

No Greater Love

The quarterly newsletter of St. Gianna Program

Winter 2023-24



“They gave the tools to pull myself up from the Hell that was my life. St. Gianna’s has given me back my world. St. Gianna’s has given me back everything and forever I will be grateful.”

-SGP client

Companionship

Veronica Pino
St. Gianna Program Manager

Recently, a past resident from St. Gianna Women’s Home reached out to the Sisters and me, looking for a little support during a difficult moment. While she’s making amazing progress, being a single mom of two young children is hard - especially when you feel like you’re doing it alone. Sometimes what we most need is simply to know that someone believes in us.

She calls me every Monday morning. Sometimes she asks me for advice, but most of the time I just spend listening. She is able to share about everything she is facing, the decisions she has to make, the difficulties that have arisen. She’s able to be honest about how she feels, what is wearing her down, her priorities and dreams. Then we pray together, for whatever is on our hearts that day.

A few weeks ago, she thanked me for being her companion in this journey. That’s something we all need. We’ve been made for community, to share our experiences and frustrations; to walk each step alongside others. To allow others to help us carry our burdens, and make them lighter.



Good question, glad you asked!

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

Tis the season to either look back or forward as we leave 2023 and anticipate 2024. So many good things have come about at St. Gianna in the last few years, and we anticipate that continuing. We praise God for all our prayer supporters and donors. Without that combination we would be hard up. Often these supporters have standard questions that we hear over and over. Here are some answers:

1. ARE YOU FULL?

A good question. Yes, and no. When we have a resident move out, it takes time to prepare the rooms for the next family. Deep cleaning, repairs, repainting and restocking the apartment takes time. When the rooms are ready, it doesn't take long for them to be filled.

2. ARE MOST OF THE WOMEN FROM LINCOLN?

No. They also come from surrounding communities as well and from out of state, and even from out of the country. At present we have some families from Mexico, Honduras, Venezuela, San Salvadore, Guatemala and one just left who had been from Iraq. We were able to help her get citizenship.

3. WHAT SIZE WAS YOUR LARGEST FAMILY?

We have had several families with five children. Our apartments have one bedroom, two bedrooms, and three bedrooms. We have bunk beds for children. We move baby cribs around as needed.

4. ARE YOU IN NEED OF ANYTHING?

Always. There are times when our faith is tested, and we are close to running out of something we need to stock the rooms. But low and behold, a donor comes along out of the blue and gives us the very items we needed. This has happened repeatedly. Right now, looking to the new year, we will need about everything to restock the rooms. We know it will come. It always does.

5. HOW DO THE RESIDENTS REACT TO YOU SISTERS?

Ah! I like this question. Some are scared to death when they first come. Most have never met a nun. So, we get questions like, "Are you married"? "Do you have any children", or "My grandma took me to Catholic Church when I was little". Our spending as much time in prayer in our chapel is indeed a mystery to them. We invite the ladies to come into chapel any time to think, cry, or pray and they do. Sometimes it can result in a funny situation. Case in point. While we were at prayer one day, a mother brought her two children into chapel to explain everything to them. She is not Catholic and was just doing a guessing job as she was answering her children. When they were ready to leave, I overheard the little boy say, "Who is that?". He was referring to the one-foot statue we have of the Infant of Prague, at the entrance. His mother satisfied his question by saying, "I think that is an altar boy". On

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Connecting through a chance conversation

Alexis Brouillette

Crisis Response & Residential Care Manager

There was a training on Post-Abortion Healing that I recently attended that was offered to the three diocese of Nebraska. It was great to learn more about how to support post-abortive men and women through the healing process and the many pro-life resources across Nebraska. I also enjoyed being able to connect with other individuals and groups who are working with women and families who have experienced a crisis pregnancy.

During one of the breaks a few of us went outside and were talking about where we were from and why we came. Veronica, Karla and I shared how we work with St. Gianna Program in Lincoln for women who have experienced domestic violence or crisis pregnancy. None of the people we were talking with had heard of the program so we explained that it is one of the many parts of Catholic Social Services. After we shared that we work for Catholic Social Services, one



of the ladies opened up to us about how when she was in college her younger sister who was in high school at the time became pregnant. She spoke of how her sister was very athletic and this was a difficult situation for her to be in as they were from a small town and back then teen pregnancy wasn't talked about or seen as good.

Her sister decided to give up her athletic career to give this child life. She carried the baby throughout her pregnancy and with the help of the adoption program that Catholic Social Services used to have, she was able to give her child to a family. It was an open adoption so she was able to see her child and receive photos of her as she was growing up. The woman that we had met shared how it was a hard time for her and her sister but how proud she was that she made the decision to bring life into the world. She was so thankful for Catholic Social Services support.

“CAROLE FEST 2023” A FESTIVE SUCCESS

On Sunday, December 10th, St. John the Apostle Church in Lincoln was the site of “Carole Fest 2023”. A fundraising event for St. Gianna Program, Carole Fest has 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, the St. Thomas Aquinas Chamber Choir, and Ellen and Carolyn Soukup. If you missed this year's Carole Fest, you can still watch it online at csshope.org/carolefest2023. Thank you to all who helped make Carole Fest 2023 raise over \$56,000.00 for St. Gianna Program!





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another occasion, one of our first-grade students, who loves to read, met Sr. Karen coming from chapel with several books in her hands. The boy looked at her in surprise and asked, "Did God give you those books"? Some time back, one of our little girls would sing "Twinkle, Twinkle little Star" to Jesus whenever her mother took her into chapel.

6. WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT ST. GIANNA? That is simple. Holding a newborn and remembering that Jesus was once this small and dependent on his Mother Mary. Currently, we have a house full of babies so that opportunity comes quite often. I hope some of your questions have been answered. May the Lord send you many blessings during the New Year. Our prayers are with you. God bless.

The HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE IMPACT of your St. Gianna Program support:

\$250

PROVIDES nearly a week of housing and advocacy for a SGP family

\$100

PROVIDES a new car battery for a SGP client's vehicle

\$50

PROVIDES one night's utilities at our SGP home

\$25

PROVIDES a fuel voucher for a SGP resident driving to work

\$10

PROVIDES cleaning supplies for our SGP home

Mail your gift in the enclosed envelope or donate online at csshope.org/donate. THANK YOU!

