

Pro-life marchers want others to consider consequences of abortion

By CAROL ROBIDOUX
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CONCORD — Mounds of uneaten sandwiches, hot pasta and cold salads remained long after a group of pro-life marchers had eaten their fill during a lunch break inside the Concord High School cafeteria following yesterday's annual March For Life.

Each year participants are encouraged to bring along some food to share after spending the morning together in observance of the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision, known as Roe v. Wade, legalizing abortion.

Kathy Marotta of Londonderry has made the Concord event a habit over the last five years. She says she comes because she believes someone has to stand up for the unborn child.

"I believe women should have the choice — but that choice stops once a pregnancy begins," Marotta said.

Abortion is a silent crime that must stop, Marotta said, and the annual March for Life is one way to bring awareness to those who have never taken time to consider what's at stake.

"There are babies being murdered every day, but nobody talks about the process, or the aftermath," Marotta said.

It's the aftermath that brought one woman out to the rally who was reluctant to give her name, but wanted to share her story.

"I had an abortion 31 years ago — one year after abortion was legalized. At the time you feel like the timing just isn't right. You figure you'll have other children someday. But the thing is, that one child is an individual — you'll never have that child again," said the woman.

"That would've been an older sibling for my children. I've had to come to terms with the guilt and shame of what I've done," she said.

Sitting nearby was Jennifer Johnson of Hooksett, attending her first rally with her son, 4-year-old DJ.

"I was told to have an abortion with my daughter, who's 2½, after I miscarried her twin.

I was in my fourth month. The doctor said I was risking infection, and that I'd likely lose the other baby anyway," Johnson said. "I politely told him where to go."

She opted to continue the pregnancy and her baby was born six weeks early, but in perfect health.

"I was in the emergency room with my daughter a few months after she was born, and saw that same doctor. He said, 'Who's this?' And I said, 'It's the baby you told me to abort.' I thought he might say something, like that he was glad everything turned out OK, but he didn't say anything. He just walked away," Johnson said.

State Rep. Barbara Hagan, R-Manchester, one of the event organizers, grabbed a megaphone and urged the crowd to help themselves to seconds.

"We have sandwiches, cake, bagels, soup — you wouldn't believe how much is leftover," she said.

Asked if the turnout for the annual event was considerably light, Hagan surveyed the crowd in the cafeteria, and said it appeared to be about the same as usual.

"We're in a bigger setting this year, so I would think the numbers are consistent with last year. We always have a lot of families who join us throughout the day for the rally, but who might not stay for the speaker," Hagan said.

After lunch, about 120 people gathered in the high school's McAuliffe Auditorium for featured speaker, Kathy Sparks, a former medical assistant at a prominent Illinois abortion clinic, now director of the New Beginnings Pregnancy Centers, a group of counseling centers in Illinois.

"The average life-span of a pregnancy center director is two years. I've been at this now for 20 years because I have the opportunity to share my testimony," Sparks said. "It's necessary that all of us not grow weary of what we're trying to do."

Sparks said she grew up in a pro-life home, and even wrote a

pro-life paper during her junior year of high school. Once she left for college, she changed her views to pro-choice.

"I became a radical feminist. What changed my mind was the argument we often hear, about child abuse. All those unwanted children who become abused and neglected," Sparks said.

One of many pro-choice arguments Sparks said are used to cloud the real issue at hand.

"It's amazing that God knew the end of my story. He put me in a position of learning everything there was to know about abortion," Sparks said. "They trained me at that clinic for this experience today, so that I can share my story with others."

Jessica Meserve, 17, of Rochester, attended the rally along with a youth group, Teens For Christ, from St. Mary Church.

"I want to take a stand to end abortion," Meserve said.

She said she always thought abortion was wrong, but attending the annual March for Life last year in Washington, D.C., changed her life forever.

The real challenge is how to use her own passion to help change the hearts and minds of others, Jessica said.

"I had a friend in school this year — just a few months ago — who told me she was going to have an abortion. I tried to talk her out of it, but she wouldn't listen. I know she was just scared. She felt it was her only choice," Jessica said.

Another youth group member, Ronni Laurion, 16, of Rochester, said public schools should be telling students the facts about abortion.

"I didn't know it hurts the baby. I didn't know anything. In school they inform us about safe sex, avoiding STDs and using condoms. But nobody tells you what an abortion is like, or that it can harm the mother — and not just physically," Ronni said.

"But if you asked 10 people at my school if they agree that abortion is OK, I bet eight would say it is — even though they don't really know what happens," Ronni said. "They need to be educated."



Jessica Santacruce, left, of Pembroke, and director of Rock for Life of New Hampshire, and Starr Covey of Hudson bow their heads at a memorial observance yesterday before the New Hampshire Right to Life's annual March for Life.

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