

Subway ads in New York offer riders first step to heal after abortion

NEW YORK - Riders on 1,000 New York City subway cars are seeing advertising messages aimed at being a first step toward healing for the many people affected by abortion.

The campaign, a four-week campaign that began Oct. 9, points riders to the Web site AbortionChangesYou.com, an outreach that seeks to help those facing difficulties in the aftermath of an abortion.

The 22-inch ads are simple panels that show the face of a lone person, representing someone who has been affected by abortion, topped with a line such as "I thought life would be the way it was before," underscored by the phrase "Abortion Changes You."

The Abortion Changes You Web site was created by Michaelene Fredenburg, an author and public speaker who had an abortion as a teenager.

"We know how to shout about abortion, but we don't know how to have a compassionate conversation," said Fredenburg in a statement. "It is my hope that in the midst of this volatile political season we might hear something different."

The Web site has a section called Healing Pathways, where visitors can find out about unhealthy behaviors such as anxiety, compulsive disorders, depression and eating disorders that can result from abortion. They also learn to identify losses, explore their emotions and find a space to anonymously tell their own story.

Those suffering from their abortions who make the decision to pursue healing are

guided to counselors and other professionals in their own ZIP code such as Project Rachel Ministry of the New York archdiocesan Family Life/Respect Life Office.

Project Rachel is a supporter of the Abortion Changes You outreach and of the advertising campaign in the subways. It organized a fundraiser at the University Club in New York and an outreach forum with Fredenburg at Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus.

Kristen M. Pearson, coordinator of Project Rachel in the archdiocese, said the office had looked at a number of different post-abortion outreach campaigns before deciding to get behind Abortion Changes You, which is nonsectarian in its approach. Its gentleness and contemporary feel were key factors that she feels will also make the outreach well received by subway riders.

Pearson said she thinks the Web site will be a place where people affected by abortion will feel safe to start the healing process. She said approximately one-third of women in the United States have had an abortion. The emotional toll affects their husbands and boyfriends as well, and can extend to family members and friends.

"We think there is going to be great interest," Pearson said. "The hope and prayer is that people will get the help they need."

If the campaign is successful in New York, it may spread to cities across the nation. The possibility of extending the campaign to buses and billboards is also being explored.

Pearson, who holds a master's degree in social work and has a private practice in post-abortion counseling, said abortion's lasting effects are real, no matter how much they are denied or suppressed.

"The only way to stop abortion is to heal post-abortion women and men," she said.

“They are going to be the biggest advocates for healing, which in turn will be the voice of those suffering in silence.”