



# Aid for Women

*Empowering Women to Choose Life Since 1978*

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Don't miss our  
new section,  
*Look at me!*,  
which  
features  
babies  
recently  
born to



Aid for  
Women  
clients

### *Aid for Women Board of Directors*

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of Client and Volunteer Services*  
Janie M. Pietrzak, *Interim Office  
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Sandra C. Hildebrand, *Mentor  
Program Coordinator*

## Finding Freedom After Abortion

Aid for Women was privileged to welcome Vicki Thorn for an in-service seminar on Saturday, June 5.

Vicki is the Executive Director of the National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing. She also is the founder of Project Rachel, a faith-based program offering a path to healing and reconciliation for those injured by abortion.

Twenty-two attendees benefited from her insights on various topics, including: the wounds of those born before 1960, protocol for caring for the newly post-abortive woman, information on teen and young adult brain development, and optimizing the environment of a pregnancy resource center for the physiological calming of the woman.

As a recognized premier expert in her field, Vicki graciously provided a brief overview of post-abortion healing for our readers.



*Vicki Thorn*

*AfW: What are some typical symptoms of a woman with post-abortion syndrome (PAS)?*

VT: Grief, depression, alienation from self, others and God. She may struggle with chemical dependency or eating disorders as well as suicidal ideation. Women often become pregnant again within two years of the abortion and some may marry the father of the aborted child to atone for what happened. Many women struggle with great anxiety in subsequent pregnancies and some may struggle with fertility issues.

*AfW: Can you describe some keys to healing for the post-abortive woman? What role do faith and prayer have in the reconciliation process?*

VT: The woman who has a faith tradition may heal more easily. The women who do not believe in an afterlife struggle in a unique way because they believe that they have taken everything from their child, because life was all that there was. The woman who is healing needs to be able to tell her story, process any anger left from the experience—often towards her partner or parents, come to understand that she is capable of forgiving. She needs to grieve for her child, knowing its sex and naming the baby. (There is a fascinating but little known fact that we women carry cells from every child we ever conceive in our brain and body for the rest of our lives...so the question of know-

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*continued from page one*

ing the sex of our baby isn't as strange as it sounds.) Writing a letter to the baby to say all her mother's heart longs to say can be very helpful and then finding a way to memorialize is important. If she is a woman of faith, she needs to resolve the questions and issues she has concerning God's forgiveness and her belief that this is the unforgivable sin and finally, come to self-forgiveness so she can move on back into life in a new and meaningful way.

*AfW: In your experience, is there a typical time period after an abortion during which most women find PAS especially difficult? Do many women carry the pain for several years before addressing it?*

VT: Things have changed over the years. We now hear from women hours, days and months after the abortion. They are in profound, overwhelming pain. Again, whenever the awareness of the abortion breaks through, again there can be a period of profound pain. This can be 5 or 10 years later or in some cases 30 or 40. Each woman is different. When her denial breaks, she is in a lot of pain.

*AfW: How do you recommend I help a friend or loved one who is hurting from a past abortion? Is there anything I should be careful NOT to do or say?*

VT: It depends on if she told you about the abortion or not. (Sometimes we know because someone else told us.) If the woman told us about the abortion, we can listen to her story and her pain if she is dealing with that. I would caution not to bring it up if she seems numb or seems to be ignoring it at the moment. She may not be strong enough to deal with it at this time.

If you know about the abortion and she doesn't know that you know, you need to be very respectful of the information you have received. Praying for her is the greatest gift you can give and gentle love. Be very careful not to make angry, hurtful statements about abortion because she will interpret them to be aimed at her. She carries a huge burden of self-judgment even if she isn't talking about it. Always talk about the need for healing of those who have been involved, if the abortion issue comes up.

If she knows that you know, you might share information about post-abortion resources if she is open to that, but don't keep repeating the information.

*AfW: Can you tell us a little about your background, and how you came to be involved in this ministry?*

VT: I founded Project Rachel because a friend of mine in high school had had an abortion before it was legal. (She had already placed a baby for adoption before this.) I watched her cycle through incredibly self-destructive activities after the abortion. I was always at a loss about what to say to her to help, but she always said the same thing to me at the end of our conversations: "I can live with the adoption. I can't live with the abortion." That experience sensitized me to the need for healing.

My husband and I are parents to 6 children, ages 16 to 27. They have taught me a lot. Academically, I have a degree in Psychology and a trauma certificate. I am trained in pre-natal loss and bereavement facilitation. I am a spiritual director and a member of the Association of Pre-natal and Peri-natal Psychology and Health, a group that has been most significant in helping me to understand the awesome nature of conception, the importance of a good pre-natal experience for the baby and the benefits of a non-complicated delivery in terms of mother/baby bonding. Over the years I have become increasingly passionate about women's reproductive health and am incensed at all the lies we have been told.

*AfW: What is the mission of the National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing? What kinds of services does the group offer?*

VT: We are an ecumenical networking agency, connecting ministries to each other, consulting on the formation of various post-abortion ministries, educating care providers and others on the aftermath of abortion and its healing. We provide referrals to those looking for help in healing, averaging more than 400 contacts per month, via telephone and email. We also sponsor conferences, and produce audio and visual materials.

*AfW: Does your organization also address the needs of post-abortive men?*

VT: I have personally worked with many post-abortive men. There is not much available for them yet because we don't know as much about them as we do the women, but there is a huge need to recognize their pain.

*AfW: Can you recommend any books or websites to find out more information?*

VT: Some websites include [www.noparh.org](http://www.noparh.org), [www.afterabortion.org](http://www.afterabortion.org), [www.afterabortion.com](http://www.afterabortion.com), [www.hopeafterabortion.org](http://www.hopeafterabortion.org). An excellent book is "A Solitary Sorrow" by Terri and Paul Reiser.



## New Faces



Laima Braune (left) and Diane Philbin pose after the June board meeting.

Aid for Women is pleased to announce the addition of two new members to our Board of Directors, Laima Braune and Diane Philbin.

Laima is the President of the newly re-organized Aid for Women Auxiliary. Working

closely with other auxiliary board members, she is overseeing the rebirth of the auxiliary, including planning a membership tea this coming September. Laima is on the faculty at Midwestern University in Downers Grove where she teaches Microbiology. She is a member of the Parish Coun-

**HELP WANTED** — Aid for Women is accepting applications for the position of office manager. This is a full-time, salaried position. For a position description and information on how to apply, visit [www.aidforwomen.org](http://www.aidforwomen.org).

cil at St. Joseph's church in Downers Grove, and is also very active in the Lithuanian community. Laima lives in Oak Brook with her husband, David.

Diane now serves as Fundraising Chairman of the Auxiliary. She and her husband, Jim, live in Northbrook with their four children. Diane is a committed member of St. Norbert's parish where she has served as Respect Life Coordinator for several years. She is very active in her community, including her children's school. Diane is currently leading the organization of the Auxiliary's annual Boutique, which is scheduled for this coming October.

We are grateful and excited about the gifts that these women bring to Aid for Women. Welcome to the family!

## W I S H L I S T

**Do you have a treasure in your attic or basement that could bless the work of Aid for Women? The following new or gently used items would be most welcome:**

**Paper shredder  
Electric typewriter  
Fax machine  
Gift cards or certificates  
for maternity clothing stores  
Computer for reception desk**



**Feel free to call the center at 312-621-1101 for someone to pick up any items you have available. Thank you!**

## Aid For Women Reintroduces Auxiliary

By Sue Barrett, Auxiliary Treasurer

Aid for Women is pleased to announce the re-formation of the Aid for Women Auxiliary (formerly the Friends of Aid for Women). The Auxiliary will work to help promote and advance Aid for Women's life-affirming mission.

While many currently serve at the Aid for Women center downtown as pregnancy counselors, the Auxiliary offers additional volunteer opportunities such as fundraising and acquiring materials used for infant layettes for our clients.

Those interested in supporting Aid for Women through its Auxiliary are encouraged to attend our "Welcome Tea" on September 18. Sharnina Starling-Buford, director of client and volunteer services, will discuss the history and mission of Aid for Women and give firsthand accounts of ways the organization has helped its abortion-minded clients choose life.

Also, all supporters of Aid for Women are invited to attend "A Boutique for All Seasons 2004," hosted by the Auxiliary on October 7. Proceeds from this event help serve clients at the Aid for Women center. It's not often one can support God's work while doing a bit of one-stop

holiday shopping, so please come out and see the fine items our exhibitors have to offer.

The Auxiliary holds meetings quarterly. Board members are Laima Braune, President; Noreen Kelliher, Secretary; Sue Barrett, Treasurer; Diane Philbin and Kate Berley. For more information, contact Janie at Aid for Women at 312-621-1101, Membership Chairman Kate Berley at 630-968-5424, or send e-mail to [Auxiliary@aidforwomen.org](mailto:Auxiliary@aidforwomen.org).

### *Aid For Women Auxiliary Upcoming Events*

**SEPTEMBER 18**

*Membership Tea • Oak Brook, Illinois*

**OCTOBER 7**

*A Boutique for All Seasons 2004 New location:  
North Shore Country Club, Glenview  
Over 35 vendors – 15 new plus old favorites  
Extended hours: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.*

# 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.

Following are memorial and honor gifts we have received in 2004.

## *In Honor Of:*

### **Baby Carmen**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*

### **Baby Jose**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*

### **My girlfriend**

*By John Michael Nona*

### **Philip Glatz**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*

### **Lillian Grains**

*By Robert and Melanie Mauser*

### **Father Benedict Groeschel**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*

### **Father Edward Phelan**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*

### **The Sacred Heart of Jesus (given on St. Valentine’s Day)**

*By William and Margareta Baird*

### **Maryann Seymour’s birthday**

*By Joseph and Jennifer Seymour*

### **The Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary**

*By William and Margareta Baird*

## *In Memory Of:*

### **Placida Amata**

*By Garry and Kathleen Berley*

### **Mary Jane Eyster**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*

### **Arthur Grains**

*By Robert and Melanie Mauser*

### **John C. Heerey**

*By Maurice J. P. McNicholas*

### **Rev. Francis C. Lewis**

*By Margaret T. Lewis*

### **The Honorable Francis J. Mahon**

*By Garry and Kathleen Berley*

### **Greg Morrow**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*

### **Cardinal John O’Connor**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*

### **Helen, Frank and Edward Peer**

*By Margaret Peer*

### **Father Edward Phelan**

*By Philip and Kay Corridon*



### **Marion E. Moriarty**

Aid for Women remembers, in a special way, Marion E. Moriarty. Marion was a faithful volunteer, supporter, and prayer warrior who remembered Aid for Women in her will. Bestowing the gift of life to unborn children is a fitting tribute to Marion and a celebration of her life. Our gratitude, prayers and blessings are with her family.

### **Donald B. Ambrose**

Aid for Women also thanks Mrs. Angela Ambrose and the entire family of Donald B. Ambrose for thoughtfully requesting memorial gifts be given to Aid for Women. Our appreciation, deepest sympathies and prayers, continue to be with the Ambrose family.

Gifts were made in memory of Donald B. Ambrose by:

*Jane R. Bensley*

*John B. Blackburn*

*Marley Close-Crane*

*Vincent and Florence Collins*

*Wayne and Joan Fickinger*

*Mary S. Gallagher*

*Mary Anne Goldberg*

*Judith L. Harmon*

*William and Lorraine Hartnett, Jr.*

*Lawrence and Ada Hickey*

*John and Ann Jans*

*Stephen and Krista Kruse*

*Nancy H. Matthei*

*Thomas and Mary Joanne McCabe*

*Mr. James F. McNulty, Jr.*

*Pioneer Press, North Shore Magazine*

*Howard and Judy Schneider*

*James and Linda Sommer*

*Kathryn M. Spiegel*

*Mary S. Sullivan*

*Brian and Patricia Walsh*

## “Way to Go Moms!”

In addition to helping our clients transition into motherhood roles, several of our volunteers are themselves new moms with babies and young children. Some have found it difficult to volunteer at the center after their arrival of their little ones.

One faithful volunteer pregnancy counselor and mentor, Erin Neese, recently came up with a wonderful idea: creating a new group in which moms trade off weeks, taking turns babysitting each other’s kids to enable the women to come downtown.

Because it will provide a way for moms to go to the

center to help out, the new program is appropriately named “Way to Go Moms.” (Kudos to Janie Pietrzak, our interim office manager, for coming up with a great name!)

**Calling all moms:** Have you ever thought that you would like to volunteer, but didn’t think it would be possible, since you care for young children at home? Contact Janie at 312-621-1101 and become a part of this exciting new group. To Erin, and all of our volunteer moms who contribute so much not only to their own families, but to the larger Aid for Women family as well: “Way to go!”



# Look at me!



These smiling faces are a few of the bundles of joy recently 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.



**Mazjai Imani** – born March 27 at 7 pounds, 8 ounces to mom Shaquita and dad Gomez. Mazjai will celebrate her first birthday next year on Easter Sunday!

## **Ethan Alexander** –

All dressed for his first Easter this past April. Ethan was born January 19 at 5 pounds, 7 ounces and 20 1/4 inches. His proud parents are Lorrie and Peter.



**Isaak Angel** - Isaak's birthday was January 5 at 3:14 p.m. at Trinity Hospital. He weighed just 4 pounds and 2 ounces. "My son Isaak was born a preemie at 7 1/2 months. Due to a seizure I had (eclampsia), I was induced," said his mom, Blanca. "I was in a critical stage where my son's life and my life were at stake, due to a seizure I was having during my delivery. He is my miracle baby." In early June, Blanca reported Isaak weighed "approximately 14 pounds and 8 ounces, at 32 inches long - believe it or not!" Blanca was mentored by volunteer pregnancy counselor and mentor angel, Rita Vanek.



**Jania Calese** - born March 11 at 7 pounds, 6 ounces and 21 inches to her mother, Shavonn. Pictured (clockwise from left) is Director of Client and Volunteer Services Sharnina Starling-Buford, proud mom Shavonn, Jania Calese, and Jania's big sister Jaila, who turned 4 in June.





# Your \$pare ¢hange Can Change a Child's Life

The Baby Bottle Boomerang campaign is coming soon! Adorable little bottles will be distributed at local churches. Inside each bottle is an introduction to the ministry of Aid for Women, as well as an opportunity to honor or remember a loved one with a gift in his or her name. After being filled with coins, bills or checks, the bottles are returned to the church at a designated time.

This program has successfully raised awareness *and* funds for about 800 pregnancy care centers throughout the

country in the past 3 years. It is an easy way to make a vital contribution to women in crisis pregnancies. It is especially fun for children to watch the bottle fill up! – often while praying for each of the mothers and their babies while dropping their coins in.

**We are looking for liaisons to help introduce this program to their churches during October, Respect Life Month.** To bring the Baby Bottle Boomerang to your church, women's group, local club, or any gathering of people, please call Diane at 312-621-1101.

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## In Perspective

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Diane R. Pietrzak, Executive Director

### *“Let freedom ring.”*

This was the focus of the United States' 53<sup>rd</sup> National Day of Prayer on May 6, 2004. Millions of people recognized this day with private reflection or group events throughout the country.

The theme was based on a verse from the Old Testament book of Leviticus: “... proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all its inhabitants.” (Lev 25:10)

The roots of this tradition extend back to the founding of the United States, when Congress issued a proclamation setting aside a day of prayer in 1775. An official annual day of prayer was later established by Congress in 1952.

As we continue to pray in thanksgiving for our freedom and observe the Fourth of July holiday, our nation must recognize that liberty is not at stake just in wars overseas or in political arenas. The struggle for freedom is fought daily here in our own cities, schools, and even our own homes. The battle is for hearts and minds.

After believing the lies of what pro-abortionists consider the “liberating” power of abortion, countless women discover that choosing abortion is actually imprisoning. The emotional oppression that results from such violence is as real as any prison in the physical world.

Thankfully, there *is* great hope for post-abortive women to be liberated from the pain and guilt of this decision. Our cover article discusses the opportunity for emancipation from the tyranny of the pain of a previous abortion. It is a message of hope and of healing.



The transformative power of forgiveness heals the wounded heart. In receiving God's forgiveness for themselves and choosing to forgive others, women can discover the beautiful, true freedom of a life entrusted to God's plan.

I have profound respect for the many courageous post-abortive women who — after embracing reconciliation and healing in their own lives — draw upon their own experience to offer love and understanding to our clients, to save them from suffering in the same way. These counselors have a unique perspective that allows them to empathize with the pain of a woman in an unexpected pregnancy and help her choose a life-affirming path. They are brave soldiers of peace, heroes in the struggle for women's minds and hearts.

By empowering and serving our clients, we not only pre-serve them from the bondage of abortion, but we also *protect our nation's tiniest citizens*. They, too, deserve the fundamental freedom to live.

**“By empowering and serving our clients, we not only preserve them from the bondage of abortion, but we also protect our nation's tiniest citizens. They, too, deserve the fundamental freedom to live.”**

Our Declaration of Independence boldly proclaims the inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Would you join me in praying for our country to acknowledge that, in order to *truly* celebrate freedom, we must first recognize that the right to life is the foundation of all other rights?

This Fourth of July, while we remember those who won our country's liberation, let us also acknowledge the heroic, gentle sacrifices of those who protect and preserve the precious gift of life. And let us pray for the hastening of the ultimate triumph of love over darkness that provides true freedom for humanity.