Interview with Planned Parenthood of CA

Planned Parenthood mostly connects to volunteers via local affiliates. In California there are 8 local affiliates. The State office works to boost their statewide presence, especially around elections, and to boost grassroots canvassing work.

The one big event the Statewide office does that touches individuals is Capitol Day. They bring 600 people to the state capitol for a day of workshops. Some of the training is for health care providers. Some is educational, for example, how to incorporate LGBTQ people into health clinic work. Some is outreach to high school and college students around sexuality. Some is training around reproductive health issues conducted in Spanish.

The content for the workshops is created internally by the education departments of affiliates through the state.

We asked about getting volunteers to use social media to communicate.

“We want to move in that direction. I went to Netroots to get plugged into social media. I don’t have a grasp of social media or how to use it. We are still trying to figure out what the power of social media is, and what is the best way to do it.”

For example, “I was in Texas for the abortion fight there. Our comms person wanted me to post to our facebook page. That was hard and time consuming.”

“I was shocked that [to mobilize people in TX] we weren’t making calls, we didn’t know who was coming, we didn’t have checklists. It was all done on social media [and social media turned out thousands].

We asked about professional development:

“I am always looking for new trainign to take back to the staff to engage constituents. We [the staff] are all under 35 but none of us has a great handle on social media.”

What are other challenges?

Command & Control is a problem. “It’s a struggle to take off the tie in the boardroom, to make social media posts more of a jeans and tshirt image.

Do you encourage your supporters to use social media to communicate about their activism?

“No, but I like the idea. I never htought of it.

“We know personal stories are a big push for us. WE gather stories, we collect them, but we do it ourselves, and we decide how to push them out. “

They do hire consultants, some ongoing, some retainer.