealed to the 9th Circuit - fines were never paid. In 1996, twelve years after the third fire-bomb, the 9th Circuit reversed the jury decision on a technicality that had been settled much earlier.

Meanwhile, violence against abortion providers escalated nationwide, with "wanted posters," death threats, and the cold-blooded assassination of physicians, security guards and clinic receptionists.

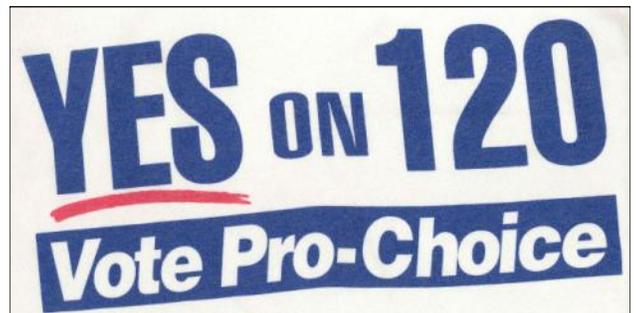
In 1991, when a private practice physician Dr. Baird Bardarson, a longtime abortion provider in Renton retired, FWHC took over his practice

known as Cedar River Clinic.

To balance the Renton clinic with a different name, we started using "A Woman's Choice Clinic" as the name of our Yakima clinic which continued through 2004.

In 1990-91, FWHC organized the Yakima Valley Network for Choice, part of a statewide coalition, to pass a new state law encompassing the principles of *Roe v Wade*. The Network collected signatures and worked for passage of the Reproductive Privacy Act, Initiative 120 which the voters approved on election day in 1991.

In 1996, we launched our first website, FWHC.org, becoming one of the first ever to publish abortion information on the web and to post first-person stories written by the women themselves.



The essence of the Reproductive Privacy Act, RCW 9.02.100 is Every woman has the fundamental right to choose or refuse birth control and abortion and "The state may not deny or interfere with a woman's right to choose to have an abortion prior to viability of the fetus, or to protect her life or health."



2000's

In 2000, another site, **Cascade Family Planning in Tacoma**, was added when a private physician retired. Then, after several years of utilizing four names, the organization consolidated in 2004 under one name: **Cedar River Clinics** and selected a new logo.

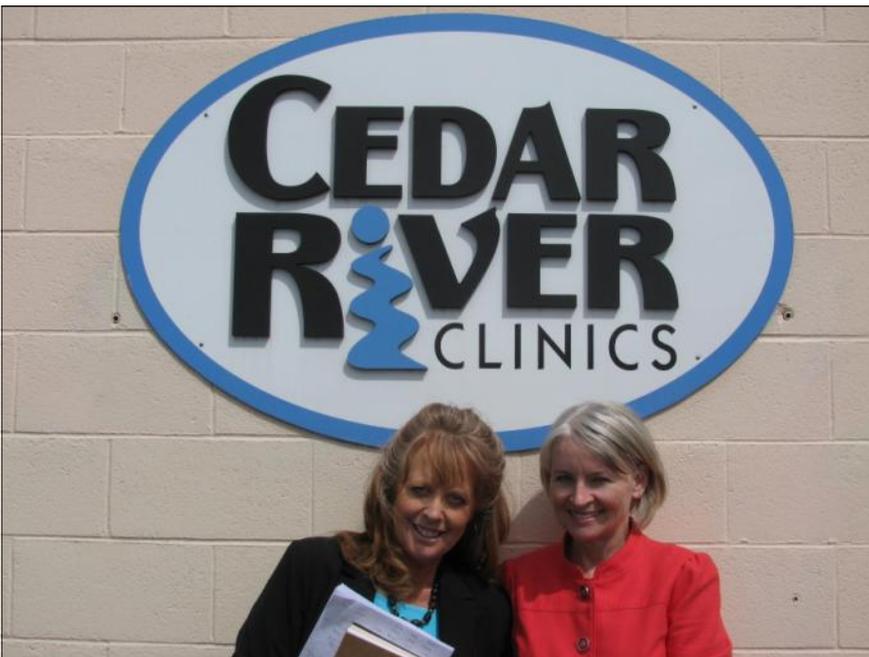


At the 2004 March for Women's Lives in Washington DC, the largest, most diverse, most inclusive march ever for women's rights.

As part of a two-year reproductive rights research project in 2003-2005, Cedar River Clinics conducted **focus groups** with women who had abortions in Yakima and Renton, then shared the results nationally helping to spark new strategies and messages to broaden support for the cause of reproductive freedom. The study revealed that women feel isolated, that silence about abortion contributes to stigma. Women are surprised to learn that **one-in-three women have abortions in their lifetimes**. Connection among women who have experienced abortion helps decrease the stigma and encourages and supports activism.



When Dr. George Tiller of Wichita, Kansas was assassinated while ushering at his church on Sunday morning May 31, 2009, Yakima staff quickly organized a memorial vigil for the following day as did thousands of other activists around the country.



Connie and Beverly at 106 East E Street, the clinic that owes so much to their leadership in Yakima.

Today, Cedar River Clinics are part of 14 organizations in 20 communities collectively called the **Feminist Abortion Network, FAN**. (feministabortionnetwork.org)

FAN members are dedicated to seeing women as whole people with complex lives, and seek to foster women's knowledge, power and decision making about their health, bodies, sexuality, and pregnancy decisions.

More organizational history at FWHC.org/herstory.htm

