

Anti-abortion advertisement angers local pro-choice groups

By JOAN RAYMOND
Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — An anti-abortion advertisement in local newspapers last week has recharged the controversy in Santa Cruz County over the nation's most explosive domestic issue.

Letters on both sides of the abortion issue flowed into newspaper offices following a large advertisement paid for by the Christian Action Council, an organization newly formed in the county to combat abortion.

Since the advertisement ran in The Sentinel, Santa Cruz Express and Good Times, the Council's ad-man, Joe

Grassadonia, says he has received several threatening phone calls with "very ugly swearing."

"I guess we've upset a lot of people, but I don't know why. When Planned Parenthood does their ads, the pro-life people don't retaliate," said Grassadonia.

The advertisement with its title, "Give your child the gift of life" has angered supporters of Planned Parenthood, the Santa Cruz Women's Health Collective, as well as the Choice Medical Clinic, which offers abortions on a regular basis.

The advertisement listed "some facts about abortion" and reasons why "abortion is not safe" — which Representatives from Choice, Women's Health Collective

and Planned Parenthood say are "lies."

"People are very angry — angry that the Express and other publications would publish what are basically lies and illogical thought," said Marilyn Marzell of the Health Collective.

The ad campaign, costing less than \$2,000, was timed to coincide with the 10th anniversary Saturday of the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

Express Editor Buz Bezore said he has received "more letters on both sides of the issue on this, than anything we've run with the exception of the Lebanon situation. We received more calls on this than any story since our story on gangs."

Bezore said copies of the Express have been removed from newsstands and trashed, and covers carrying the ad have been torn off and strewn about the streets. "This is an insult to women" stickers have been left for Bezore and his staff to see.

Sentinel Advertising Director Norman Powell reported no vandalism, although he said one woman appeared at the advertising department before the ad ran and said "someone would do something to The Sentinel" if the ad appeared.

A stack of letters supporting the ad was hand-delivered to Sentinel editorial offices this week.

Sentinel Editor Bruce McPherson said that other than the stack of pro-life letters, "we haven't had any upset members of the community calling to protest the ad."

Back at the Express, Bezore said his advertisers have been approached by people asking them to remove advertising from the Express due to the Christian Council ad.

"All of us here are pro-choice (about abortion)," said Bezore, "but we consider ourselves a community newspaper and the pro-lifers are part of the community."

SEE BACK PAGE

Abortion advertisement—

FROM PAGE 1

Bezore said the ad was run, for one thing, in the name of free speech.

Marzell, on the other hand, said, "There were (newspaper) people at the Express who knew the truth wasn't being printed. When profit motives rule people's behavior, there can be ugly, ugly results."

Newspapers running the ad "are not an ally to what we consider social change and justice," added Marzell.

The ad in the Express covered the back page of an edition with a "Film Fest Fever" cover story. The ad in the Good Times covered the back page of an edition with a "Career Women" cover story. The ad in the Sentinel was flanked by other church ads.

Good Times Editor and Publisher Jay Shore said the reaction to the ad was "probably the strongest reaction to anything we've run in the paper."

Shore said letter-writers on the ad appear about equally divided on each side of the abortion issue.

He said there have been "rumors" of Good Times copies being vandalized following the appearance of the ad.

Planned Parenthood public affairs coordinator Cynthia Mathews said Planned Parenthood would run its own ad this week in the three publications.

"We had such a strong grassroots response. Our phone was ringing like crazy and people said, 'What are you going to do about it?'" said Mathews.

Mathews said the Planned Parenthood ad would be financed through donations, with the names of contributors appearing on the ad if they wish.

Lori Chavez, director of the Choice Clinic, said her organization would join the Planned Parenthood ad campaign.

Mathews said the Christian Council ad "just floored me. When I saw it, I was concerned. But I had no idea the response from the community would be so strong."

Mathews was not the only one who was "floored."

Santa Cruz Christian Action Council President David Skomsvold said he was "shocked" by the reaction.

"Our intention was just to exercise our freedom of speech. I was totally shocked at the response, showing little regard for freedom of speech. I thought it was kind of funny. We're such a liberal town," said Skomsvold.

Skomsvold said it took him "only four days" to collect the money from contributors to pay for the ad.

Responded Marzell: "We aren't talking about free speech. It's a question of misinformation and lies being perpetuated by people who have an interest in

seeing women kept in the home and becoming child raisers only."

Vice-president of the council is Edith Manchester, one of the county's most outspoken opponents of abortion.

Said Manchester: "Our concern was to reach the ones who really needed to hear the message...the more counterculture and radical people."

One Christian Council supporter wrote in a letter to the editor of the Sentinel that many pro-abortion advocates "are anti-nuke, save the seals activists who feel it is a woman's right to kill a baby as a matter of personal freedom."

Grassadonia is "very proud" of the ad he designed.

"The Christian Action Council doesn't harm anyone. They're just out to save the children," said Grassadonia.

One part of the ad tells the reader about "when your life began." In the second month of fetal development, the ad says, "The tip of your nose showed up on your 37th day and you could pull away if you were tickled. In the sixth week you felt pain, you slept, woke, breathed and ate. You began to hear the rushing sounds of your watery world. At this stage you were 'a splendidly functioning baby.'"

On the day of birth, says the ad, "a time came when you heard a loving whisper saying, 'It is time.'"

The ad tells readers who are pregnant and debating whether to have an abortion to call the Crisis Pregnancy Center. The center is the "ministry arm" of the local Christian Action Council, said Manchester.

Chavez said the latest statistics from the Center for Disease Control in Georgia refute the "facts" listed in the ad by the Christian Council.

One of the "facts" that is wrong, said Chavez, is a statistic in the ad stating "damage (from abortion) includes a 14 percent increase in habitual miscarriage."

"In any pregnancy," said Chavez, "there is a 15-20 percent chance of spontaneous abortion. That's true regardless of whether or not a woman has had an induced abortion previously."

Planned Parenthood's Mathews said the ad "portrayed abortion as a procedure that is much more dangerous than it really is and implies severe consequences to women that in fact are not borne up by current studies."

However, Mathews said the Crisis Pregnancy Center "does offer a valuable service to the extent they help pregnant women continue a pregnancy. We are opposed to that. We are concerned about the fact they presented their point of view as an absolute one."

1/26/83 *Sen. Chavez*