Clinics pushed into a corner
Harassment by anti-abortion groups chasing doctors away

By Judy Lundstrom Thomas
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Two of Wichita's three abortion clinics may close because their doctors are being driven away by the harassing tactics of abortion protesters, clinic officials say.

Officials at the Wichita Women's Center, 700 N. Market, and Wichita Family Planning, 3013 E. Central, say their clinics may not survive the summer.

The tactics being used by some abortion foes include:
- Threatening to picket a doctor's wedding so that church members and others will know that physician works at a clinic where abortions are performed.
- Keeping a watchful eye on doctors, their spouses and children, including confronting them at their homes and calling them. Abortion opponents also write to doctors and their families, urging them to "repent."
- Distributing leaflets and other booklets to medical students across the country. The material derides doctors who perform abortions and sometimes identifies them.

Using billboards, fliers and phone hot lines to divulge the names and personal information about doctors who perform abortions, routinely referring to them as "vampires" and "baby killers."

Abortion foes say they are ecstatic to hear that their methods seem to be working — methods they say are justified if clinics are shut down.

Meanwhile, abortion-rights advocates say the tactics are inexcusable acts of terrorism.

The March 10 shooting death of physician David Gunn by an abortion protester outside a Pensacola, Fla., clinic where he performed abortions has heightened doctors' anxieties. Now, they are arming themselves, securing their homes, hiring bodyguards and wearing flak jackets.

Abortion protesters see these as signs that they are winning the war. "This is a victory for the children, and it's a victory for Wichita," said Bryan Brown, director of Godarchy Productions, an anti-abortion group in Wichita.

"With all that's going on, if I were in (the doctors') positions, I would be afraid to do this, too."
Debbie Riggs, administrator of Wichita Family Planning clinic

Vandalism is part of the routine for clinic employees. Roxann Meyer, director of the Wichita Women's Center, works near a damaged window.

Inside: Clinics under siege

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