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EDITOR'S PICK

Livingston abortion clinic shutting down

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The decision to close a Livingston abortion clinic “has absolutely nothing to do with protesters,” Dr. Susan Wicklund said Thursday.

“Quite the opposite,” she said. “I’ve had nothing but incredible support from both the Bozeman and Livingston communities.”

Mountain Country Women’s Clinic is the only abortion provider within 100 miles of Bozeman. The clinic is no longer providing the service and will be closed Oct. 1.

Wicklund, 59, is retiring after 26 years to focus on her health and her family.

Amber Williams, director of the Trust Women Fund, said Wicklund’s retirement will leave a “huge black hole in women’s health care.” The Trust Women Fund provides loans and grants to women who can’t afford abortions.

Wicklund operated an abortion clinic in Bozeman from 1993 to 1998 but closed it to care for her dying mother in the Midwest. In 2008, she announced that she planned to reopen a clinic in Bozeman but instead reopened the Livingston clinic in February 2009 because space was more affordable there.

She garnered national attention when she appeared on “60 Minutes” in 1993 because of her stance against pro-life protests in Bozeman and the Midwest. She’d received death threats, wore a bulletproof vest and carried a handgun for protection.

Wicklund also published a book about her experiences, “This Common Secret: My Journey as an Abortion Doctor,” written with Bozeman author Alan Kesselheim.

Williams, 34, saw Wicklund for an abortion when Williams became pregnant at 18.

“I know personally why abortion access is important,” she said, adding she didn’t want to be a mother at that young age.

The Trust Women Fund was founded primarily to support Wicklund’s patients. With the clinic closing, the fund will change its focus and its name “because we feel so strongly about Dr. Wicklund’s mission,” Williams said.

On Oct. 1, the Trust Women Fund will become the Susan Wicklund Fund and will continue to provide loans and grants to women who will now go to other clinics.

“Regardless of where women are from or where they are going” for services, the fund will help with gas cards or other financial backing, Williams said. “All women should have access to abortion care regardless of their situation.”

The clinic’s website directs patients to one of five other clinics in the state: Blue Mountain Women’s Clinic in Missoula, All Families Healthcare in Kalispell and Planned Parenthood of Montana in Billings, Helena, Missoula and Great Falls.

Wicklund said she stands by her beliefs and will continue fighting for a woman’s right to choose. She hopes younger women will join her.

“I hope younger generations will step up to the plate and find someone that will provide abortion services in the area,” she said.

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