

NOAF Update: Clinic Escorting

Thu, 11/30/2017 - 00:00

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Hi everyone! Something I was really looking forward to participating in during my internship with NOAF was clinic escorting. I signed up for my first shift a few weeks ago and will sign up for my last shift of the semester this week!

Clinic escorts are volunteers who sign up for 4-hour shifts every weekday morning and escort people into the Women's Health Care Center for their abortion appointments. There are usually a different group of protesters outside the clinic

each day in a sort of rotating schedule, with the Friday group being particularly vitriolic. Since Friday mornings are free for both me and my co-intern Alex, we signed up for a Friday morning shift, somewhat curious to experience this daily antagonism. We were told that the Friday protesters show up in a large white van, from which they pull out big signs and other anti-abortion material (hand-outs, sometimes even instruments to play, which I thought was a pretty interesting tactic).

On Friday morning, Alex and I drive to the clinic and park in one of the metered spots next to the clinic building. We do this because we want to fill all the parking spots that are closer to the clinic so that the white van will be forced to park farther away & give the clinic a little more breathing room. We arrive earlier than the protesters (who usually come at around 9:30am to 10am)so that we can direct all the individuals into the clinic before they can be harassed outside. For many people, our bright green clinic escort vests confirm that they have arrived in the right place; the clinic building is otherwise very nondescript. Without any signage (for privacy reasons) the building blends into the surrounding residential neighborhood easily.

As 10:30am approaches, there is no sign of the white van. Fortunately for us and for the clinic patrons, there are no protesters today. A woman from the neighborhood walks by us with her dog and says, "No protesters today? Thank God!"