

## THIS ISSUE

- [Transgender equality](#)
- [Sexism and women's professional soccer](#)
- [Congressional Republicans Don't Want You to Have Healthcare](#)

Inside This Issue:

The Future of Our Families	1
Attacks on Title X funding	2
FIFA and Sexism	2
King vs. Burwell	2
Love Wins!	3
Team Member Spotlight	3
Walnut Street Clinic Opens!	3

## Our Hope for the Future of Our Families

Jennifer Mooney, PhD — Presented at *Infant Vitality: Inside the Evidence* — June 11, 2015

The personal right to plan a family should be afforded to all Cincinnati residents. Ensuring this right allows our citizens the freedom to set and achieve their life goals. However, it is clear that those born into poverty have a diminished chance of achieving their life plans. Providing high quality, accessible, preventive reproductive health care can help resolve this inequality. Over the course of 25 years, shifts in the relationship between unintended pregnancy and poverty have highlighted disparities in reproductive health care access. Regardless of moral or political influence in how we view family planning and birth control, data indicate that those at a greater financial advantage are more enabled to plan their families.

Over half (54%) of the pregnancies in Ohio are unintended, a rate that supersedes the national rate of 49%. Unintended pregnancies are expensive to taxpayers, costing \$11 Billion a year because nearly 2/3 of all unintended pregnancies are publicly funded. While the costs of unintended pregnancy to the state are staggering, the costs of preventing unintended pregnancy to individuals can be equally alarming. Funding from federal programs such as Title X, which subsidizes comprehensive preventative reproductive health care, helps alleviate the family planning cost burden for some families, but the greatest disparities in maternal and infant health still lie within our community's poorest families.

How does preventive reproductive health directly affect infant outcomes? It is well documented that brief intervals between pregnancies are associated with preterm birth. Since preterm birth is the leading cause of infant death in Cincinnati

and Hamilton County, a comprehensive discussion around spacing is justified. Pregnancy spacing is typically calculated using the Interpregnancy Interval (IPI), or the spacing between a live birth and the beginning of the following pregnancy. It is theorized that if the mother's nutritional reserves have been depleted due to pregnancy, then a longer spacing interval would allow for repletion prior to the next conception.

However, spacing should not be viewed strictly through a biological maternal resource lens. The social situation of an expectant mother also contributes to birth outcomes and we would be remiss to exclude the social determinants of health. If a mother is living in poverty, has inadequate access to healthy food, has little to no social support, or is involved in an unhealthy relationship, she and her fetus may be more inclined to suffer the consequences of short IPI. If we took a more collective approach to addressing the role of spacing in birth outcomes, it would necessitate the reproductive life planning (RLP) process. RLP is a self-directed plan for when or if a person wants to have children. Unfortunately, the burden of reproduction largely falls on women. Women's rights pertaining to reproduction are politically volatile and there is little opportunity for sharing the family planning responsibility with a male partner. A woman's right to access medically effective and affordable contraception is essential in the reduction of poor outcomes derived from inadequate pregnancy spacing.

In the future, reproductive rights will be accepted as human rights for all Cincinnatians. Reductions in infant mortality

would follow since preterm birth would be minimized with adequate spacing. Meanwhile more men and women would actively pursue their reproductive life plans, fewer pregnancies would be unintended, and women would be healthy at the time of conception. Education around birth spacing would be complemented with the contraceptive resources that make spacing possible, thereby increasing gender equality through the advancement of women. By equipping our community with knowledge, the incidence of negative reproductive health outcomes would diminish due to safer sex practices. Finally, our community would have the ability to reallocate funds related to preterm birth to other meaningful needs.

If we are content with the current state of sociopolitical stagnation around the issues of maternal and infant health, the effects of our collaborative efforts will not be realized. We would commit the ultimate disservice to our community by denying our youth the knowledge and truth about how to choose healthy relationships, how to become autonomous by establishing and reaching life goals, and how to become successful parents when and if they choose to be so. We must acknowledge health care access barriers, laxity around sex education, and faith-based discordance with contraception as barriers to effective reproductive health policy. Our goal should be to promote health equity by empowering women and men in Cincinnati to make and enact their reproductive life plans.

## Republicans Attack Title X

A recently proposed budget put forth by Republican members of the House of Representatives would eliminate all Title X funding if it passes. When Title X passed in 1970, both political parties were strongly in favor of government efforts to make birth control accessible to all women, but this attitude has shifted as Republicans have increasingly become beholden to fringe religious elements in their party. Since many Title X service providers are also providers of abortion, conservative policy makers who are eager to see family planning funding disappear use this as justification to take funding away. This despite the fact that funds for Title X and termination services are strictly separated under the law. Additionally, the House Appropriations Committee is seeking to “roll back much of the Affordable Care Act, eliminate most of the federal funding for comprehensive sex ed and teen pregnancy prevention programs, and give employers more power to refuse to cover reproductive health care services they object to.” The funds allocated to Title X are already low, but eliminating this source completely would be devastating to the millions of women and men who rely on Title X for low cost contraception, cancer prevention services, well-woman care, STI testing and treatment, and a variety of other services. Title X funds the family planning safety net in this country, This safety net allows teenagers to have confidential access to care that they need when parents are not supportive of family planning measures.

Confusingly, other conservative Senators from New Hampshire and Colorado are pushing for legislation to make birth control pills available over the counter as an effort to appear supportive of family planning measures and women’s health issues. While this would make access easier for women who can readily afford over the counter medications, it does little for poor women. For example, the wholesale cost of Plan B is around \$5, while in drug stores it costs \$50 per dose. This is simply not a feasible expense for most women. If birth control pills are made available over the counter, they would also not be covered by insurance — prices would go up, access would go down. Dr. Mark DeFrancesco, president of the American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecologists, does not support these bills: “Unfortunately, instead of improving access, this bill would actually make more women have to pay for their birth control, and for some women, the cost would be prohibitive. We cannot support a plan that creates one route to access at the expense of another, more helpful route.”<sup>2</sup> Laws like this are in place in California and now Oregon for women who can afford regular prescriptions, but that still will still leave many without coverage if Title X services go away.

## FIFA and Sexism

The governing body of international Major League Soccer, FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association) has been in hot water lately due to an ongoing corruption and bribery scandal. But amidst the current Women’s World Cup in Canada a new slew of accusations against FIFA have emerged. The resigned (but still acting) president of FIFA, Sepp Blatter, demonstrated his casual disregard for the women’s game by being unable to recognize two of the best female players in the world at the women’s player of the year award ceremony (where they were candidates for the award).<sup>3</sup> After misidentifying Abby Wambach’s (US forward ) wife as Marta (Brazil forward, arguably the best player in the world), Blatter went on to announce that female players should wear tighter shorts because they are pretty. The implication being that the value of women’s sports rests in their ability to attract the male sexual gaze. Now, while Blatter has pushed for the development of more women’s teams and added a woman to the FIFA board of directors during his tenure, these actions suggest that he cannot seriously take the game into an era of gender equality.

But these are superficial slights compared to the ongoing legal battle about the fields that the World Cup is being played on in Canada. The fields are composed of artificial turf instead of real grass. 40 players sued last year for the right to play on grass fields, citing risk of injury and turf burn among other reasons that they should not be expected to play on anything but grass. Players have publicly said they play the game differently on turf. US forward Sydney Leroux is well aware of the gender inequality involved here: “Men would never play a World Cup on turf. Some men in Major League Soccer don’t even travel when (games are) on turf because they won’t play on it.”<sup>4</sup> Further, debates over artificial turf don’t even occur usually because playing on turf is like playing “on planks of wood with rusty nails poking out.”<sup>5</sup> FIFA has agreed that the event will not be played on turf in the future.

It gets worse. All of the women playing in the world cup are to be tested to show that they are “of an appropriate gender.”<sup>6</sup> Teams have used gynecological records, physical exams, hormone testing, and chromosome testing to confirm that all players are female. This fear of women “who don’t conform to perceived feminine norms [and were] scrutinized based on their physical appearance alone”<sup>7</sup> only serves to recreate quickly dissolving gender stereotypes. Plus, there is no record of men having ever been tested.

## SCOTUS Defends Obamacare

On Thursday, June 25, the Supreme Court handed down a decision on a critical health care case known as *King vs. Burwell*. The central issue in this case was whether or not the federal government has the authority to subsidize private insurance for people who couldn’t afford to buy it on their own. The court decided that the government does indeed have the authority to do this. Specifically, their decision supports the ability of the federal government to subsidize health insurance for poor and middle-income people looking for insurance on federally run insurance exchanges.

The health care establishment breathed a collective sigh of relief upon hearing this ruling. The subsidies constitute a central component of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. Without them, individuals who are just above the poverty threshold for Medicaid would likely be unable to afford health insurance. Being uninsured is damaging enough on its own for low-income people, but these individuals would be financially penalized further due to the law for not having health insurance if their subsidies were taken away! Because of this situation, the subsidies constitute the glue that holds Obamacare together. The Obama administration estimates that nearly 11.7 million Americans are using exchanges to get health insurance and that among these people some 10 million are receiving subsidies. So now that SCOTUS has ensured that no one’s health insurance will be taken away, the question is who would want to take away health insurance from people who can’t afford it?

The answer, perhaps unsurprisingly, is Congressional Republicans and their corporate backers. The series of lawsuits that led to the *King vs. Burwell* decision were funded by an organization known as the Competitive Enterprise Institute — a self-described “non-profit public policy organization dedicated to advancing principles of limited government, free enterprise, and individual liberty” (cei.org). How preventing individuals from getting affordable health insurance advances their individual liberty is completely bewildering. Nonetheless, this attack on the Affordable Care Act is just one of a long line that will no doubt continue long into the future. We should keep in mind that the law passed in 2010! Over nearly 5 years we have seen attack after attack emanate from the Republican ranks only to fail miserably among the broader public and in the courts. Despite mounting evidence showing the value of Obamacare in reducing uninsured rates, improving patient safety, and improving patient outcomes, Republicans remain unwilling to submit to the will of the people they claim to represent. It’s time that they begin listening to people instead of corporations and stop attacking the bedrock of our public health system.

## LOVE WINS!

This week, we took a huge leap toward equality with the Supreme Court ruling in favor of the right for gay couples to legally marry in all 50 states in a 5-4 decision with Justices Kennedy, Ginsburg, Breyer, Sotomayor and Kagan in the majority.<sup>6</sup> The ruling in Obergefell v. Hodges is a monumental decision by the court, originating from a case in Cincinnati. Jim Obergefell, the lead plaintiff in the case, and his partner John Arthur fought the State of Ohio for the right to have their marriage legally recognized by the state since they'd been married in Maryland, where gay marriage was already legalized. Arthur was dying of Lou Gehrig's disease and Obergefell wanted to be listed as his spouse on legal documents when he passed away. The state refused, so he took the case to the courts, where it eventually reached the Supreme Court.

The City of Cincinnati was the first in the country to include transgender specific health care in the insurance available for city employees, and prides itself on inclusivity. Despite the city being listed as a defendant in the case, "it's attorneys refuse[d] to defend Ohio's ban."<sup>7</sup> Jim Obergefell was in Washington when the decision was announced, received a call from the President live on CNN, but ultimately he celebrated his win at Cincinnati's Pride Festival over the weekend! (Image from WCPO)



## TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: GENEVA GOODE

**Hometown:** Cincinnati, Ohio

**Favorite movie/book and why:**

**Movie :** One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. Why?- so many reasons and not enough time to explain.

**Book:** I have several but Who Moved My Cheese is the latest favorite. Why? sometimes I need to remind myself why people fear change.

**What do you do for thebodyshop?**

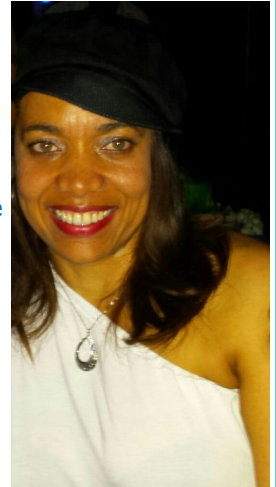
I assist with scheduling, coordination of services, on occasionally serve as support staff, organize their work area, and make coffee for the staff :)

**What do you love about working in reproductive health?**

I love when I see the younger population utilizing the services. I know for sure that they are being empowered to make informed decisions about reproductive health.

**When you're not at work, where might we find you?**

You will find me at home, in the kitchen, I love to cook!



## Opening of Walnut St. Health Center

The Walnut Street Health Center will be opening July 1<sup>st</sup>, with a ribbon cutting on July 2nd at 10am! This health center is located in the Talbert House Community Link building downtown, and will serve primarily clients already utilizing their services, but will potentially accept new patients in the future. We'd also like to welcome a new Nurse Practitioner, Pam Copass, who will be providing services at this location! Pam will be able to work with women, men, and children who need appointments, and will even be able to see parents and

children in back to back appointments. This will allow patients to avoid back-and-forth travel to get medical attention for themselves and their children in one visit.

Services provided will include physicals, reproductive health care, pediatrics, well-woman and well-man care, and will allow for some walk-in appointments. On Wednesday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, clinical staff will be on hand to provide potential patients with information about services, make appointments, give tours, and meet the staff.

## MEN'S HEALTH

Interested in the Men's Health Initiative for your organization? Contact the program coordinator: [eric.washington@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:eric.washington@cincinnati-oh.gov)

The Men's Health Initiative performs health education seminars at local community-based organizations. We currently have seminars on the following topics:

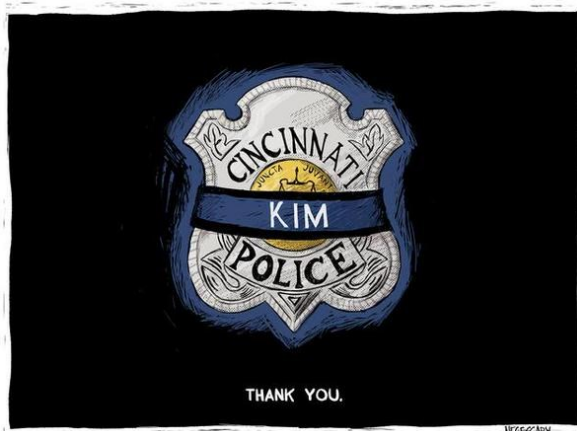
- Reproductive Anatomy, Pregnancy, and Sexuality**
- STIs and Protecting Yourself**
- Relationships and Communication**
- Family Planning**
- Fatherhood**
- Puberty**
- Bullying**


**REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAM**

Reproductive Health Suite  
Clement Health Center  
Cincinnati Health Department  
3101 Burnet Avenue  
Cincinnati, OH 45229

RHWP Hotline:  
513-357-7341

Appointment scheduling through the CHD Call Center:  
513-357-7320


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- 7) Stolberg, S. G. (2015, April 25). Gay Marriage Case Caps Cincinnati's Shift from Conservative Past. The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/26/us/gay-marriage-case-caps-cincinnati-shift-from-conservative-past.html>

**The Reproductive Health and Wellness Program (RWHP) or the body shop**, is a five-year grant awarded by the Ohio Department of Health to the Cincinnati Health Department and is funded by the federal Title X program. The primary objective of this program is to provide access to contraceptives and reproductive health services to the men and women of Hamilton County, especially to the most underserved populations, so as to reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies, unwanted pregnancies, and ultimately, the number of poor pregnancy outcomes. Through these direct services, education and outreach, the program also hopes to cultivate a culture of responsibility, well-being, and empowerment in regards to sexuality and reproductive health. To date, we've enrolled thousands of individuals, and continue to grow, learn, and serve.

For additional information regarding the project, please contact Dr. Jennifer Mooney at:  
[jennifer.mooney@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:jennifer.mooney@cincinnati-oh.gov)

**Sonny Kim, 1966-2015**

In remembrance of CPD Officer Sonny Kim, we would like to offer our condolences to his wife, sons, and fellow officers. There are no words we can offer that are more poignant than those of his son, Tim:

"Hey dad, thanks for everything. Your life was cut short, but in the time you were here you taught me so much and shaped who I am today. I'll always remember riding our bikes to the bike trail, running that 5k with you (even though you were far behind me :) ), I'll miss your selfies that you would send me from work in the morning, I'll miss your stupid jokes that I would purposefully make a straight face at even though they were actually funny, I'll miss making fun of you for looking like a potato, I'll miss your random texts just to tell me how proud of me you were and how much you love me, and most of all I'll miss you coming home from work every night and giving you a hug and just feeling safe and comfort around you. Thank you for making our family and so many others feel safe, and I wish I could tell you all of this in person, but I can't. But that's okay because I know you're watching me now, and I hope that heaven lets you look at Instagram posts! I guess it'll be Joshua, Jacob, Mom, and I from now on but that's okay because we all know you're looking out for us. I'm so proud of you and so proud to call you my father and my hero. I'll see you soon dad. Also thank you everyone for the love and support. It has been unreal and my family can't thank everyone enough for it. I just ask one favor from everyone: Please just give your parents a hug and tell them how much you love them, cherish the moments you have with your family and parents because life is already short enough and you can't determine when someone will pass."