



Aid for Women

Empowering Women to Choose Life Since 1978

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Ongoing Support For Clients Ongoing Opportunities For Aid For Women

More and more, women, who come to Aid for Women abortion-minded, are motivated by our Client Bonus and Mentor Angel programs to reconsider and change their intention. It is very gratifying when they return to us for ongoing support.

A 26 year-old client, who is participating in both programs now, is a perfect example. She came to us abortion-minded and, after her initial counseling session, left with her counselor believing she was undecided and abortion-vulnerable. The counselor made a follow up call to talk with her again but was unsuccessful in reaching

her. To the counselor's surprise, the client called to make an appointment for the Client Bonus Program.

When she came, her boyfriend and father of the baby, was with her. They both seemed sure in their desire to parent, and the client had already started prenatal care, following through with a medical referral the counselor had given her. It was apparent the couple had a loving relationship and would be sharing in the pregnancy experience.

Because it is early in the pregnancy, the program benefits should be significant for them. In their first meeting with the program coordinator, the client earned "\$50" in "bonus bucks", and she made purchases totaling the full amount. Her satisfaction with the beautiful items she selected for their

baby was a major step forward.

The client and her mentor angel will be communicating on a regular basis. As their friendship develops, they will probably meet at our center. They can watch pregnancy and parenting videos together and discuss the client's progress and resource referral results.

Including the baby's father whenever possible is an important advantage. We know that the father's role should never be neglected. It is an ideal opportunity when we can lend support to a man who is willing to be responsible.

If there are good reasons to encourage marriage for a couple through our counseling and mentoring, we have yet another opportunity that we can count as one among our greatest.

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Peg Hanlon, Mentor Angel

During an interview, early in her training to be an Aid for Women volunteer mentor, Peg Hanlon's wealth of lived experience and her valuable wisdom came to light. There was no doubt she could offer pregnant women, who faced serious challenges, the most effective kind of loving, ongoing support.



Peg modestly revealed she was a pediatrician, retired after practicing for 30 years. Dr. Margaret Hanlon, even in retirement, has continued to care for young patients. She volunteers her services at a free Chicago health clinic.

Married for 57 years to Dr. C. Rollins Hanlon, a renowned surgeon, Peg and her husband have successfully raised eight children and now enjoy eight grandchildren. Always a devoted couple, they have shared in fulfilling their parental and professional responsibilities.

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Peg Hanlon *continued from page 1*

Since 2002, Peg has been a volunteer mentor in the Aid for Women Mentor Angel Program. Her mentoring has proven to be exceptional. In a particular case, her client was one of the youngest to participate in the program, and in another, her client was one of the oldest. Altogether, Peg has been the mentor for 10 pregnant women needing special support and friendship. Clients genuinely appreciate and respond positively to Peg's motherly, generous guidance.

Some mentoring relationships that are difficult to start can turn out to be the more transforming ones. Peg agrees, "Teenagers and women who face many uncertainties early in their pregnancies can feel overwhelmed. They require patient understanding. Persistence in communication with such clients, through mentoring, has allowed me to encourage them to use the best and most appropriate resources available. Often, there was gratifying improvement in their family relationships as they matured in their acceptance of personal responsibility. Being happy and prepared when they gave birth to their beautiful, healthy babies provided both client and mentor a strong reason to celebrate."

Aid for Women is so blessed to have Peg serving in a most important role of our ministry. We extend to her our sincere and heartfelt thanks!



Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. joins Aid for Women in welcoming Bob Castagna at a festive celebration held at the Cardinal's residence.

SAVE THE DATE — Auxiliary Spring Luncheon on April 21st at the Woman's Athletic Club with guest speaker Sheila Liaugminas of Relevant Radio. Contact Katie at 847-256-6019 for reservation information.

Day of Recollection

Board members, staff, and volunteers gathered one dreary January morning for a day which was certain to uplift their spirits. While the weather outside was cold and gloomy, the atmosphere inside was anything but.

Sharon Hefferan, Executive Director of Metro Achievement Center, began the day with the theme of finding God in ordinary things. She reminded us that whoever is faithful in little things is faithful in much. Every task, no matter how mundane or trivial, can be turned into a prayer. In clerical work, we can see a soul behind every piece of paper. In counseling, we can offer a warm welcome, a cheerful smile or even a fresh cup of coffee. In fundraising we can show our appreciation, no matter how small the gift. Sharon challenged all of us to find something divine in every moment.

Father Francis J. Hoffman, Chaplain of Northridge Preparatory School, reflected on the issue of abortion. The bad news is that abortion is part of the culture of death. The good news is that a culture of death has no future, which means, the bad news is good news. He began with the tragedy of abortion on many levels—natural, cultural, spiritual, and personal. He recalled Pope John Paul II's message that a nation is only as strong as its ability to care for the weakest among it. It is not

merely Christian to be prolife, it's patriotic, and we become a better nation and society when we care for the weakest and most vulnerable among us. He spoke about signs of hope—the promising future demonstrated by the youth at the recent March for Life in Washington, D.C., the good work of many prolife organizations, the advancement of science and technology which exposes the truth of both abortion and fetal stem cell research, the more recent outspokenness of Catholic bishops on life issues which has brought about real change in legislative policy, and the abundant contributions of John Paul the Great by his personal witness and deposit of faith through his encyclicals, particularly *Evangelium Vitae* and *Veritatis Splendor*. Even the internet, with all its downsides, brings about an opportunity to evangelize (see our Executive Director's column), as it enables us to spread our message of life and hope to a vast audience.

The talks were followed by benediction and exposition, confession and celebration of the Holy Mass. The group concluded the day with lunch and fellowship, and all left with renewed enthusiasm and an eagerness to "roll up their sleeves" and continue the work of protecting the dignity of life from conception to natural death.



Reflections

Mary Hallan FioRito, Esq.

Bella Is Beautiful

I don't get out to movies much any more. With a three-year-old and a five-year-old at home, truth be told, I don't get out much, period. And if our television is on at all, it's standard daytime children's fare (my overused one-liner is, "If it's not on PBS, it's unlikely I know about it.") Not that Hollywood gives me all that much motivation, either. There's enough blood and gore and sadness in real life these days, so I figure, why pay to see it?

So when I was invited to a private screening of the Toronto Film Festival's *People's Choice Award* winner, "Bella," I jumped at the chance. I'd read Robert Novak's review of it, so I was aware it was a film with uplifting, life-affirming themes. The movie stars Eduardo Versteegui, described by the producer as the "Brad Pitt of Mexico," and Tammy Blanchard as two down-on-their-luck New Yorkers working as a cook and waitress, respectively, in the same Mexican restaurant. By chance (or God's providence) their lives become intertwined and, eventually, renewed and redeemed.

This is one of those movies whose images and themes stay with you long after you exit the theatre. The film is a potent reminder that our lives can change, for better or for worse, in an instant, and its message is one on the importance of loving the stranger and welcoming the alien in our midst as well as the ultimate power of prayer to change hearts and minds.

The film was shot entirely in New York City, and anyone who loves New York will really appreciate the cinematic sweeps of the Big Apple's diverse neighborhoods. (And fans of Father Benedict Groeschel's Franciscan Friars of the Renewal will be happy to see a subway scene with a few of the friars as extras!)

If you haven't been out to see a movie since "The Passion of the Christ," it's time to start planning to see "Bella" when it comes out this spring. You can visit the movie's website, www.bellathemovie.com to view a trailer and learn more about the production company, Metanoia films.

"Bella" is beautiful. Spread the word.



CLIENT CHRISTMAS REUNION

The auxiliary hosted the second annual client reunion. Families gathered at Old St. Mary parish for a bit of holiday cheer. The room looked beautifully festive with the fine homemade Christmas decorations provided by our Mentor Coordinator, Sandy Hildebrand.

Mary Rita Clifton and Stephanie Klatt entertained us with Christmas songs, inspiring all to join in impromptu caroling. Mentor Peg Hanlon met

the client she has been counseling for the first time—she had only spoken to her on the phone prior to the event. Santa was on hand distributing gifts to the children while moms received Jewel Food Stores gift certificates. Tommy the Elf made an appearance spreading good cheer and helping dispense presents to the children. A wonderful time was had by all!

