

No Greater Love

The quarterly newsletter of St. Gianna Program

Fall 2023



“
The secret of
happiness is to
live moment by
moment and to
thank God for all
that He, in His
goodness, sends
to us day after
day.

”
-St Gianna

The joy of the journey

Veronica Hotovy
St. Gianna Program Manager

One of the best parts of our current baby boom has been accompanying the mothers in such a beautiful and challenging moment. I was recently blessed to be able to take one of our first-time mothers to the hospital, and to bring her and her newborn son back to St. Gianna's a few days later. Walking into the hospital, she expressed feeling excited, but incredibly nervous. The next time I saw her, despite the challenges of an unexpected C-section, she was simply glowing, praising her little boy who was “the most incredible thing that exists!”

It has been quite an adventure accompanying this new mother and her son in their first days together. The many doctor appointments, overcoming sleepless nights, successfully getting him properly set in the car seat on the first try, learning how to breastfeed, laughing through being peed-on the first time. I've witnessed a number of moments of mom feeling completely alone and incapable of doing everything expected of her, but I've also seen countless looks of complete love and dedication to that little boy who has changed her life.

It's been inspiring to see how other women at St. Gianna's have surrounded her in support, offering kind words of encouragement, small gestures through preparing a meal, guidance and advice as she navigates motherhood for the first time.

The last couple of weeks have been filled with ups and downs for this little family. But I'm incredibly thankful that they are sharing this journey with us, and that we can walk alongside her through it.



Oh baby!

Sr. Bernadette Radek, M.S.- St. Gianna Program Advocate

As Dr. Seuss might have said, “Babies here, babies there, babies, babies everywhere!” Yes, we are having a baby boom, a baby hall, a baby a month club. Since May, there have been mothers here at St. Gianna giving birth each month and this goes into November. Seven months straight. Dr. Seuss would probably also say, “Diapers here, diapers there, diapers, diapers everywhere.” Thank goodness because of the diaper drive in the parishes, we have been blessed with sufficient diapers except.... Did you know that babies can be allergic to some diaper brands? Now one would be tempted to believe that all diapers are created equal (except for the price), but they aren’t. Usually, the more costly diapers are safe, but now and then you get a child who breaks the norm and breaks out in a rash as soon as the high-priced diaper touches him. Babies are unique. Mothers are so grateful for the diapers we can give them. Diapers are a big expense when a young mother has a newborn and can’t work yet.

Speaking of babies, have you ever seen a more beautiful sight than a mother looking into the eyes of her newborn? A mother’s love is just something you can’t explain, just observe. It is awesome and beautiful. Recently I was visiting with a mother and her newborn. After all the Oh’s and Ah’s over the little bundle, she asked if I would like to hold her. The look on the mother’s face would make you think she was handing me a precious gift. And she was! It didn’t take long for the little bundle to realize she was no longer in her mother’s loving arms and there was a wail of protest. What a change from the woman two weeks before the birth who strutted around saying, “This child is killing me”, to the loving mother cooing to and kissing her newborn. Quite a transition.

At this point in time, we have been blessed with a plethora of babies and toddlers. They all seem so happy. There are so many smiles and so much laughter, and of course, crying? The toddlers just love to run down our long halls once they can start walking with mom chasing after them. It is the cutest thing to see a child under two go up to a baby, size him or her up and announce to everyone around, “baby”. One little toddler greets us with the only word we can understand, “Hola”. Where would these women be if it weren’t for the St. Gianna Program (SGP)? Two of the women I know for sure were contemplating abortion because they felt there was no way they could care for another child. They were relieved when they learned SGP was an option.

Our program is growing in many ways and so are our needs. We especially need help with childcare for an hour several times each week so the mothers can get a break. Because of the number of children, we need a group of women at a time to help us out. If you or someone you know, feel called to volunteer, please visit csshope.org/volunteerlincoln. Financial needs are a big concern also. It takes so much money to make St. Gianna possible. And of course, our highest priority is prayer. Please pray for the women, their children and their future. Pray for the continued success of our program. Please pray that we will always have many generous donors who will help to keep us afloat. God bless each of you.

Life is always better with pancakes

Alexis Brouillette

St. Gianna Program Crisis Response & Residential Care Coordinator

Recently we have had an uptick in residents who are expecting, and some already with, children. This is such a beautiful opportunity to welcome these mothers and their families into our program and support them through their pregnancy or whatever situation they are going through. Sr. Carol counted the number of children currently living here and it totalled 36. This is almost double the number of mothers that are living here.

From May until November we will have had a baby born each month. The gift of life is so beautiful and being able to walk with these women and their children has been such a blessing. Over the summer we have been able to spend more time with the children as well as the moms.

To celebrate the first day of summer, we held a pancake breakfast in our community room. A generous donor gave many boxes of pancake mix, so what better way to use them than to celebrate summer! Leading up to the breakfast, one of the kids told me he was going to have 30 pancakes and that he couldn't wait for the day to come! (Don't worry, he only had a few pancakes.) The families were all very excited to spend time together and enjoy the first day of summer. Throughout the rest of summer we had some "Coffee Connects" where the mothers met for a small group and the kids could play outside. We also had some other activities hosted by one of the counselors from the

Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center that were more geared toward the kids. I have been able to spend some time with the kids and babies while the mothers are in bible study or other support groups. They bring so much joy and hope into their mothers lives during this time of struggling and the unknown.

As the school year begins, the kids will be getting back into a schedule which means we will be as well. We offer more classes and programming throughout the school year but in order to allow the mothers to get the most out of these classes we are looking for women volunteers to help with childcare. This childcare could be during the classes or at a different scheduled time to allow the mothers to have a break as it can be a lot to single parent and provide for their family amidst the busyness of life. If you are interested, reach out to our volunteer coordinator Rachel at Catholic

Social Services at rtrvrdy@csshlope.org. If

you're not able to volunteer but would like to get involved with St. Gianna Program, we are in need of diapers or gift cards for groceries. You can bring diapers to our Catholic Social Services offices in Lincoln, Auburn, Hastings or Imperial during business hours. You can also mail grocery store gift cards in the enclosed envelope. God bless!



This past quarter in our ST GIANNA PROGRAM:

\$8930

IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:
providing a variety
of critical
services

3846

BED NIGHTS PROVIDED:
giving victims of domestic
violence and unexpected
pregnancies a safe place to
rest and recover

22

RESIDENTS MOVE-INS:
offering a fresh,
supportive start in a warm,
welcoming environment





PO Box 30425
Lincoln NE 68503-0425

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
LINCOLN, NE
PERMIT No 976



Lincoln Catholic Women's Golf League "chips-in" to support St. Gianna Program

This past summer, the Catholic Women's Golf League celebrated its 30th anniversary. Based in Lincoln, the mission of the league is to "develop friendships in a Christian environment while enjoying the game of golf." Over the years the league has also raised money for numerous causes. This year, our St. Gianna Program was blessed to be the beneficiary of their efforts, receiving a check for \$835.00. Thank you, Catholic Women's Golf League, for your support of the St. Gianna Program and Hope in the Good Life!

