

OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS MATERNITY SHELTER

Fall/Winter 2010

Volume 9

OUR LADY'S UPDATE

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

This has been my first full year at Our Lady of the Angels Maternity Shelter as Administrator and I have learned so much from staff, volunteers and residents, as well as individuals at various agencies in our community. Working at the shelter is a labor of love for us all. We see this as not "just a job" but truly a ministry where individual lives are touched, and hopefully changed in some way for the better. Our residents come from all walks of life, and their stories and journeys have often been painful and heartbreaking. However, we believe that those who really want to make a change in their lives have left our shelter feeling better about themselves and more hopeful about their future. And most especially, their precious unborn babies will find a better life also. In looking back at my previous job experience, which was mostly in church work, but always working with the public, I see that every job and every individual I've worked with over the past 20 plus years have brought me to be at this place, at this time, and I feel very blessed to be a part of Our Lady of the Angels Maternity Shelter. Thank you for your support and prayers as we continue on with God's work!

Here are a few pictures of some of the special times we've shared at the shelter this past year:



One of the highlights at the shelter this year was having a young mom with 3 children, all under the age of 3. None of the children had ever experienced a birthday party, and when I mentioned to the mom that we'd like to do something special for her daughter's upcoming 1st birthday, she was thrilled. She said her daughter would love a Princess and the Frog cake and balloons. We had recently been contacted by the Cen-Tex Sirens Roller Derby team wanting to do something special for the shelter and residents, and with their financial support, we were able to provide a great and memorable party for this young family. I wish we could bottle up all the laughter and giggles we had at the shelter that day. Everyone had such a great time! It's beautiful to see how these contributions brought about the enjoyment and memories that will last a lifetime.

A special thank you to the Cen-Tex Sirens for their great contributions that allows us to meet a lot of our resident's needs. Below are special pictures from the birthday party.



Other activities at the Shelter this year:

Come & Go Christmas Luncheon for all Volunteers and Substitute House Parents



Marcia Loaiza, Lillian Sifuentes, Pam Yost, Mary Ann and Ed McCrae



Sandi Brakemeier, Ann Cooney



Lafon Eary, Sister Sini, Jane Montgomery

Going-Away Party for Social Worker, Leslie Whaley



Leslie opening gifts from everyone



Louise Leyden, Mary Ann McCrae, Lafon Eary



Ann Cooney, Charlene Hart, Louise Leyden, Leslie, Kai Reed, Marcia Loaiza

The key to our success rests in people like you, who embody the spirit of greatness by saying, "Yes I can, and so can you!"

Thanks for your inspiring dedication and tremendous example to us all!

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An Angel To Guide

The first time I saw Lisa, she was sitting in a crowd of women all wearing the white uniform issued by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. She was obviously pregnant and clearly nervous. It didn't take long for me to realize that this lady did NOT belong in prison. As the weeks went by, I got to know Lisa and was taken by her gentle spirit and quiet determination.

Because she had been picked up for a minor offense, her stay at the Lane Murray Unit in Gatesville was soon over. Now the dilemma was where could a Deaf, pregnant, ex-offender go to live? I offered to find a place that would accept her since she had virtually no support system. She had been living on the streets for years prior to her arrest and that simply wasn't an option with a new baby. I naively thought that it would be easy to find a place for her given her vulnerable situation and her pleasant personality. Was I ever wrong!

I called multiple places all over the state. The fact that she was an ex-offender, regardless of the crime, turned many off. Having a baby on the way was a deal-breaker for others. But most often, the reason for rejection was because Lisa is Deaf. No one wanted to deal with that. I grew increasingly frustrated as I called agency after agency. At the end of each phone call, I always asked, "Where else do you suggest I call?" My last phone call lead me to OLAMS right here in my own backyard.

Lisa was incredibly nervous that hot day in August when she arrived at "Angel House" as she calls it. Eight months pregnant, with only the ill-fitting prison-issue clothes on her back, she was truly starting from scratch. Then the real miracle happened. I watched as the staff and residents rallied around her. They made her feel loved and welcomed. They made her feel valuable. They gave her dignity. Her confidence soared. For the first time in years, all of her physical needs were met. Her health began to improve and on Sept. 23rd, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl.

Lisa is now living in Dallas in a transitional program for female ex-offenders with children. She is a loving, nurturing mother who has wonderful plans for a bright and self-reliant future for her and her daughter.

Thank you "Angel House" for giving her a chance. When no one else would, you stepped in to give Lisa the loving support she needed to succeed. You made the difference.

May God richly bless each one of you more than you could ever dream!

Nancy Pfanner

