



# Aid for Women

Empowering Women to Choose Life Since 1978

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Fall 2000

## Perennial Thanks

Sharon Cosey gave birth to her daughter in September 1991 because she had come to Aid for Women nine months earlier.

Nine years later, Sharon still brings her tribute of gratitude — a bouquet of fresh flowers every year — for the help she received from our counselors.

*Sharon Cosey, former client (left), with Kristina Maker, AfW counselor, in July.*



### Aid for Women

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## Heartbreak and Heartfelt Joy

Three months is not a very long time when you look at it over the course of a lifetime. But for some, it's all the lifetime they get. Our heartbreak is deep and intense as a pregnant woman leaves—having been shown the love of God — with a heart that remains desperate or cold, determined to have an abortion.

In the past three months we have ministered to many girls and women on the phone and face to face who have that “I know what I’m going to do” attitude.

J., the single mother of a one-year-old son, came to us strictly for abortion-procedure information. A doctor had confirmed her pregnancy. The father of the baby offered no support, saying only, “Do what you want.” Struggling to finish her education and raise her son, the idea of bringing another child into the world seemed too overwhelming. J. watched a video of testimonies by post-abortive women sharing their struggles. J. agreed to have an ultrasound exam. After her visit here, and her ultrasound, she decided to keep her baby: “I just realized I can make this work.” Heartfelt joy and tears of thanksgiving.

P. and T., his girlfriend of four years, came in together thinking that they would be referred to an abortion clinic. P. was hostile and controlling, convinced that all they would hear was propaganda. T.'s pregnancy test result was positive. Neither would watch a video nor take any literature. They were told the truth, and lovingly challenged in their reasons for considering abortion. They did take a video home that explains abortion procedures and schedule an ultrasound exam. Having seen the reality of their child during the ultrasound, T. called the following Monday for a prenatal-care referral. Heartfelt joy and tears of thanksgiving.

For every heartfelt joy story we have to share with you, there is at least one heartbreak story. Yet, despite the heartbreak, these strongly abortion-minded clients are an answer to prayer. These women are precisely why we are here. These women are the very ones who most need to hear that abortion is not only not the only option, but it's not the best option, for them or for their baby.

We expect many calls asking for Mifeprex (RU-486) in the weeks and months ahead. These clients will be looking for an easy answer to sexual activity way outside of God's plan for their lives. They will want a no-strings-attached abortion. With your help, we will be here to listen to each woman, counsel her, teach her, love her, challenge her lifestyle, and, most of all, plant seeds for life in her heart.

Whether we know heartbreak or heartfelt joy, we trust God for the harvest.

*Elaine M. Kindler, Executive Director*

**“I’m so glad that you  
came into my life.”  
R., October 2000**

## The Babies Say “Thank You!”

Many people have responded very generously to our need for new, gender-neutral newborn and infant clothes, blankets, diapers and toys to give to our expectant clients.

Some of the Illinois Club for Catholic Women debutantes held a non-shower baby shower and collected enough items to create nearly 30 layettes.



*Kathy Napleton, Adele Lyden, Annie Kane and Judy Burke show their layette making in progress. Photograph courtesy of John Reilly Photography.*

Tracy Arbanas, Terry Miller, Denise Wasserman and Ginny Reuter each sent various and wonderful items for the babies. Joan Anderson scoured garage and yard sales to send a huge box of gently used items (we mingle these in with new items).

In Illinois, Father Marc Reszel and Barbara Gunderson organized a shower at St. Mary's Parish in Buffalo Grove, and Susan Couri organized a month-long shower at St. Joseph's Parish in Wilmette. We received many lovely clothes, toys and diapers from both parishes.



*Ruth Gamber (right) organized a baby shower in August, and with two guests, admires some of the beautiful gifts given for our clients.*

We are very grateful for this amazing outpouring of generosity. You minister to the babies, their mothers and our counselors who assemble the layette packages. Thank you!

## Road Map for a Life's Mission

By Sharnina D. Starling, Director of Client Services

It is amazing how God can make even the most questionable turns become part of a good road map for your life's mission. My professional training began at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, where I worked with people of various ages as I earned my B.A. in social work.

Our studies required internships. My first was with elementary children who came from dysfunctional homes.

While still a college student, I applied for a direct care counseling position at an all-boys group home. The boys ranged in age from 12 to 16 years, and were in great need of positive guidance. This position gave me the chance to give back to the children in the community, and there was an even transfer of appreciation and understanding between the boys and me.

I worked at the boys' home my entire college career, while also completing other internships and volunteer work. However, I was still undecided which area of social work I wanted to pursue—until my last internship.

I worked at a women's clinic counseling pregnant women of various ages from all walks of life. These ladies were very vulnerable and frightened, and meeting their needs stretched me in ways I'd never known before. This compassionate work placed me in the right direction for my career.

While the clinic gave direction to my career, my personal experience ultimately placed me on the right path with God.

You see, I became one of the young ladies who was afraid and vulnerable! "I can't believe this happened to me," played over and over in my head as I sat in the waiting room of the clinic. "Positive." I was not surprised at all.

I was faced with the most difficult decision in my life up to that point. God has always been a part of my life since I can remember, so who else would I turn to but my Father in heaven? But everyone was saying, "It's your decision to make. I can't make it for you."

In the end I made the decision to abort my child, God's voice drowned out by the chorus around me. This decision is forever in my heart and memory. I believe that God is a forgiving God if you truly repent, and that I did. Today, I go to God for everything I do and won't let his voice be diminished in any way.

My burden is no more and today I can shout it from the mountaintop: I am pro-life. And my husband and I are expecting a child! As usual, God has hit me with many blessings at one time. I was hired by Aid for Women and then learned that I am pregnant. I know not to question God's plan and am sure that my pregnancy can be used for our clients' good.

I believe that I'm here at Aid for Women to share what was not shared with me, to help one woman at a time choose life for her child.

I thank God that my life's mission includes this opportunity to be part of Aid for Women's mission. God bless!



*Sharnina D. Starling (left) and Margaret J. Harmon discuss center procedures.*

## Adoption Gave Me Life

By Margaret J. Harmon, Volunteer Counselor

I began volunteering at Aid for Women (AfW) in May 1996, and knew from the start that I could use my experiences and gifts to help others in this place.

I have always known that I am adopted, and as long as I have known about abortion I have been pro-life. If I'd been conceived after 1973, there's a good chance that I would have been aborted. I have seen that no matter how principled and loving a woman may be, legal abortion can be an overwhelming temptation.

I am grateful that my birth mother didn't have that temptation, and that she was loving and unselfish in choosing adoption for me.

Many of the women that I counsel at AfW are reluctant to consider adoption at all. Often they're worried what their children will think of them when they realize that they are adopted. I tell them that I've never been angry with my birth mother or felt that she didn't love me. I tell them that she loved me so much that she wanted the best for me and knew that she couldn't provide it. I tell them about the many, many couples on waiting lists to adopt children.

My parents adopted me — their first child — as an infant in 1966. They adopted my brother Joe as an infant in 1968. In fact, my first memory is going with Mom and Dad to pick up Joe. Then, in July 1969, my sister Kathy was born! My parents love us all and have never made a distinction based on adoption. I'm sure that it would be hard for Mom, Dad and Kathy to imagine what their lives would be like without Joe and me. Yet, if abortion had been legal in the 1960's, there's a very good chance that Joe and I would not be here.

What would the world be like without my brother Joe? He's an outstanding musician and has brought joy to so many through his organ playing and choir directing. He teaches high school history and has positively influenced the lives of his students. Think about how many lives he has touched and the loss if he had never been born. And I think about the millions of children who have been aborted. We will never know in our lifetime what the loss of these children has meant to the world, but I am sure that it's greater than any of us could imagine.

Every time I counsel a woman, I want to help her to give the wonderful and beautiful gift of life my birth mother and Joe's birth mother gave my family. I want each woman to know that she is loved, hear the truth about abortion, and receive the encouragement and support she needs to make the best choice for her — either to parent her child or release her child for adoption.

Just as much, if not more, I want each child to have the precious gift of life and the opportunity my brother and I have to make a difference in the world.

*Editor's note: Margaret leads our Saturday volunteers, and prepared our client statistics this year while we were without an office manager. Thank you!*

## The Babies Say "Thank You!" Again

\* To Sandy Hildebrand for her selfless service to this ministry, as executive director for one year, then as director of client services for four months. The board of directors, staff and counselors say thank you, too.

• To the dedicated women who currently serve as counselors:

Jean Athey	Estrella Mancini
Kate Berley	Jeanne McParland
Susan Couri	Melanie O'Hara
Erika Gleeson	Debbie Wells
Mary Anne Goldberg	
Margaret Harmon	Carolyn Whalen
Mary Ann Lusk	Maggie Wong
Kristina Maker	Mary Zdunek

• To the 27 vendors who came to this year's Boutique with their talents and beautiful items, and to Teresa Hartnett Tario, president, and the Friends of Aid for Women, who raised \$19,000 for our ministry.

*Editor's note: If you can't travel overseas, but have a heart for missions (and can commute to Chicago's Loop), come visit us to see how you can make a difference in the lives of more than 150 babies each month.*



## New Team Members



*Debbie Wells, counselor (center) and Susan Couri, board secretary and counselor (right), welcome our new office manager, Anna McLain (left).*



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*This beautiful blue and yellow quilt was made by Janet LaRue Romig and was given to Aid for Women as a special gift of thanksgiving for the help she received when her daughter was thinking about aborting Janet's grandchild. Bella's story was featured in our Summer 2000 issue.*



## Wish List: #4 More Clients!

Aid for Women served 1,682 clients from January through September. Forty-two percent of these came because of our Yellow Pages advertisement. We can serve more!

Advertising reaches more women with the truth that can set them free. We know that it works. We need to do more.

Ads on four CTA "L" lines earlier this year added as much as 30 percent to the total number of clients. There are other opportunities, too. But advertising is expensive.

Four hundred forty-five CTA banner ads cost us \$6,000 for one month, plus the production costs of nearly \$2,000. CTA bus ads would cost at least \$9,000 for one month.

Our half-page Yellow Pages ad costs us \$5,000 each month. In four years, we've seen a 118 percent increase in the cost of this ad, and it's going up again in 2001.

We would not reach our clients without these advertisements. They can't hear the truth unless they come, and they can't come unless they know that we're here!

But we can only advertise as we have the funds to cover the cost. Can you help underwrite our advertising? **Please send a special year-end donation to Aid for Women to help us reach more women in 2001.**

The lives of many women and children depend on your help.

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