

Refuse & Resist!

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Coalition of Activists Honor Abortion Providers with National Day of Appreciation March 10, 2003

New York, NY - On March 10th, for the seventh consecutive year, activists across the country will pay tribute to the physicians and staff members who risk their lives daily in order to preserve a woman's right to choose. Each year, 1.4 million American women obtain safe and legal abortions from committed, courageous providers who continue their work in spite of great stigma, professional ostracism, and real physical threat. On any given work day, these men and women may face verbal, emotional, and physical abuse while walking from their car to the clinic's front door. In 2002 alone, there were 247 acts of violence against providers and clinics, including arson, burglary, vandalism, anthrax threats, and stalking. Seven providers and clinic workers have been murdered since 1993. Not surprisingly, fewer doctors are willing to perform the critical medical service and access is decreasing--since 1982, the number of abortion providers has declined by 37 percent, and today, women living in 87 percent of U.S. counties must travel elsewhere for the procedure.

"Abortion providers are called 'murderers,' harassed, stalked, and even killed for offering valuable, critical services to women," says Refuse and Resist!. "It is important to let clinic owners, directors, and staff nationwide know that we support and thank them. They continue to be on the front lines of the fight for women's reproductive freedom."

The date of March 10 was chosen to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Dr. David Gunn, the first physician murdered by an anti-abortion extremist, and to honor all abortion providers for their perseverance and dedication to women.

"Abortion providers will only be safe from violence when there are thousands of physicians willing and able to provide their patients with a full range of reproductive options, and there are thousands of people publicly supporting their work," says Jody Steinauer, MD, founder of Medical Students for Choice.

"Abortion providers stand in a long line of prophets and heroes, sung and unsung, who have changed the world simply by doing what was right, one day at a time. We salute them, on this day and every day," says Rev. Carleton W. Veazy, president of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

Each year on March 10th, countless acts of appreciation take place. Organizations and individuals deliver flowers, thank you notes, or breakfast to their local clinics. "Providers tell us that they really appreciate the National Day of Appreciation. They are under the gun and often feel isolated. This reminds them that many are standing behind them 100%," says Refuse & Resist!

The National Day of Appreciation for Abortion Providers was initiated by Refuse and Resist! and is co-sponsored by other pro-choice organizations, including the National Organization for Women, the Center for Reproductive Rights, Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health, Medical Students for Choice, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America, among others.

Refuse and Resist! is a national anti-repression organization. <http://www.refuseandresist.org>