

No Greater Love

The quarterly newsletter of St. Gianna Women's Homes

Winter 2021



Last fiscal year,
St. Gianna
Women's
Homes
provided
18,566 nights
of lodging
and safety
for abused
women & their
children

A beautiful reminder of why we do what we do

Veronica Hotovy, Director, St. Gianna Women's Homes

Yesterday I saw a family who I hadn't seen in four months. Mom had contacted me late last week about getting a food pantry, so we scheduled a time to meet at the office. I was looking forward to seeing her again and hearing all she had to share after having successfully moved on from St. Gianna's. I knew I would be receiving updates about a new job, a new apartment, steps in her immigration process, and the deeply desired baptism of one of her children.

What I wasn't expecting, however, was to see her 7-year-old daughter, who had gotten out of school early. I don't think anyone has ever brightened up a Monday afternoon like that little girl as she walked into the CSS front lobby. I have to admit that sometimes, especially amidst the busy season that comes with the holidays, it's easy to feel stressed and overwhelmed, and forget the reason that we are working so hard. She joyfully filled me in on all that I had missed - a new year of school, beginning catechism classes, and their new home. Suddenly she got a little quiet and told me, "You know, I'd kind of like to give you a hug." I went out into the lobby, and after hugging me she took my hand as she showed me how excited she

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Will you pray for me?

Sr. Bernadette Radek, M.S.
St. Gianna Women's Homes

It happened again. We just received a text message from one of our former residents this morning asking for prayers for a very special intention. It makes our day to hear from former residents but often it doesn't happen until they need prayers. On occasion we receive pictures sent by text showing how the children are growing or just letting us know of their progress. When residents leave, their parting words usually consist of, "Someday I want to give back to St. Gianna for all the help you gave me. I am so grateful." And we often see this in many ways. Recently we were visited by a former family we had here a number of years ago. We had a wonderful visit. We even had an invitation to the freshmen boy's football game in which he was one of the star players. All the children had grown so much and it was evident that their mother was doing a remarkable job. Oh yes, they brought some outgrown clothes with them. For that we are always grateful.

Several weeks ago we got a call from a senior high school student who had been living with her mom and siblings here at St. Gianna a number of years ago. She had some clothes she wanted to donate. Of course she had grown up so much we would never have recognized her on the street, but here she was, visiting and giving details of how her family was doing. Then a

few months back we got a call from a former resident who just wanted to come and show off her daughter who was a baby when she left. What a lovely visit that was. She is doing so well and of course she gave St. Gianna much credit. She said, "You remember, I was a mess when I came to St. Gianna? You saved my life". Yes, we do remember. It was quite a struggle for her and we were quite concerned about her. But her determinations lead to success. However, not all the stories are happy ones.

One former resident who had several abortions before she came to us, calls us now and then to be assured that God still loves her even though she killed her babies. It breaks our hearts to hear of her pain. We are so grateful she keeps in touch. Several weeks ago, a former resident invited us to see her new apartment. When she first came to us she had absolutely nothing. It was all uphill work but she was determined that she would not rely on welfare but work for everything she would get. She just needed to heal and move ahead. After many setbacks, and with the help of Catholic Social Services, she was able to get a full time job, find an apartment and get it furnished with donations from Catholic Social Services and people from her work place. She was so pleased with herself and delighted

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Feeling connected

Jillian Giesselmann
Mental Health Intern

Since 2017 I have served different capacities for Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska's Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center. I first started as the receptionist while taking graduate studies at night. I am now planning to graduate with my Master's degree in the spring and have completed my practicum and am near the end of my internship. As a Mental Health intern for Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center I have been traveling to the Gianna Women's Home since August of this year. One day a week I provide free counseling services to the residents, weekly psychoeducation, and support to staff. My job is to provide an open door policy to residents so they can have an outlet to manage their day-to-day stress, feel more connected at their residence, process trauma, or simply have someone to stop in and say hello to. My weekly psychoeducation is in the form of a newsletter called the Weekly Wellness. Each week the Weekly Wellness is printed



and given to all residents. The information includes mental health psychoeducation, uplifting quotes or simple recipes to try. My hope for this is to provide another form of connection as well as helpful tips as they transition. It has been a joy to work with the residents and staff in this capacity. By providing counseling on site, this takes away some of the barriers many of the women face when seeking mental health therapy.

Many do not have reliable transportation or have difficulty finding childcare. By providing therapy down the hall from their apartment we hope this brings healing and makes hope more accessible than ever.

"CAROLE FEST 2021" A FESTIVE SUCCESS

On Sunday, December 19th, St. John the Apostle Church in Lincoln was the site of "Carole Fest 2021". A fundraising event for St. Gianna Women's Homes, Carole Fest has quickly become an Advent tradition. Those in attendance as well as an online audience enjoyed Advent and Christmas songs of the season performed by choirs from St. John's, St. Teresa's, North American Martyrs, and the Marian Sisters. If you missed this year's Carole Fest, you can still watch it online at www.csshope.org/carolefest2021. Thank you to all who helped make Carole Fest 2021 a success!





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Lincoln NE 68503-0425

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A beautiful reminder of why we do what we do (Continued from page 1)

was that today she was able to get Lucky Charms from the pantry. As she bounced around the office thankful for her favorite cereal, I couldn't help but feel that I was the one receiving the most that day. The joy and gratitude radiated from her, and it was just the spark I needed to remind me why I love what I do at St. Gianna's. I can't think of another place where I would have the opportunity to create relationships the way that I do living with the families at St. Gianna's for an entire year. St. Gianna's mission is one of accompanying our families - in the difficult moments, but also in the beautiful ones. It means getting to support mothers as they make difficult decisions and begin a new life for their family, but it also means getting to share in the pure excitement of a 7-year-old holding a box filled with sugar. I couldn't be more thankful for the reminder that she gave me of the importance of everything we do here, but especially that the most important thing we can do is to simply enjoy moments by their side.

Will you pray for me? (Continued from page 2)

that she could show us her beautiful, homey apartment, and that she did not need to depend on society to support her. She is a very prayerful person and depends so much on the Lord. He has shown what he could do for her. All of our ladies at some point in time have shown us how very prayerful they are. They thank the Lord and praise him in conversation. It is truly uplifting. They also know that we stand beside them in prayer. That is why the phone keeps ringing and the text messages keep coming. God bless each of our ladies and their children. God bless all of you who make St. Gianna possible with your prayers and financial support.

"St. Gianna's means everything to me and my children. We came to St. Gianna's after leaving a dangerous situation with my significant other. We had an opportunity to come here and start all over again in a safe environment. Everything about St. Gianna's has been nothing short of a blessing!" -A St. Gianna's client