



Mercy Residential Services

Shelter • Support
Self-Sufficiency

MERCY MESSENGER

A NEWSLETTER FOR MERCY RESIDENTIAL SERVICES
SUMMER 2006

From the Executive Director

Nurturing Moms!

Some of you are familiar with our program philosophy here at MRS. Our aim is to nurture young moms, affording them the opportunity and skills to nurture, love and raise their babies. Some of our young moms lack not only the skills, but the confidence and conviction that they are capable to take on this tremendous role of motherhood.

In this issue you will read about our outstanding, Life-Skills Education program and also get a glimpse of one of our young mother's experience living here.

Here's a story that warms me. While some of our young moms-to-be have friends or family to provide an important rite of passage into motherhood, a baby shower, more often they do not.

What makes a great baby shower? From gifts and cake to games and decorations, it's as much about making sure Mom has all the supplies she needs, as an opportunity for us to tell the young mother, "you are special and this is a very special occasion."

In a brainstorm, a mix of staff and volunteers decided to recruit several groups of volunteers who would be called upon once or twice each year to provide baby showers for our young women.

As our first willing group of volunteers began enthusiastically to gather ideas and gifts, we found ourselves suddenly with two new

residents and three babies due in the same week! Our volunteer group easily adjusted to this expanding need, getting the word out that the shower was growing.

On the day of the big event, the volunteers arrived with three adorable homemade cakes shaped as baby buggies, two blue and one pink! Gifts included those can't-have-too-many onesies and jammies, as well as other essentials. The volunteers brought each mom a baby book in which to begin the record of their special moments.

Volunteer Marketta Bakke says, "It was amazing how easy it was to pull together a shower. It seemed like almost everyone I asked had something to offer. Even a 13-year-old friend made a quilt to donate. You know, sometimes there are moments that are kind of magical. The shower was one of those times for me. When all the presents had been opened and the cake was about to be cut, one of the teen-age fathers came up to us – a group of middle-aged women – and told us that he really appreciated what we had done for his girlfriend and the baby. Then we knew we had made a difference."

Looking for fun and easy satisfaction? Consider gathering your neighbors, church group or family to sponsor a baby shower for one of our moms-to-be!

Susan



*Susan Aiello
Executive Director
Mercy Residential Services*

MISSION

Mercy Residential Services, a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, provides a continuum of quality residential programs and support services to pregnant and parenting women and children. The program offers transitional housing, life skills education and a nurturing environment. A holistic approach is used to empower women in their development of healthy relationships and self-sufficiency.



Teaching, learning and modeling

While creating a nurturing and supportive environment for the young families that enter our doors each year is our priority, the true heart of guiding the young women towards self-sufficiency lies in our Life Skills Education program.

Paving the road to independence takes an incredible amount of commitment, collaboration, and creativity on the part of our Life Skills educator, Sue Creamer, the young women who participate in the program, and the entire Mercy Residential Services team.

Our young women have moved along their roads to self-sufficiency by completing the program with not only increased skills in parenting, but also equipped with knowledge in the areas of household maintenance, money management, nutrition, job readiness skills and personal safety.

Some of highlights and new initiatives from the past year were: During the February school recess Sue facilitated a job readiness workshop using curriculum sponsored by Rochester Works! a Monroe County employment resource. The workshop focused on adolescents who have not yet held a formal job, but have developed skills through volunteer and other experiences, and taught them how to capitalize on those skills making them more marketable to employers. Each of the participants received a certificate of completion signed by representatives of Rochester Works!

As part of a national initiative, Mercy Residential Services was a pilot location for a project funded by the National Fire Protection Association called Risk Watch. This program is typically geared towards

school-aged children, but this new initiative was designed for families who reside in shelters. The program focuses on fire prevention and safety, as well as avoiding common household dangers. It was a great source of practical information.

Sue cites the case of a young mother whose 12 month old child was returned to the house from her day care provider not properly secured in her car seat. The mother, who had learned the proper use of car seats during a Risk Watch session, discussed the incident with the day care staff and decided to remove her child from the day care program.

“She took charge of the situation, and her response made me feel good. It really showed that these lessons are working” reports Sue.

As a result of our program’s success MRS was featured in the *Journal of National Fire Protection’s* July/August 2006 issue.

Finally, this summer our residents completed an exciting 8-week workshop series facilitated by Cornell Cooperative Extension on Healthy eating during and after pregnancy while on a budget. The series included instruction on food safety, preparing meals and also featured taste tests at every session – a big hit with all!

Congratulations to all our young moms on their hard work and accomplishments!!



Sue Creamer and Haydee Brown of Risk Watch.

We are grateful . . .thank you

CONTRIBUTIONS

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St. Thomas More Church
St. Vincent dePaul Church
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All contributions acknowledged here were made between June 1, 2005 and May 31, 2006. We have made every attempt to be accurate in both content and spelling. Please call Susan Aiello at 585-254-2175 with additions or corrections.

Resident Profile:

Alaina's story

So much has changed for 19 year old Alaina in the eight months she has lived at MRS. Today she is living drug free, has completed her GED and is eagerly awaiting the birth of her son at the end of this month.

Experimenting early with drugs and alcohol, Alaina dropped out of school and burned bridges with her family and friends by the age of 18. "Through my time at Mercy Residential, I have really learned that bad choices have serious consequences and it's up to me to make responsible decisions."

Alaina's goals have been to live clean and sober, to repair her family relationships and to be present for her son, who will be called Jaydon.

At first, Alaina says, "the

thought of living in an all-female residence didn't sound so great, but on second thought, this environment would give me an opportunity to stay focused."

Alaina attended an outpatient treatment program where she maintained her sobriety and gained skills to cope with life's ups and downs. MRS staff reinforced her attendance in the program. Alaina says, "Even when I thought I didn't want support from staff, I still got it!" Our environment was nurturing and provided sober leisure activities such as arts and crafts and community service projects.

As the months have passed, Alaina has had much to celebrate. Her birthday, GED graduation and upcoming delivery are all great rea-

sons for parties with much fanfare, gifts and cake.

In September after Jaydon is born, Alaina will be warmly welcomed and embraced by her family as she returns to her community. She and her son will live in a spacious apartment, close to her mom and family. She plans to begin working and possibly to enroll in a Certified Nursing Assistant program with support from her grandfather.

Today, Alaina talks with her mom daily about the ups and downs of her pregnancy, and how it will be when they are living as neighbors. "I am going to miss it here, but I am happy to know that I am going to be okay."

Profile

Renee Segina Moore

MRS Board Member

Renee Moore has served on the Mercy Residential Services Board of Directors for less than a year and has already made great contributions and brought wonderful connections to the MRS team.

Renee moved to Rochester just a few years ago from Buffalo and was looking for a way to become more involved in her local community, a way to make a difference. As a former audit manager specializing in not-for-profit agencies she understood the role and importance of volunteers. While she was investigating several opportunities she was introduced to Mercy Residential Services by her friend, our board member Sue Coia-Ahlman. When Sue explained the mission and services provided by Mercy, Renee knew she had found the right place.

As the child of a single parent and a single mom herself, Renee recognizes the struggles women face as single parents raising children, even under the best of circumstances. "As I raised my son alone for many years, we both benefited immensely from family support and people in the community. Without them I would not have been nearly as successful in achieving the goals that I set for myself and my son."

Renee and her husband Bob have one school age child and are expecting a baby in early October. She and Bob work in the family real estate business and enjoy many sporting activities together. They are actively involved in many charitable organizations, supporting them both financially and with personal involvement.



Renee Segina Moore

The services provided by MRS help young mothers get on their feet with basic food and housing, but it is the life skills that provide a foundation for future success. "It is imperative that we provide these young women with the skills and self esteem to encourage long term success for them and for their children." It is important to Renee to support these young women in every way possible.

Within months of joining the board Renee became involved in the development committee, spearheading a mailing promoting the United Way Donor Program which resulted in a 50% increase in donations! Renee and her committee members continue working to bring additional long-term, sustainable funding sources to MRS.

Thank you Renee for your support of the Mercy Residential community!

Wishing on a Star



Furniture:

Floor-style oscillating fans
Floor or table lamps
for bedrooms

Baby Supplies

Size 4,5 & 6 diapers
Baby formula
Onesies and socks

Hygiene Supplies

Combs and brushes,
hair items
Deodorant, liquid-soap
Toothpaste and brushes

Linens

Twin/single size sheet sets
and comforters
Bed pillows
Bath towels and wash cloths

Paper products and household supplies

Paper towels, napkins and
toilet paper
Large trash bags and
laundry baskets
Laundry detergent

Please visit us at
www.mercyresidential.org
or call: 585-254-2175

Volunteer Opportunities

BABY SHOWERS: Gather a group from your school, church or neighborhood to sponsor one baby shower for a Mercy Residential Mom-to-be. We will provide the pertinent details (due date, gender, larger gift needs like car seat, bassinette) and together your group provides gifts, cake, games and decorations. Attend the shower with MRS residents and staff for a meaningful celebration!

ONE-TIME AND ONGOING HOUSE PROJECTS: Sorting and organizing donations in the Baby Boutique/ Women's Boutique/Food Pantry. The area needs constant attention as donations are delivered regularly.

NURTURING MOMS: We believe that increasing our Moms' self-esteem and confidence will positively impact their parenting skills! We are looking for donated programs and services that support this approach such as, massage, fitness, manicure, cosmetics and hair, and guest speakers for our Life-skills workshops.

DONATION COLLECTION: We collect personal items for babies and moms. Donation drives can be coordinated in churches and work

places to support this need. Many of our clients are homeless and need clothing for themselves as well as their children.

GIFTS IN KIND: A limited budget and lots of traffic and wear and tear on the building adds up to the regular search for the following donated services: Carpet Shampoo, Floor strip and wax, Interior Painting, Fix-it and Repair, and Spring Cleaning.

WORKING WITH RESIDENTS Meal preparation and sharing: Arrange to stop by any afternoon to prepare dinner with the residents and to join them for dinner! This is great opportunity for teaching, role modeling and sharing! Arrive at 4 pm to get started and stay and share the meal.

Child care: Arrange to stop in on weekday evenings to assist with child care while our young mom's participate in skill building meetings with our staff. We have toys, games and snacks on hand, as well as staff to answer the phones.

Reading activities: help to facilitate reading and other activities with residents in a modeling and mentoring role.

Volunteers

2005 - 2006

Pamela Bradley
Marianna Beigel
Barbara Berg
Molly Bach
Lynn Bull
Trisha Carroll
Heather Chaapel
Kristine Cintorino
Kushana Dentley
Skip Diesenroth
Ginny DiPonzio
Kayleigh Ditomassi
Mike & Mary Ditomassi
Sam Gervasi
Rita Kane
Jess Lester
Beverly Maida
Marnee McClean
Daynel Rowell
Stephanie Sgroi
Jonna Terhune
Key Bank Make A Difference Day
Rochester City School
Students/Paula Garland
Xerox Day of Caring

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A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy



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