



Aid for Women

Empowering Women to Choose Life Since 1978

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Aid for Women fondly remembers **Ann Jans**.

Ann was a long-time board member and a great advocate for Aid for Women.

The next newsletter will feature a tribute to Ann and reflections on her life.

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Life From the Womb, Life From the Heart

By Mary Rita Clifton, volunteer counselor

I was asked to share my experience as a volunteer counselor. I hope my story will inspire others to join Aid for Women in our mission to respect life.

I became a volunteer in January 2002. I did Level 1 counseling, which entails speaking on the phone with clients, for a year and two months. With training and experience, I began to feel more confident with my phone skills and decided to go the next step, Level 2, face-to-face counseling.

As part of my training, I would role play with Sharnina Starling-Buford, and observe her or Susan Couri in counseling sessions with clients. Next, I began to counsel a client with Sharnina at my side. Of course, I studied many reading materials and videos while gaining valuable mentoring from Sharnina and other experienced counselors. There is such a wonderful atmosphere of support, sharing and love in our center!

It took me several months to take the plunge and begin to counsel clients on my own. I began to doubt myself. What can a middle-aged, married, childless, woman contribute to a woman who is undecided about whether to continue her unexpected pregnancy? Many of our clients are from the south and west sides of the city, a different environment than what I was used to. What could I offer? I felt scared and inadequate.

On Friday, June 4, I decided to start face-to-face counseling. I asked God to give me whatever it would take to do His work.

I worked with three clients that day. My last client, a 21-year-old single black woman, came into the

*I was
overwhelmed.
I had tears
in my eyes...
Nothing is
impossible
with God!*

Life from the Heart continued on page two

continued from page one

center late in the afternoon. “Sharon” (name changed to protect her privacy) looked very beautiful and extremely sure of herself. She appeared to be one tough lady! A feeling of intimidation and inadequacy overcame me. I prayed to our Father to grant me the courage, strength, gentleness, wisdom and love that He alone can give.

As I began to learn about my client, I realized the error of my judgmental first impression. What a kind, loving and smart woman she was. I had judged her by her appearance and my preconceived notions. After listening some more, she wanted to know more about me and why I was a counselor.

WOW! How was I going to answer this? Holy Spirit, inspire me! After telling her a little about my personal background and elementary teaching career, I poured out my soul as to why I wanted to be a counselor.

I expressed a desire to be a good listener, to provide information so she could make an informed decision, and to love her, whatever decision she made regarding her pregnancy. I offered her support from both myself and Aid for Women.

After my story and answer to her question, Sharon had tears in her eyes. She asked me if she could express her thoughts. She said that my having been a music teacher for kindergarten through eighth grade had to be demanding. I had to provide a lot of energy, attention and patience for many children. Sharon thought that God had a hand in my teaching and that now He has put me in this role to help undecided women.

She then placed her hands over her unborn child and said, “Maybe you have never given birth in the natu-



Besides being a dedicated and caring volunteer pregnancy counselor, Mary Rita is also an accomplished pianist. She performed at this year's Boutique (see page 4) and her CD recording is often heard at the center. Mary Rita is pictured here by the fetal development models, and a sample layette, in our counseling area.

ral sense of the word.” And then moving her hands to her heart, she added, “But it seems to me you are bringing new life each time you love a child and counsel an undecided pregnant woman.”

I was overwhelmed. I had tears in my eyes. I responded, “Who is helping who?” After asking her permission, Sharon and I shared a hug to end our time together.

This experience was an eye opener for me. Nothing is impossible with God! I am ready to welcome each undecided woman that comes to our center with love and hope.

“Mary Rita has such a strong desire to learn every aspect of counseling. She helps me to guide her effectively, because she is very open and honest when she isn't sure about something or if she just needs to talk about a counseling session. I believe this is one of Mary Rita's positive attributes.

Because of her deep desire to make sure she gives our clients the most appropriate information, she exposes her own insecurities, doubts, and fears in order to learn more and become better. Thank you, Mary Rita, for trusting God to use what you have to offer.”

~ Director of Client and Volunteer Services Sharnina Starling-Buford





Look at me!



These smiling faces are a few of the bundles of joy born to our clients. Aid for Women congratulates the new parents, and thanks you, our supporters, for your important part in welcoming these precious children into the world.



Briyana Aniece — born June 5 to her mother, Laquesia, and father, Brian. Briyana was born at 7 pounds, 11 ounces, and 20 inches long. Mary Pawl is Laquesia's mentor.

Jalen Michael — Proud mother Dana and father Anthony are pictured with their son, Jalen Michael. Jalen was born May 2, 2003 in Chicago. He weighed 6 pounds and 1 ounce and was 20 inches long at birth. As you can see, he is growing into a big boy now! Thanks to Dana and Anthony for keeping us up-to-date with this beautiful photograph.



Shawn — born August 8 at 5 pounds, 6 ounces, and 17 inches to proud mom Lateshia. Lateshia's mentor is Mary Konopka.



DEBUTANTES LEND A HELPING HAND



The Illinois Club for Catholic Women continued their support of Aid for Women with a generous grant to fund ultrasound referrals. In addition, the group's debutantes helped out in a "hands-on" way with a baby shower on August 6. They brought many bagfuls of items and then sorted and packaged them into beautiful layettes. These young ladies made over 50 layettes with their gifts of time and materials, with many supplies left over. The debs also toured the center, viewed our video, and learned how their efforts will help women and children.

Thank you to of the debutantes and their organizers: Cathy Kane, Anne Kiefer, and Susan Krakora and her daughter Leann.

The young ladies who participated include: Kate Besser, Mary Ann Botica, Frances Crane, Kate Devlin, Ashley Donohoe, Ashleigh Dowd, Cara Losacco, Kimmy Rizzo, Ally Sandner, Christina Sorensen, Sarah Starshak, Lauren Tallon, and Meghan Walsh.



Boutique

The Boutique for All Seasons returned this year on October 7 in the elegant setting of the North Shore Country Club in Glenview. Several hundred shoppers enjoyed perusing through a dazzling array of 40 high-quality vendors, listened to piano music provided by Mary Rita Clifton, enjoyed light refreshments and wonderful company. Many thanks to the Aid for Women Auxiliary board and members for their hard work, all of the volunteers, vendors, and shoppers who enjoyed the day.

Special recognition goes out to Diane Philbin, who chaired this year's event, and to Bob and Pat Daily for organizing the vendors. We wish a heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated in volunteering that day or who wished us well for a successful boutique.

Thanks to everyone for their invaluable support. Make plans to do your holiday shopping at next year's boutique!



Also known as the "Blanket Ladies," Denise Sexton and Heidi Wagner donate homemade blankets and hats for our clients.



Diane Pietrzak, Sharnina Starling-Buford and Janie Pietrzak at Aid for Women's information table



Janie Pietrzak, Jane Colleton, Susan Couri and Gretchen Croak enjoy the refreshments.



Mary Rita Clifton provides festive music for the holiday atmosphere.



Vendor Chairman Bob Daily's efforts were recognized following the boutique.



At the checkout table: Sue Navratil, Jeanni Richards, Barbara Schuetz, Debbie Brejcha, and Kathleen Berley.



Auxiliary President Laima Braune presents Diane Philbin with a bouquet of pink roses to thank her for organizing a wonderful boutique. Diane promptly gave her roses away one by one to thank others who had helped plan the day.

for All Seasons 2004



Sally Kandl and Pat Daily greet an arrival at the registration table.



Dr. Jerry and Janie Pietrzak enjoying the day.



Shoppers for life!



Sue Barrett, Katie Bredemann, Sandy Hildebrand and Teresa Tario working hard on the accounting in the "back room."



Kathleen Van Ella of PORTRAITS/CHICAGO and Robert Dewar Bentley, the artist who created the painting of President and Mrs. Bush with a young child, presented at Aid for Women's 25th anniversary dinner last fall.



Three generations of boutique shoppers: Julie Cooper with son Timothy and mother Sandy Hildebrand

**Congratulations to our raffle winners:
1st Prize – \$1,000 Joannie Kajmowicz,
2nd Prize – \$500 went to Dan Wedel,
3rd Prize – \$500 was Jan Shields.**



Kathleen Berley helps a shopper to check-out.

Memorial and Honor Gifts

A special gift is a meaningful way to remember a friend or a loved one at the time of his or her death – or in life by honoring that person’s accomplishments and testimony.

These gifts assist in providing opportunities for Aid for Women to bring *hope, support, and life* to women in unexpected pregnancies and their babies.

In Memory Of:

Donald Ambrose

By Charles and Kathleen Sullivan

Bishop Edwin M. Conway

By Philip and Kay Corridon

Josephine Corridon

By Philip and Kay Corridon

Arthur Grams

By Robert and Melanie Mauser

Ezequial Guerrero

By John and Concetta McCartney, Jr.

Connor Kandl

By Larry and Sally Kandl

Rev. Francis C. Lewis

By Margaret T. Lewis

Mary Meade

By John M. Meade

Greg Morrow

By Philip and Kay Corridon

Leonard Nemerovsky

By Angela M. Ambrose

Eleanor Zemla

By Robert and Patricia Daily

In Honor Of:

“David” from Aurora

By Philip and Kay Corridon

Bill Griffin

By Philip and Kay Corridon

**Thanking God for
the birth of their 7th grandchild,
Olivia Veronica Marie Hack**

By Arthur and MaryAnn Seymour

Congressman Henry Hyde

By Philip and Kay Corridon

Tina Mahar

By Philip and Kay Corridon

My girlfriend

By John Michael Nona

**The Sorrowful and
Immaculate Heart of Mary**

By William and Margareta Baird

In Honor of Kathleen G. Bindley’s special birthday:

Kathleen and Garry Berley

Joanne and Gene De Muro

Mary Anne Goldberg

Sandy and Ernest Hildebrand

Mary and Kevin FioRito

Florence and Buz Sorensen



*Pictured from left: Pat Daily, Janie Pietrzak, Sue Barrett,
Irene Murney, Kathleen Berley, William Simpson,
and Sharnina Starling-Buford.*

Aid for Women extends its gratitude to the Christ Child Society of Chicago for their generous grant. Trustees William Simpson and Irene Murney presented a check for \$3,000 during a visit to the center on September 27. The society also donated 30 layettes, through the efforts of Paul and Jane Helmer. Many thanks to the entire Christ Child Society of Chicago.

✓ **VOTE** ✓
YOUR
CONVICTIONS!

Make your voice heard! Aid for Women *strongly* encourages your full voter participation in the upcoming election on Tuesday, November 2. To learn where candidates stand on various issues, visit www.votinginfo.org, or www.ivotemyvalues.com Faithful citizenship requires that we exercise the right, and privilege, to vote. Please join us in doing so.

Pro-Life Christmas Cards Available

Aid for Women is selling 4 beautiful varieties of Christmas cards for the holiday season. A message on the back of each card reads, "By sending this card you are furthering efforts toward restoring the sanctity of all human life."

Ordering options:

- Fill out the form below and return with payment enclosed to 8 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60603
- Call 312-621-1101 and ask for Janie to place your order by phone; credit cards welcome
- Send a message to jpietrzak@aidforwomen.org to order by e-mail



#1 Madonna and Child – (Luke 1:46-49)
 Faithful choir, rejoicing sing Alleluia! A Virgin bore the
 King of Kings, O most wondrous thing! Alleluia!
 ~ St. Bernard of Clairvaux

#2 The Adoration of the Magi – (Luke 1:38)
 O King of Kings! God made man!
 Come, let us adore! May the joy of Christ
 be yours in this Holy Season of Christmas!

#3 Away in a Manger – (John 1:14)
 In that lowly manger bed, the Christ Child
 found rest for His little head.
 May God's love fill your heart this Christmas!

#4 Christmas Eve – Peace. Love. Joy.
 Merry Christmas and all the best
 for the New Year!

A donation of \$10 is requested for each package. Each package contains 10 full-color cards.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

SHIPPING/HANDLING COSTS:	
1-3 packages	\$2.35
4-6 packages	\$2.75
7-9 packages	\$3.15
10 packages or more	\$3.55

Order:	Quantity of Packages	Donation	Total
Design #1 (Madonna and Child)	_____	at \$10.00 each	_____
Design #2 (The Adoration of the Magi)	_____	at \$10.00 each	_____
Design #3 (Away in a Manger)	_____	at \$10.00 each	_____
Design #4 (Christmas Eve)	_____	at \$10.00 each	_____
		+ Shipping/handling	_____
		Grand Total	_____

Please enclose payment. Make checks payable to *Aid for Women*.
 To pay by credit card: call 312-621-1101 and ask for Janie.

While supplies last.

Thank you for your support!

Auxiliary Kicks Off with Membership Tea

Approximately 30 ladies gathered at the home of Auxiliary President Laima Braune on September 18, for the first Auxiliary Membership Tea. The women mingled and enjoyed refreshments and the company of new and old friends. Presentations by staff members and Auxiliary officers capped the event, with many new members joining the group.



Peg Hanlon and Sandy Hildebrand pause at the refreshment table.

The Auxiliary is a fellowship of women who, out of concern for life, support the mission of Aid for Women by fundraising for client needs, acquiring materials used for infant layettes for clients, and promoting community awareness.

For information about the newly restructured Aid for Women Auxiliary, contact Membership Chairman Kathleen Berley at 630-968-5424, or send e-mail to Auxiliary@aidforwomen.org.



In Perspective

Diane R. Pietrzak, executive director

Get ready for an astounding statistic.

According to the Elliot Institute, a national non-profit research organization based in Springfield, Illinois, fully *80 percent* of women who have had abortions say they would have carried their pregnancies to term if they had been supported in doing so.



Mentoring partnerships offer communication, time, information, education and instruction, encouragement, and especially friendship to those facing serious challenges related to pregnancy. This vital program serves clients who are confronted with the greatest challenges, but who lack a support system with which to overcome them.

Tragically, these women felt they had nowhere to turn for the emotional, material, and medical support necessary during this difficult time.

Indeed, the Institute cites research showing that *30 to 60 percent* of women having abortions feel compelled to do so by other persons – usually parents, boyfriends, or husbands. This pressure results in many women feeling as if they have no choice at all.

We believe these women and teenagers deserve better. Through support provided by Aid for Women, those experiencing distress due to an unexpected pregnancy can find loving, non-judgmental, honest and caring support to meet the challenges of their personal circumstances.

Each client is given unconditional compassion and respect while we discuss the development of her baby, abortion procedures and their risks, adoption possibilities, the benefits of abstinence until marriage, and the full range of women's health issues. We strive to speak the truth, but as Ephesians 4:15 instructs us, always to do so *in love*.

This support is accomplished through pregnancy counseling on the telephone and in person, and also in one-on-one personal relationships with trained volunteer mentors.

Fully 80 percent of women who have had abortions say they would have carried their pregnancies to term if they had been supported in doing so.

Intervention at an individual level enables young women, one by one, to break the cycles of poverty, single parenting and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases that are so destructive today.

The benefits of this investment are immeasurable. Young women in unexpected pregnancies can be instilled with hope for a bright future as responsible parents and productive members of society. The impact of scores of young women making healthier lifestyle choices, choosing to welcome and nurture their children, taking care of themselves and their families' emotional and physical health, and becoming increasingly established in productive work and stable living situations, can only be considered extraordinary.

Your vital participation in this work literally strengthens the America of tomorrow. With God, *all things are possible*.

As Mary Rita beautifully described in our cover story, the Lord works in such amazing ways. Even when (perhaps *especially* when) we do not feel adequate for the task, His grace is sufficient for us. His strength is made perfect, when we are weak (2Corinthians 12:9). As long as we depend on Him, both our clients and ourselves are in the best hands imaginable.