

Abortion protest draws counter-demonstration

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SANTA CRUZ — Nearly 100 people stood in front of the the Santa Cruz Medical Clinic Saturday morning, some protesting abortion while others encouraged passers-by to "Honk if you're pro-choice."

"We are here today because we recognize that abortion will end in the United States when it is no longer tolerated in local communities," said Ron Shubert of the Christian Action Council, which had planned the protest to coincide with the 16th anniversary of the Wade vs. Roe Supreme Court decision which made abortion legal.

"By doing this we are bringing attention to the greatest outrage in our free society," Shubert said.

But the anti-abortion protest was diluted somewhat by a crowd of pro-choice advocates who showed up in front of the clinic with their own signs and slogans to be shouted.

"What really makes me uncomfortable is how many men are here opposing abortion," said Juliet Peck, one of the pro-choice advocates. "They don't have to carry a child for nine months."

As a result of the mix, the medical clinic on Soquel Drive was surrounded by a long line of people holding signs supporting opposing views. "A baby feels pain starting at eight and a half weeks" read one anti-abortion placard. It was held up next to another that said "Keep abortion legal and safe."

One group of protestors sang "We Shall Overcome" while the other group chanted, "Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide." In the midst of all the chanting and singing there was a steady chorus of car horns passing by agreeing with the pro-choice signs.

Police ordered pro-choice advocates off a divider strip in the middle of Soquel Drive. No arrests were made at the protest, which ended just after noon.

Caught in the controversy was the medical clinic. Shubert said he

had inside information that 30 to 40 abortions are being performed at the clinic every month, although he also said that a clinic spokesman had told him the number was more like three to four. Clinic officials could not be reached for comment Saturday.

The local uproar was reflective of similar demonstrations throughout the United States. About 200 people were arrested Saturday in Sunnyvale at a demonstration in front of a family-planning clinic. That demonstration also attracted

counter-protesters, police there said.

An estimated 600 people either opposing or supporting abortion participated in the demonstration at the Family Planning Alternative Clinic there.

At the Santa Cruz Medical Clinic, as the uproar along Soquel Drive was at full force Saturday morning, a man in a red jacket came out of the clinic's opposite entrance, swinging a baby in a car chair and singing to it. Neither seemed to notice the people shouting nearby.