

# EXCLUSIVE: First look inside abortion clinic planned for OKC

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Controversial New women`s healthcare clinic in Oklahoma ...



OKLAHOMA CITY -- There is a new abortion clinic coming to Oklahoma City, the first to open in the state of Oklahoma in forty years.

Oklahoma City is the largest metro in America to have zero abortion facilities.

The last abortion clinic closed about two years ago when the doctor surrendered his license.

For two years, a reproductive rights advocate has been working to bring abortion services back to Oklahoma City.

## Pushing a boulder up a mountain

CEO of the Trust Women Foundation and Trust Women South Wind Women's Center, Julie Burkhart, bought an old eye doctor's office at Southwest 44th and Blackwelder.

"This is really the only path to provide access to people. Just because we live in a more traditional, conventional part of the county it doesn't mean people don't deserve their rights," Burkhart said.

She describes the process of opening the facility like "pushing a boulder up a mountain."

There have been a number of hurdles for Burkhart including twenty new

anti-abortion laws signed by Governor Mary Fallin since 2010, and other stringent measures proposed at the statehouse, but which never made it to the governor's desk.

And there were delays at the Oklahoma State Health Department (OSDH) which denied the clinic's license for months.

OSDH hasn't issued a license for an abortion provider since the 1970's.

According to Corey Robertson in the OSDH Office of Communications the license was just approved August 31st.

### **A lifetime of advocacy**

"I think one's opinion about abortion is very personal and everyone is entitled to their own opinion about abortion," said Burkhardt. "However, we don't agree that a small minority of people should be making the decisions for the majority."

Burkhardt has spent her entire career fighting for women's health and abortion rights.

She was born in Oklahoma. She's the the executive director at Trust Women South Wind Center in Wichita, Kansas.

That's where she was in 2009 when the medical director, Dr George Tiller, was gunned down in his church on a Sunday morning by an anti-abortion activist.

"It made me re-evaluate my own ideas about life and how we care about people. So that made me even more committed to the cause," Burkhardt said. "After his assassination I was sitting in his widows living room two weeks after the funeral saying, 'I'm going to re-open that clinic.'"

Burkhardt re-opened South Wind in Wichita, reinforced for safety with a stockade fence, cameras, a metal detector and armed security. Dr.Tiller's picture hangs in the entry.

"I think it's a sad commentary that in the United States of America. People who provide reproductive health care have to live in fear," Burkhardt said.

### **An alternative for pregnant mothers**

Less than a mile from the South Wind Women's Center, the ladies at Birth Choice are troubled by their new neighbors.

"It is difficult to have places like the abortion clinic down the street so close to us, so close to churches, so close to businesses and knowing the controversy it's going to bring," said Birth Choice director Barbara Chishko.

Birth Choice has been serving pregnant mothers since before Roe v. Wade.

Chishko says they are here to support every woman, even if they choose abortion.

About five percent of the women who walk into Birth Choice will choose to terminate their pregnancy.

"We have built this facility for our pregnant women irregardless of what they're going to decide because we know that this is better than abortion. They deserve better than that. We want to give them the best we have to offer," Chishko said. "I became involved because of my faith and my belief system in that i believe life is precious. Life is a gift from god and it would be wrong to return that gift unopened."

Four Birth Choice facilities around town provide free pregnancy tests, prenatal and post-natal support to about 150 women a month.

"We always have the clients sit by the door so that they know they can leave anytime," said Medical Director Dr. Mary Martin. "She's not being coerced. There's no one kneeling on her chest holding her in a chair and forcing propaganda on her."

Birth Choice serves about 1500 moms a year.

The new Trust Women South Wind Women's Center Oklahoma City expects to treat about 1500 patients in their first year and 3000 patients in year two.

They will start seeing patients September 10th.

Additional links:

[Trust Women South Wind Women's Center](#)

[Birth Choice of Oklahoma](#)



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