



Planned Parenthood of Montana

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November 28, 2016

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

For parents who are looking for more comprehensive sexuality education for their middle schoolers, look no further.

A new sexuality education curriculum is being offered at the Missoula YMCA as a once-weekly afterschool program. The program is being offered as a collaboration between Planned Parenthood of Montana, Missoula City-County Relationship Violence Services, and EmpowerMT.

Christopher Coburn, one of the program's organizers, noted the need for a program that includes education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth. "LGBTQ youth are excluded from traditional sex ed taught in schools and, as a consequence, experience higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies than their heterosexual peers," he said. Coburn is an outreach educator for Missoula's Planned Parenthood and coordinates Teen Council, a peer education program that provides healthy sexuality lessons for Missoula high school students.

The program is adapted from Our Whole Lives (OWL), a holistic sexuality education program that "moves beyond the intellect to address the attitudes, values, and feelings that youth have about themselves and the world". Unlike many other sexuality curricula currently available, Coburn said, the OWL curriculum is comprehensive and progressive. The curriculum was developed by the Unitarian Universalist Church and the United Church of Christ, though Missoula's program will be entirely secular in nature.

Jesse Jaeger works for local non-profit EmpowerMT and is another of the program's organizers. His ulterior motive in organizing the program was to have his son participate. "My wife and I want our 8th grade son to have a full and healthy life," he said. "Healthy sexuality is a big part of that, so we are excited to have a comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education program like Our Whole Lives getting started here in Missoula."

The program is designed for up to fifteen 7th and 8th grade youth. Weekly workshops will begin in January and continue through April of 2017. A sliding fee will be assessed for the program to cover the cost of materials and supplies, ranging from \$25 to \$75 depending on household income. No participant will be turned away for the inability to pay.

Parents can find more information about the program online at <http://bit.ly/OWLMissoula>.

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