

In times of budgetary shortfalls, job loss and war, much of our energy goes into responding to crisis. Good news becomes a scarce commodity. That's why I wanted to write about the Rights, Respect, Responsibility® initiative that is gaining momentum in Oregon.

This initiative was launched a short two years ago to ask Oregonians to look for ways to help our youth develop healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors. We knew that our kids were improving but still lagged way behind the successes of some other nations in reducing unintended pregnancies and preventing sexually transmitted diseases. Our concern for their lives and futures drove us to action.

Lots of progress has been made with this initiative in the early stages. Funded by foundation grants, 30 Oregonians have gone on European Study tours to research effective strategies in Germany, France, and the Netherlands. The Oregon Team returned to their communities to share information locally. We began looking at strategies proven to be successful in Western European countries and asking ourselves what we could learn that would be helpful here.

Clergy and leaders from 44 faith communities participated in Faith Leadership Forums to discuss how to support the young people in their congregations in developing healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors

National experts have toured Oregon Communities leading local discussions throughout the state. Recommendations for changes in state policy have been reported in a publication entitled **We Can Do Better.**

Teen forums have been held so that young people can share with their communities what they need in order to make healthier decisions.

Discussions have been held with state agencies about how we can all work together towards better sexual health outcomes for our youth.

In Eugene, First Congregational Church invited Barbara Huberman from Advocates For Youth to give a Sunday sermon on spirituality and sexuality.

We know that a committed partnership with the media is one key to the success in Western Europe. We wanted to think about what media partnerships could be developed in Oregon. In September Dr. Wolfgang Mueller (Germany), Anne Poutier (France), and Barbara Huberman (USA) traveled throughout Oregon to share some of their successful mass media approaches.

The Jackson County Health Department in conjunction with Planned Parenthood Health Services of Southwestern Oregon introduced two media spots they developed to encourage parents to talk to their teens and for teens to make responsible decisions. The positive response to these ads led to their introduction on Medford television on October 5.

The excitement grows. It is the beginning of a long journey. We believe that Oregon can lead the country in supporting our young people's right to accurate information and appropriate services. We are convinced that with our help and respect, they will make healthier decisions. Lives will be saved and unintended pregnancies prevented.

Oregon likes to lead the nation. I can think of no better way.

