

One of New York's largest abortion clinics to open in Jamaica

Choices Women's Medical Center is brainchild of Merle Hoffman

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Jeanne Noonan for New York Daily News

Merle Hoffman, a leading reproductive health activist, at the new Choices Women's Medical Center in Jamaica, Queens. Set to open on Friday, it will be one of the biggest abortion clinics in the state.

After four decades of death threats, picket lines and evictions, a leading women's health crusader is set to open one of the state's largest, licensed abortion clinics this week in southeast Queens.

Choices Women's Medical Center, which also provides gynecological, prenatal and counseling services, is moving from its current Long Island City location to a \$3 million, state-of-the-art facility in Jamaica on Friday.

"I'm going where the need is great," said [Choices CEO Merle Hoffman](#), 65, whose clients are primarily from southeast Queens. "We want to see a women's health renaissance in Jamaica."

Hoffman, whose memoir "Intimate Wars" hit bookshelves last month, helped open one of the state's first licensed clinics with her late husband in 1971 in Flushing. She was a medical assistant at the time.

More than 40 years later, the former aspiring concert pianist is opening an 18,000-square-foot outpatient surgery center at 147-32 Jamaica Ave.

"This is basically built to the specifications of a hospital," said Hoffman, who grew up in Kew Gardens and now lives on the upper East Side.

The clinic is expected to serve 40,000 clients and perform roughly 10,000 abortions a year.

The most common reason women terminate their pregnancies is a lack of financial resources, said Hoffman, who had an abortion at 32.

"I was totally committed to the work," said Hoffman, who was married at the time. "There was no way I could be the mother I wanted to be."

She adopted a child from a Siberian orphanage at the age of 58.

Choices is moving from its current location in Long Island City after the building in which it rents a space went into foreclosure.

Hoffman said she chose Jamaica for the new site because 78% of her clients are from the area.

"I'm not opening on Madison Avenue," she said. "I'm opening here because this is where it's most needed."

[Dr. Steven Inglis](#), chairman of Jamaica Hospital Medical Center's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, said Choices will be "a wonderful addition to Jamaica."

The hospital is partnering with Choices for prenatal care and to perform second-trimester abortions.

"They will offer high-quality services," he said. "The women in Jamaica are going to have a much improved access to care."

But not everyone is welcoming Choices with open arms.

Christian Slattery, founder and president of Expectant Mother Care Frontline Pregnancy Centers, said his Christian pro-life group already plans to have a presence outside of Choice's new location praying for the conversion of Hoffman and her staff.

His organization has 12 pro-life centers throughout the city that offer pregnancy tests, ultrasounds and counseling.

"I can guarantee a daily presence of prayer and vigil at her new facility until the day [Hoffman] closes or the end of time," he said.

"She's probably been the most committed and notorious abortion provider in New York City history," he said. "She's overseen the killing of children in huge numbers for over 40 years with absolutely no remorse."

Hoffman said she is ready for the opposition.

"I live in this war zone," she said. "I would be surprised if they didn't say hello to me here."

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