



NEVADA COUNTY
Citizens
 EDUCATED CHOICES *for* LIFE
Choice

► *Message from the President* ►

Twenty years ago a historic gathering of dedicated, energetic, resourceful women occurred: and Nevada County Citizens for Choice, "NCCC" was begun. Marion Becker, Dee Eldridge, Marian Gallagher, Laurel Knapp, and Bonnie Taylor, representing the American Association of University Women, Nevada County Branch, the Business and Professional Women, and the League of Women Voters of Western Nevada County, came together with the vision that is now stated in our booklet **Who We Are**: "...that everyone of reproductive age have access to affordable, confidential family planning services, current medical knowledge, and reproductive healthcare...."

Another goal of the founders was advocacy. As former NARAL president Kate Michelman stated, "For the past 20 years leaders on reproductive rights have always established that a women's right to decide is fundamental..." The originators in 1989 knew that local, state, and national decision makers needed to know that there were significant numbers of pro choice voters throughout Nevada County. Many activities were

undertaken to inform voters and influence legislation.

These were the years of Operation Rescue, clinic bombings and protests, and when antiabortionists turned to harassment of individual doctors and circulated "Wanted" posters. Reagan and Bush also had a negative impact by appointing judges who have ruled in favor of restrictions such as the historic 'Casey' decision in Pennsylvania. In 1994 Congress passed the "Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act" but there was ever more work to be done to preserve choice nationwide.

Many of you know far more about the struggles of those first years for NCCC than I. Yet, some may not know that during a Constitution Day parade, the proud NCCC members were alternately spat on and cheered, and that when plans were developed to have Planned Parenthood do a clinic at the UUMC Church, many letters to *The Union* were full of negative, hurtful words.

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►►►► *Events* ►►►►

Birds, Bees...& Butterflies
National Family Sexuality Education Month

One of our organization's most successful public education and awareness campaigns has been resurrected for 2009: the local Nevada County implementation of National Family Sexuality Education Month (NFSEM).

October is NFSEM month, and we're lucky to have Helene Fellows as the very capable organizer of this project. Helene, who grew up in Nevada County, has two young children and is passionate about the importance of parent-child communication. She is coordinating the dozens of organizational details needed to make it a success.

"NFSEM in Nevada County" is a month-long public awareness and education campaign about the need for parents to talk to their children about sex, love and relationships. It is endorsed by a community coalition including the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools Office, the Nevada Union Joint High School District, Business & Professional Women of

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Voices for Choice

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 This number will be answered during clinic hours; at all other times messages will be retrieved at least weekly.

Reproductive Justice - 1989 vs. 2009 by *Elaine Sierra*

It's daunting to try to assess the state of reproductive justice, 20 years after Citizens for Choice was founded in 1989. We can all agree, I believe, that there is an ongoing need for our organization, and for our supporters to continue working with us, to expand access to reproductive healthcare, to provide education and information to the public and to advocate for reproductive rights. But has the need changed over the years? To look at that question, let's consider a few gauges of the status of reproductive justice.

First and foremost, what is the viability of Roe v. Wade and its Constitutional protection of a woman's right to choose to terminate her pregnancy before fetal viability, without undue interference from the State? Since Roe was decided in 1973, and certainly over the last 20 years, significant opposition has arisen to its underpinning in the right to privacy, and to the notion of a woman's right to choose. Faith-based opposition has grown over the years, rooted in unyielding beliefs that life begins at conception and that sexual behavioral norms mandated by various religions should apply to secular laws governing the general citizenry. The intrusion of faith now affects public policy related to abortion, contraception and sex education in our schools in all branches and at all levels of government.

Roe is being seriously questioned in the judicial sphere, where even members of the U.S. Supreme Court seem bent on limiting its scope. One example is its treatment of a law Congress enacted in 2003, law outlawing a late-term abortion procedure that opponents labeled "partial birth abortion." The Supreme Court upheld the law in 2007 in *Gonzales v. Carhart*, despite the lack of an exception to protect the health of the mother. Ironically, its practical effect has been not a reduction in the incidence of abortion, but rather, only the use of an alternative abortion procedure that is arguably more traumatic and less safe when the mother's health is threatened by heart disease, high blood pressure, or cancer. The major lesson of this case may be that the Supreme Court may not be the protector of the Constitutional right to choose that many believe it should be.

As important as Constitutional protection for the right to choose is, so is the practical availability

of abortion as an option. Last year, a Guttmacher Institute analysis of data from 1974 to 2004 *found* that the U.S. abortion rate is at its lowest level since 1974 and that the decline has been most significant among white women and teens. The rate for women between ages 15 to 44 dropped by 33% from its high in 1980 to 20 abortions per 1,000 women in that age group in 2004. The report said the decrease in the abortion rate among teens has been accompanied by an increase in teen births in part because of increased difficulty in obtaining abortions in some parts of the country, a greater societal acceptance of unwed mothers and changing attitudes toward abortion. The number of abortion providers continues to decline, a fact tragically highlighted by the assassination of Dr. Tiller, one of the few physicians providing late-term abortion services. Significantly, the study found that the proportion of all abortions performed for women who already had a child increased from 46% in 1974 to 60% in 2004; the study's main author posited that this reflected the trend of women turning to abortion when they cannot afford to support another child. Shockingly, the report found that 48% of all pregnancies were unintended. The conclusion seems inescapable that the promise of Roe v. Wade remains largely unfulfilled. Real reproductive choice is not yet a reality for most women. Apart from publicly funded healthcare, a large number of uninsured people lack access to affordable reproductive health care, including birth control. The prevention of unwanted pregnancies would seem to be a distant societal goal.

The positive news is that the state of California has a stellar record of supporting responsible public health policies relating to family planning and of helping those unable to afford reproductive healthcare on their own with public funding. Such policies have helped make reproductive healthcare services, including abortion, more available. And they've helped make accurate and complete information about reproduction, sexuality and contraception more available.

California has expanded public funding for family planning under its unique partnership with the federal government under the

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Citizens for Choice turns 20!

Medicaid program – Family PACT (Family Planning, Access, Care and Treatment). California has been operating Family PACT under an administrative “waiver” of the usual Medicaid rules since 1999, covering reproductive health services and prescriptions, primarily for low-income or uninsured residents. Through the program, services are provided for approximately 1.65 million women and men in the state annually, averting nearly 170,000 unintended pregnancies every year. About three-fourths of the clients served by the Women’s Health Specialists clinic in Grass Valley are covered by Family PACT or by regular Medi-Cal. In light of the current budget crisis in our state, the program has been threatened with cutbacks, while the need for publicly funded coverage grows due to unemployment and employer cutbacks to health insurance. Early this year, a proposal to eliminate the time-consuming waiver process under Medicaid, and instead, to allow all states to choose to use Medicaid funds to extend family planning services to more low-income women, was cut from the economic stimulus package. This summer, 16 governors urged Congress to make a similar proposal part of the healthcare reform package. As funds are included in the Obama administration’s budget for 2010, the Medicaid expansion may

provide confidential services to minors. Access to services for teens locally was reduced just last summer, when the Nevada County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to eliminate funding for the County-run teen reproductive health clinic in Grass Valley. Citizens for Choice argued that the special needs of teens deserve special services. The supervisors may have listened. Miners Family Health Center has since opened a new part-time, teen-oriented clinic to help serve those who formerly used the teen clinic.

Unlike many other states, California mandates that any sex education offered in the schools must be comprehensive, accurate and unbiased, and must include instruction on effective modes of contraception. Schools are not required to provide sex education, however, and enforcement of state-level curriculum requirements needs to be strengthened.

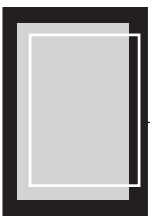
Is the concept of individual choice still being challenged? You bet it is. The outgoing Bush administration issued regulations that would allow federally funded health care providers and pharmacists to opt out of treating people, filling prescriptions,

“Is the concept of personal choice still being challenged? You bet.”

yet be enacted. Although the status of California’s waiver for Family PACT was threatened with termination last year, under the new administration, the waiver has been extended to the end of this year, and a final determination is expected to be completed by then.

A separate issue is minors’ rights to receive confidential reproductive health services. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that the rights of minors to obtain contraceptives and to choose abortion are constitutionally protected under the right to privacy. Our state has long protected those rights, as well. All states currently allow minors to consent to testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. A California law that would require parental consent for abortions was ruled unconstitutional under the state constitutional right to privacy in 1997, and thus, has no effect. As you know, that right has been challenged several times in the recent past by parental notification initiatives. So far, reproductive justice advocates like Citizens for Choice have defeated such challenges in California, but they are likely to continue. A few states (Texas and Utah) even require parental consent for state-funded family planning programs. On the other hand, federal Medicaid and family planning programs explicitly

or providing full information and advice, based on their personal moral or religious beliefs. Citizens for Choice and its activist supporters were among those advocating for prompt action to overturn the rule, which the Obama has effectively done. Many states, as well as the federal government, refuse to use taxpayer funds – which we ALL pay — for all aspects of reproductive healthcare. A recent example is the national debate over healthcare reform. Efforts to use this opportunity to expand access to needed abortions, and to make them more affordable, are virtually absent, while some opponents of abortion would hold the entire reform effort hostage by insisting on more restrictions on abortion. Some proposals under consideration would prevent insurance companies that currently cover abortions from doing so. You may want to let your congressional representatives – Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and Rep. Tom McClintock – know that you oppose any language in a health reform bill that would deny people the right to secure health insurance coverage for abortions. Ask them to support health care reform efforts that will ensure health coverage is available to all Californians, is affordable, and provides comprehensive health benefits, including reproductive health services.



Pro-Choice: Its Struggles and Its Vital Role by Cece Royal

Caution: This article opens with a graphic description from the book by Cristina Page, *How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America*.

To be pregnant in many ... parts of the world is a dangerous undertaking.... If you're a woman between fifteen and forty-five ... in the developing world, you're more likely to die from pregnancy than any other cause... Women in the United States don't fear fistula; most don't even know what it is. But in sub-Sahara Africa, South Asia, and some Arab states, fistula is a common and tragic part of life. Caused by prolonged and obstructed labor and the unavailability of a C-section, a fistula is a hole that forms between a woman's vagina and her bladder and rectum. In most cases, the baby dies as a result of this kind of delivery. A woman who survives is left with a fistula, and life-long incontinence. Urine and feces run down her legs. It affects more than 2 million girls and women worldwide....Family planning saves lives. Whatever convictions you cherish, the facts are clear: as contraception use rises in a country, maternal, fetal, and infant deaths decline.

On this, the 20th year of the formation of Citizens for Choice, we celebrate our great success in providing reproductive health services to Nevada County women. Of those services, family planning through the distribution of contraceptive options is an important one. Legal and available, contraception is something we have come to take for granted. But pro-lifers* and the religious right have a hidden agenda that is focused not only on abolishing legal abortion but on abolishing access to contraception,

To pro-lifers, the issue is straightforward: a woman wanting an intimate relationship with her partner must marry.

Pro-lifers on the surface say they support birth control—but only natural birth control, such as the rhythm method, risky and often unsuccessful. To them, *artificial* contraception (which includes the pill, the shot, the patch, the ring, the IUD) is tantamount to abortion since they see such medical means as preventing a life that should have been created. They have

*“...the pro-choice movement,
by becoming the contraception movement,
has become the real pro-life movement
for America.”*

which they characterize as a form of abortion—unbelievable, but true.

Under the Bush administration, pro-lifers sought not only to repeal *Roe v. Wade* but to make birth control access difficult if not impossible. We live with their political success in getting pro-life candidates elected and pro-life officials appointed to important federal positions, despite now having a pro-choice President. The pro-life agenda flies in the face of what women have achieved in thoughtful planning for career and family. Why would anyone want to return to an era where birth control access was denied, as recent as 1965? Why? Because pro-lifers are uncomfortable with the idea of women as equals. Women should be at home, caring for children, not out in the world competing with men. Their argument has at its base a fundamentalist tenet: sex should occur only inside a marriage and with the sole purpose of producing a child.

pushed their agenda forward by trying to make contraception less available and are currently working against the distribution of the HPV vaccine (which they purport will increase teen promiscuity). How are they doing? Take a look:

- In 1998, pro-life operatives were behind the defeat of federal legislation to require health insurance companies to pay for contraceptives.
- Fewer than half [the states in the US] have laws mandating that contraception be as available to women as Viagra is now to men.
- The United States ranks number one for teen moms, far outpacing the rest of the industrialized world—four times the European Union average and 60 percent higher than the rate in the United Kingdom.
- Finally, the negative pro-life campaign against the Gardasil vaccine effectively killed its legislative support, even though it could eradicate all diseases associated with HPV (anal cancer, vaginal cancer, vulvular cancer, esophageal cancer, mouth and oral cancers).

So when a woman does become pregnant, do pro-lifers see any option other than to have the child? Certainly not to seek abortion, another choice the pro-lifers have worked against with various misleading messages.

- The pro-life partial-birth-abortion message centers on an invented term that serves to make a problem out of something that has never been a problem: Less than two-tenths of 1 percent of all abortions use the procedure described.
- Although pro-lifers characterize abortion as traumatic, studies have shown that abortions do not cause psychological trauma; on the contrary, “adolescents who chose abortion showed significant drops in anxiety and significant increases in self-esteem and internal control immediately following the abortion to two years later. (12)”

* The term “pro-life” or “pro-lifers” used throughout this article is used deliberately, as that is the title the anti-choice movement uses to describe themselves. -Editor

► *President’s Message continued from page 1*

Realize how forward thinking our organizers were then and how their goals are echoed today in those of the Republican Majority for Choice: “shift funding from abstinence-only programs to comprehensive sex ed, promote solutions to reduce the rate of unintended pregnancies such as expanding family planning and contraception services to those in need, and create legislation that would ensure a federal standard to codify Roe v Wade and protect medical privacy.”

Citizens for Choice is a respected and valued community resource, called upon to present unbiased education, and supported by civic and philanthropic groups. Our clinic has seen more than 6,500 clients since its opening in 2006 and our outreach educators are known for their common sense approach, solutions, and expertise.

Rev. Dr. Rebecca A. Parker, in a 2004 speech at All Souls Unitarian Church in

In a twist of irony, the *pro-choice* movement, by becoming the contraception movement, has become the *real* pro-life movement for America. It’s the pro-choice movement that’s largely responsible for the decline in abortion in recent years, as well as the reduction in the need for later-term abortions. And in another life-affirming direction toward health, it’s the pro-choice movement that seeks to educate young people as to hazards of STDs and the ways to prevent their spread.

The world faces a real threat in the ongoing right-wing campaign to prevent sex education and the ability to exercise reproductive choice. You’d be amazed at the cases put forth in Cristina Page’s book, *How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America*. Read it. It will bolster your resolve in supporting The Clinic’s vital services.

D.C., stated, “Why should we march to keep abortion safe and legal? Because where there is choice there is life. Where there is life there is hope.”

And so, as we celebrate the work of all who have taken up the vision of those who were with NCCC in the first years, let’s renew our commitment to that vision, advocacy, and outreach which began in 1989 – and work to ensure that Citizens for Choice, its clinic, advocacy, and programs will expand and thrive for the next twenty years and beyond!

To all of you who have given of your funds, time, expertise, advice, love, sweat and tears – Go raibh maith agaibh, Gracias, Toda, Danke, Grazie, Tak, Merci – Thank you to all!

Sharon O’Hara

Citizens for Choice thanks the following donors who generously gave between 7/23/09 and 10/17/09

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▶▶▶▶ *Reproductive Health*

The Other A Word by Nancy Eubanks

As most of you know, Citizens for Choice has partnered with Women's Health Specialists (WHS) for the last 3 years to provide a full range of reproductive services from birth control to STD testing for uninsured and underinsured women and men in our community. The Clinic! has seen over 6,500 client visits, now averaging about 50 visits per day. Considering The Clinic! is only open 2 days a week, we think this is a remarkable achievement. Yes, Women's Health Specialists also performs abortions at their main clinic in Sacramento, BUT did you know Women's Health Specialists also offers a full service **adoption** program – **the other "A" word**.

At our last board meeting Citizens for Choice had a presentation by Marikathryn Hendrix, the director and co-founder of Adoption Choices of Northern California. This program has been part of WHS services for 15 years. Marikathryn is adopted and is also a birth mother of an open adoption, so she has firsthand knowledge of the many choices and challenges a prospective adoptive mother

faces. The program provides education and counseling about adoption. The counselors neither judge nor persuade, leaving the choice of adoption (or not) and what kind of adoption (from open adoption to closed adoption to anywhere in between) for the woman to decide based on her needs and desires.

The program also:

- helps find adoptive parents (they have a waiting list of about 15 parents at any given time).
- provides networking with other birth parents – if desired – including an annual picnic that brings together all their birth parents, adopted children, and adoptive parents.
- provides guidance and advocacy during the adoption process.
- provides legal information and referrals pertaining to birth parents rights and the legal process.

If you want further information or have any questions please feel free to contact Marikathryn at www.cawhs.org

▶▶▶▶ **National Family Sexuality Education Month** *continued from page 1*

Nevada County, the local branch of the American Association of University Women, and other local groups.

Launched by former Citizens for Choice communications director Susan Rogers in 2005, the campaign ran each October through 2007, with a break last year. Advocating for responsible sex education at home and in the community has always been a major platform for our organization, but finding ways of reaching parents is very difficult. NFSEM, started by Planned Parenthood quite a few years ago, was a "hook" on which our organization has been able to build a local campaign that has served as an effective public relations tool.

The culmination of NFSEM is two free parent workshops, held at Pleasant Ridge School in conservative south Nevada County and at Lyman Gilmore in Grass Valley, on the evenings of October 27th and 29th respectively. The sessions help parents feel more comfortable talking to their children about "the birds and the bees," including topics that they probably wish they didn't have to talk about, but know they have to. Two highly qualified and respected discussion facilitators (both parents themselves) are helping us with these workshops: Michael Curtis, M.D., a local pediatrician, and Meg Luce, a licensed Marriage & Family Therapist and facilitator of parent education and support groups for First 5 Nevada County.

President Sharon O'Hara states, "We know that children learn what they live. Kids are exposed to all kinds of conflicting messages about sexuality from the media. Parents and other adults can be an 'antidote,' but only when the adult is comfortable talking to the child. That's why these workshops can be really helpful, now and in the future, during those teachable moments." The workshops do not promote nor endorse any particular point of view that parents are supposed to take when talking with their children. According to Rogers, this approach is key to achieving common ground with parents and organizations that may otherwise disagree with our organization on the issue of abortion rights. The endorsement of our

continued on next page

Baskets!

The following businesses have graciously allowed us space in their store to display our informational baskets:

Please support our supporters!

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Asylum Down
Behind Closed Doors
The Bottle Shop
BriarPatch
Classic Tatoos
Common Goals
CORR (Community Recovery Resources)
Diamond Tattoo
DVSAC
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Miners Teen Clinic
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Sacred Bee
Sierra College Health Center
Sierra Mountain Coffee
Roasters
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Tribal Weaver
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children Services)

▶▶▶▶ *Reproductive Health*

4abstinence-only.gov by *Linda McManus*

When Barack Obama said that he wanted to bring science back to the White House, we were thrilled. Coupled with his statement that he won't support abstinence-only education but did support a comprehensive program where "contraception has to be part of that education," we thought, finally - after eight years of medical inaccuracies and biases regarding sexuality - tolerance, fairness, and science would be back.

Wrong.

In mid-August of this year a commercial was aired on YouTube, created by the US Health and Human Services Department, directed at parents who want to talk to their children about sex but were uncomfortable doing so; at the end of the commercial the viewers were referred to an HHS website, www.4parents.gov for more tips on how to talk to their kids. But the commercial – and the website – are extremely misleading. The ad basically told parents that it's ok to be vague about the physical aspects of a maturing body, that parents "don't have to be explicit about it," that they didn't need "to talk about the parts." The ad goes on to say that kids just want to be told to wait to have sex...until marriage.

Although the commercial doesn't specifically mention marriage, the website definitely does. Don't be fooled by the lack of the word "abstinence" – both the commercial and the website advocate abstinence-only until marriage (the website has been updated as late as August 2009) The website states that parents should tell children to wait until marriage before having sex. It states that children do better in a home headed by a mother and a father, and that married people will live longer, have better physical and emotional health, are happier, earn more, enjoy better sex lives, and save more so they have fewer money worries. Of course if you're gay and can't get married, or if you simply don't want to get married, or if you're a teen who is going to continue having sex, then, oh well, you'll be unhappy, poor, and have a lousy sex life.

This website was created in 2005 by the Bush Administration, to "equip parents to talk with their teens about sex and relationships while encouraging them to remain abstinent from unhealthy behaviors." It was so full of medical inaccuracies, bias,

misinformation, and inappropriate wording that SIECUS sent a letter on March 31, 2005 to the HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt in protest, calling for its immediate removal; the letter was signed by 150 organizations (<http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpage&pageid=692>). Later that year Henry Waxman, as Ranking Minority Member of the Government Oversight Committee, also sent a letter to Secretary Leavitt <http://oversight.house.gov/documents/20050713110309-93818.pdf> calling for its removal. Waxman had also disclosed that the website was created by the National Physician's Center for Family Resources, http://www.physicianscenter.org/v1/positions_sex-wk.php, an organization with an anti-birth control, abstinence-only agenda, whose current website states that "...with the advent of school-based contraceptive education programs, the rates of teen pregnancy and STDs increased dramatically."

With those and other letters stirring up opposition to the website, HHS was required to review and make any necessary changes to conform with scientific evidence.

Fast forward to 2009. Most of the medical inaccuracies were brought into 21st century, although the glaring exceptions are the reference to abortion causing depression (rejected by the American Psychological Association) and having complications (abortion is safer than giving birth), and the fuzziness of fertilization-is-pregnancy vs implantation-is-pregnancy, the latter being the medically accepted definition. Most conspicuous and damaging however is the emphasis on abstinence-until-marriage with no converse emphasis placed on contraception or comprehensive sexuality education. Indeed, finding information on contraception itself was difficult; it was finally found under the heading "Dealing with Risky Behavior and Other Challenges." Suggestions and talking tips to parents of gay teens is remarkable light (e.g. it mentions that gay teens are at a higher risk for depression and suicide, but does not go into further detail) and referrals for further information for LGBTQ youth and their parents are absent.

A site that helps parents talk to their children about sex is a wonderful idea – as long as it's medically accurate and includes all facets of reproductive health, and doesn't exclude certain groups of people. A website like www.advocatesforyouth.org. Hopefully at some point during this administration, 4parents will be updated, to be truly useful for everyone.

▶▶▶▶ **National Family Sexuality Education Month** *continued from previous page*

community coalition partners – and the support of the public schools at which the workshops are held – are likely due to our stated position that the choices parents make for conversations in the privacy of their own homes are their own personal decision. However, the workshops do emphasize the importance of providing medically accurate and comprehensive information. We offer free pamphlets on topics ranging from abstinence, to helping your child learn to say "no," to discussing birth control, STDs, peer pressure, and more. We stress the need to for good parent-child communication, because kids are learning about sexuality from the media every day, and those messages are almost guaranteed not to reflect parents' values.

For more information, contact Helene Fellows, 412.0050 (cell) or email helene_fellows@yahoo.com.

▶▶▶▶▶ *Choice Programs & Events!* ▶▶▶▶▶

October Citizens for Choice turns 20!

Join other parents for a free evening of informal discussion about how parents can talk to their children about sex. You'll be able to ask questions specific to your family. Co-facilitated by local pediatrician Michael Curtis, MD, and Marriage and Family therapist Meg Luce

October 27 Discussion starts at 7 p.m.
Pleasant Ridge School District Board Room
22580 Kingston Lane, Grass Valley

October 29 Discussion starts at 7 p.m.
Lyman Gilmore, Room D-3
10837 Rough & Ready Highway, Grass Valley

February 2010 Pairing wine with food, stay tuned!

▶▶▶▶▶ *Help Wanted!* ▶▶▶▶▶

Board member and volunteers We are looking for women and men to help us in our efforts. Development, Event Planning, Database managing (Microsoft Access), and Communications are some main areas where we'd like to find that special person. Please email us if you're interested or would like further information! info@citizensforchoice.org

Website Have you visited our website lately? www.citizensforchoice.org. Tell us what you think -- about the content, graphics, style, we welcome all suggestions. One new item that has been added is online donating, now it's easier than ever to donate!