



CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA

Hope in the Good Life

June 2021

St. Germaine Cousin/Steve Sousek

Perseverance brings hope

Born in 1579 in Pibrac, France, Germaine Cousin was the only child of Laurent Cousin and Marie Laroche. When she was five years old, the plague took the life of her mother, and her father soon remarried. His new wife, Armande, made no secret of her dislike for Germaine, who was born with a deformed right hand and scrofula, a condition that made sores erupt on her neck.

Armande's disdain for Germaine took the form of physical abuse and neglect. For 17 years, Germaine was forced to live in the family barn, often deprived of food. She was ordered to watch the family's sheep near the wolf-infested La Bouconne forest- it was Armande's hope that the wolves would kill the young shepherdess. Through the neglect and banishment, Germaine somehow grew in her relationship with God. She attended daily Mass, embraced a life of prayer and often gave her food scraps to beggars. She offered up her suffering to God.

Her humble generosity, and her lack of resentment towards her stepmother, earned her the respect of the villagers.

As her reputation for holiness grew, her father finally intervened, stopped the abuse by Armande and invited Germaine back into their home. But Germaine preferred her humble conditions and chose to stay in the barn. One morning, her father went to check on Germaine and found her dead on a pallet of twigs. She was just 22 years old.



Steve Sousek

A patron saint of abuse victims, child abuse victims and the abandoned, St. Germaine embraced her suffering.

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering

produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

- Romans 5:3-4

Steve Sousek knows suffering and perseverance can bring hope.

A member of North American Martyrs in Lincoln, Steve has been an avid long-distance runner for more than a decade. For many of those years, Steve said the idea of running for a greater cause often crossed his mind. A life-long advocate of causes that value the sanctity of life, he

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Last year, our
CSS Hastings
regional office
distributed
229 tons
of food

to
15

communities

#HopeintheGoodLife



PO Box 30425
Lincoln NE 68503-0425



#HopeintheGoodLife

Perseverance brings hope (continued)

wanted to do something to support women in abusive relationships or with difficult pregnancies. As a past victim of a physically abusive relationship, he felt a deep connection with women fleeing domestic violence and could relate to their fear and need for support.

"I wondered if the purpose of me experiencing it myself was to prepare me to have greater understanding of their need," he said.

Steve was inspired to create RUNBORN, a pro-life mission to support women and their unborn babies. Last summer, Steve ran and biked approximately 520 miles across Nebraska raising nearly \$41,000 to support the work of St. Gianna Women's Homes and Women's Care Center of Lincoln. Sousek said, "These women and children face much bigger challenges than the challenge before me to accomplish this run – their actual life is being challenged and threatened. I am running for their lives believing that my effort and physical sacrifice will inspire others to help support them with a financial donation, or sacrifice if you will, through RUNBORN."

This year, Steve has an even more ambitious goal. From June 27th-July 1st, Steve will swim 12 miles, bike 560 miles and run 131 miles- the equivalent of 5 ironman triathlons- across Nebraska, from Wyoming to Iowa! Steve's goal is to raise \$55,000 for St. Gianna Women's Homes and Women's Care Center of Lincoln.

To see the RUNBORN story, learn more, join the run, or support Steve's efforts, visit runborn.org.

St. Gianna Women's Homes

Planning to succeed

There is a lot of truth in the saying, "failing to plan is planning to fail." This is why our St. Gianna staff visit with residents to review their family action plan and safety plan. Developed by our Resident Care Manager, the Family Action Plan is a proposed strategy or course of action that breaks down large, sometimes overwhelming goals or tasks into smaller, more manageable ones. It gives our residents a step-by-step path to keep them accountable and help them to succeed. Here are some stats from the first quarter of this year:



- Four new residents escaped their abusers and moved into St. Gianna's.
- One resident completed her apartment application and transitioned out of the program.
- One resident received a donated car from CSS. This will help her and her daughters get to school, work, and doctor appointments.
- Several residents attended a group counseling session offered by the Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center.

Thank you to all of our friends who donated over \$26,000 on Give Hastings Day, and more than \$224,000 on Give To Lincoln Day! We couldn't bring Hope in the Good Life without you!