



The Fertility Awareness Center Newsletter

Issue #3, April 2008

Happy Spring!

We hope this finds you in good health. This newsletter was written by FAC's Director, Ilene Richman, and laid out by Board President Suzanne Barker. We hope you enjoy it.

FAC's Second Benefit Heats Up A Winter Night

As many of you know, the Fertility Awareness Center held a benefit on 11/27/07 at The Living Theatre, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The night of burlesque & comedy was emceed by Howlin' Vic as Liza, and performers included Fetchin' Gretchen, the Baroness Von Harmer, JZ Bich, Howlin' Vic, Brooke Van Poppelen, Queefer Sutherland, Giulia Rozzi, and Margot Leitman. Raffle prizes were donated by Babeland, 'n Joy



Volunteers Alice & Carter taking a break



Current & then board presidents Suzanne & Autumn deciding the fate of the raffle participants

Photo by Ilene Richman

(pictures continue on page 2)



Liza (Howlin' Vic) instructing the crowd

Sweets and Pastries, Flower Power, Deco Etc, Bluestockings Bookstore, and a generous bodyworker who prefers to remain anonymous. Yummy vegan food was prepared by board member Melissa King, with additions from a couple of other folks. We would like to thank everyone who came out to support us, the people who volunteered their time & skills to make the event possible, and those of you who did not attend but bought raffle tickets or made donations in advance. It was definitely a good time. Here are some pics to give you an idea.

In This Issue

FAC's Second Benefit 1
Barbara Seaman 2
FAC In The Media 3
Our Entry Into the 21st Century 4
FAC Dine & Learn 4



Happy raffle winner with prize from Babeland

Women's Health Community Mourns Barbara Seaman

On February 27th, we lost one of the great activists of the 20th century, a woman who made tremendous contributions to the fields of women's healthcare and feminist consciousness. Many obituaries have been written for Barbara Seaman. The following is excerpted from the website of the National Women's Health Network, an organization Ms. Seaman co-founded (<http://www.nwhn.org>). It has been edited slightly.

Comedian Brooke Van Poppelen



*Barbara Seaman
(1935 - 2008)*

An author, women's health activist, and energizing influence on hundreds of younger writers and organizers for nearly half a century, Barbara Seaman persistently challenged the medical establishment and pharmaceutical companies by exposing their drive for profit at the expense of women.

She was first to reveal that women lacked the information to make informed decisions on contraception, childbirth, even breast-feeding (in an age where infant formula companies claimed their products were nutritionally superior to mothers milk).



Burlesque performer JZ Bich

All photos by Jeana Fanelli, except where noted.

(continued on page 3)

The Fertility Awareness Center Newsletter

In 1967-68, while at the Columbia University School of Journalism, Seaman began her first book, *The Doctors' Case Against the Pill*, which was published in 1969, and became the basis for a US Senate hearing in 1970. Young feminists led by Alice Wolfson repeatedly disrupted the hearing, demanding to know why patients were not testifying, and why there was no pill for men. These demonstrations, widely covered by the international press, are looked back upon as the "Boston Tea Party" of the women's health movement. As a result of Seaman's book, and the brouhaha that followed, a warning to patients was placed on oral contraceptives, the first on any prescription drug. Barbara Ehrenreich would later write that "in 1969, Barbara Seaman proved that women can talk back to doctors - calmly, rationally, and scientifically. For many of us, women's liberation began at that moment."

After the 1972 publication of her second book, *Free and Female*, Seaman was cited by the Library of Congress as the author who raised sexism in healthcare as a worldwide issue.

Her third book, *Women and the Crisis In Sex Hormones*, coauthored with Gideon Seaman, persuaded the Secretary of HEW to convene a government task force (on which Seaman served) on an estrogen called DES (diethylstilbestrol)



Barbara Seaman. Photo by Bettye Lane

which caused cancer in the daughters of women given it by their doctors to prevent miscarriages.

After her first three books, The New York Times wrote that she had "triggered a revolution, fostering a willingness among women to take issues of health into their own hands."

In 1975, Seaman cofounded the National Women's Health Net-

work (NWHN) in Washington, DC, with Alice Wolfson, Belita Cowan, Dr. Mary Howell, and Dr. Phyllis Chesler.

In *For Women Only: Your Guide to Health Empowerment*, 2000, co-edited with Gary Null, Seaman collected hundreds of consciousness raising articles, stories, and poems dating back to Elizabeth Cady-Stanton.

The Greatest Experiment Ever Performed on Women: Exploding the Estrogen Myth was published in July 2003, and will be reissued in the early spring of 2009. *Body Politic*, a history of writings on the female body throughout history, co-edited by Seaman and Laura Eldridge, will be published in June 2008. And *The No-Nonsense Guide to Menopause* by Barbara Seaman and Laura Eldridge will also be published in the summer of 2008.

"I didn't start out to be a muckraker," Seaman has said. "My goal was simply to try and give women plain facts that would help them to make their own decisions, so they wouldn't have to rely on authority figures."

FAC In the Media

For some unknown reason, we've been getting a lot of media attention of late. I was interviewed twice for an article that will appear sometime later this year in a national magazine, and I also participated in a documentary on the topic of sex education in America. I've no idea when that film will be coming out, or if I'll be included, but the filmmakers did film one of my classes, and they seemed pretty enthused. I'll keep you posted. In the meantime, you can check out a couple of articles that have appeared in regional papers. This first piece was published in The Radish, a Midwestern magazine focusing on healthy living:

<http://radishmagazine.com/stories/display.cgi?prcss=display&id=356095>

And another piece ran in two Vermont papers, *The Times Argus* and the *Rutland Herald*. It's the same piece, picked up from a news service, so no need to read both:

<http://tinyurlw.com/2xvydw>
<http://tinyurl.com/ytvofb>

FAC Participates in Dine & Learn Brooklyn

On November 9th, 2007, we participated in a massive health fair for women, held at Brooklyn's famous Tabernacle Church. The fair was presented by SUNY Downstate Medical Center, in conjunction with The Brooklyn Tabernacle, American Cancer Society (Brooklyn), Diaspora Community Services, and Center for Women's Development at Medgar Evers College/CUNY. Over 1200 women pre-registered for the event, and I'd guess that at least 800 attended, despite a nightlong downpour. Our information table was staffed by Shakti Ziller (then a volunteer and now a board member) and me, and gave us the opportunity to reach a very large, primarily African-American audience. We also met lots of other like-minded health care providers and representatives of community organizations and advocacy groups. Most memorable visitors: the 3 teenage girls who kept circling back to our table, giggling, but definitely interested.



Shakti Ziller staffing FAC table at Dine & Learn
Photo by Ilene Richman

Our (Reluctant) Entry Into the 21st Century

I had hoped that blogs would go away, but alas, they seem to be here to stay. So, we have one. Here is the link:

<http://thefertilityawarenesscenter.blogspot.com>

Although the blog contains many of the same pieces that appear in these newsletters, there is some additional content, and there are several nice features that make it worth checking out:

- You can subscribe, so you'll get an email whenever the blog is updated. The "subscribe me" box is on the top right side of the page.
- You can email a blog post to someone else, by clicking on the little envelope icon underneath each post.
- The best thing about the blog is that you can **reply** to the articles, by adding your comments. Under each post is a link, which states the number of current comments. Click on that link to post a comment. Tell us (and the rest of the world) what you think!

Please consider a donation to support the work of the Fertility Awareness Center. You can send checks to the following address, or send money via Paypal. Our email address there is admin@fertaware.com. Thank you.

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