

NORFOLK ABORTION DOCTOR RESIGNS

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An abortion doctor who wore a bulletproof vest and carried a gun to work says he's resigning from the only abortion clinic in Hampton Roads, partly because he's tired of being harassed by anti-abortion activists.

The activists "are not the major reason, but they are part of it," said Michael Girtelschmid, who also cited personal reasons for his decision.

Girtelschmid has performed abortions at Hillcrest Clinic in Norfolk for three years. He will leave Thursday.

Girtelschmid, 40, said he plans to go into private practice or work for a group of physicians. If the activists let him alone, he said, he will perform no more abortions. But if they continue to follow him, picket his office or show up at his house, he will resume performing the procedure.

Girtelschmid is the third Hampton Roads doctor to announce that he will no longer perform abortions since the March 1993 murder of David Gunn outside a Florida abortion clinic.

Abraham Anderson, a gynecologist who became a target of Operation Rescue's Virginia organization when he was the medical director at Hillcrest, announced in July 1993 that he would no longer perform abortions. One of Anderson's associates, Olugbenga Oredein, stopped two months later because of safety concerns.

"I should say that the anti-abortion campaign is working," the clinic's director, Bonnie DeAngelis, said Wednesday.

"The pickets, the posters, the harassment and the ostracizing of doctors who perform abortions - it's all working.

"I hate to say that because they'll say, 'We're accomplishing our goals.' But it's the truth. One day our daughters and granddaughters will not have a choice. It will be legal, but the choice will not be available."

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