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## **Speaker addresses sexual integrity at FirstChoice Clinic event**

Roxane B. Salonen

She has spoken around the world and before many different audiences, including an African king with 19 wives. But on the evenings of March 7 and 8, international abstinence speaker Pam Stenzel was among her own, addressing 1,200-plus prolife Midwesterners who gathered to hear her message of sexual integrity and raise funds for FirstChoice Clinic.

Stenzel and her British agent, Colin Hearn, who served as master of ceremonies, traveled to North Dakota to take part in FirstChoice Clinic's 2011 fundraising banquets. The events in Fargo-Moorhead and Bismarck-Mandan drew crowds of 800 and 400, respectively, marking the debut event of the new FirstChoice Clinic's West satellite site.

The widely acclaimed speaker gave it straight to the crowds, causing many participants to dab their eyes with tissues some moments and sit up straight at other times while listening to her frank talk.

"I'm not the sex police. If I thought my job was to keep teenagers from having sex, I'd put them all in a box," she said. "No, my job is to tell them the truth."

Stenzel has put together her version of the truth, revealed in part by teenage kids who have written her through the years, in her newest book, "Nobody Told Me," which uses a social networking format to attract younger readers. Unfortunately, the truth isn't what's being disseminated through sexual education programs, she said, noting that we're trying to lessen the consequences of poor behavior by not being honest with kids about where bad choices will lead them.

In a conference at the United Nations, Stenzel said, she was told abstinence doesn't work. "Last I checked, abstinence works 99.9 percent of the time, and the one time it didn't work, we had Christmas," she said.

Responding to high rates of sexually transmitted diseases with injections or latex doesn't work either, she said; building character, however, does. "Maybe if we put our standard at what's right instead of what's 'a little bit safer,' we might get a better result."

Stenzel noted a culture shift, pointing out that today's teens aren't embarrassed about having sex but getting pregnant. "We've made pregnancy the problem, not the sex that brought it about," she said.

She shared the following statistics to drive home her points:

- Infertility in women has risen 500 percent in 10 years. "Many of the girls who graduated from high school in 2001 are finding out they will not have children because of choices they've made."
- In the next 24 hours, 14,000 teenagers will contract a sexually transmitted disease in this country.
- Girls are paying the highest price. Out of the 30 most common sexually transmitted diseases, 26 of them primarily damage women, whereas the other four damage men and women.

Stenzel, who was conceived as a result of rape, also commented on the belief of those who feel abortion is OK in cases of incest and rape. "My biological father is a rapist; I don't even know my ethnicity. But I am still a human being, and I still have value, and my life is not worth less than yours just because of the way I was conceived," she said. "I do not believe I deserve the death penalty because of the crime of my biological father."

When one life is not protected, she added, nobody's life is protected.

She suggested that the way to turn the culture around is to look within. "The ministry of FirstChoice Clinic is not another political rally. This is about changing hearts. This is Jesus with skin on it."

The evening included a client testimony by Kelsey, a FirstChoice Clinic client, who introduced her infant son, Rylan, to the crowd, and her father, Kent, who said FirstChoice Clinic convinced him and his wife, Kathy, that life is always the best choice.

The two fundraising events brought in more than \$150,000 for operation of FirstChoice Clinic and its affiliated programs, including the "Make a Sound Choice" abstinence education program.

*Roxane Salonen, wife and mother of five, is a parishioner and cantor at Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church, Fargo. She's also a freelance writer, children's author and host for Real Presence Radio.*