



Stewards of His Gifts

Respect and dignity for all life

Referred by the health department, Blanca entered the Catholic Charities Birthline/Lifeline Center in Delray Beach. She needed a test to confirm her pregnancy so that she could receive government insurance and assistance. What she left with was much more than the required paperwork. She left feeling loved and her visit put her on a path to healing.

"As soon as I walked in the door and saw the picture of (the Holy) Mother and Child on the wall, and spoke to the staff, I felt love. They were so loving," explained Blanca.

Blanca was nervous about her pregnancy and took her mother along. She felt uneasy because years prior she had an abortion. It was an experience Blanca described as painful and one that she never shared with her mother, until the visit at Birthline/Lifeline. She was also afraid of what the Birthline/Lifeline staff would say to her when she told them of her past.

"(After I told them) the staff showed compassion and told me 'God will forgive you and cleanse you.' I wasn't judged and my mother said she wished I would have told her when it happened so she could have helped me."

When Blanca spoke about the pain, grief and spiritual loss she suffered after her abortion, she sat with Carmelia, her now 1-year-old daughter, who laughed and played with Blanca's

long hair. Blanca looked at her daughter with amusement and joy, fully recognizing the gift that she has been given.

Blanca and her husband of seven years wanted a family, and Blanca said Birthline/Lifeline brought her more joy than she could imagine. On her first visit there, the staff gave her an outfit for the baby.

"I keep her first ultrasound picture and that outfit, which no longer fits Carmelia, to remind (me) that my baby is blessed," she said.

Catholic Charities Birthline/Lifeline Pregnancy Care Centers serve women who are referred to them for insurance purposes and those who come to confirm an unwanted pregnancy. Mary Rodriguez, director of Birthline/Lifeline, said staff at all three pregnancy care centers makes every client feel as Blanca did during her visit.

"Our goal is to provide comfort and love to those who come here. We encourage them to have an ultrasound so they can become informed about the baby growing inside them," said Rodriguez, who

added some women choose an alternative to abortion after seeing their ultrasound.

Catholic Charities Birthline/Lifeline also provides help throughout the pregnancy, calling to check on the women, and also offering a basket of baby items shortly before the baby is born.



Below are actual responses of women who utilized the services available at Birthline/Lifeline Pregnancy Care Centers. Clients are asked to complete an anonymous survey about their experience and the services they received.

"Made me remember how precious life is"

"I see a life forming inside me and I don't want to take it away"

"I love all the help. I was very scared at first, but now I'm excited."

"I received valuable information not only statistics but personal information that pertained to my situation"

"It gave me a chance to realize that I have received a gift from God."

Birthline/Lifeline Pregnancy Care Centers are part of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach. There are three centers located in West Palm Beach, Delray Beach and Boynton Beach. The facilities offer pro-life services, education and counseling focused on abortion alternatives and adoption. Referrals for prenatal care, medical coverage, housing and emergency assistance, along with free ultrasound, pregnancy testing and baby items are provided.



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Samaritan Center: 'Helping those in need'

Clients who come into Samaritan Center in Vero Beach, a program of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach, are families who are struggling and in need of a place to stay. Quite often they need a hand up, not a hand out.

"Without (Samaritan Center), I wouldn't be able to do what I do. You wonder how you would do this on your own," said Caroline, a single mother of three who is living in Samaritan Center.



Prior to Samaritan Center — a transitional residence for struggling and homeless families — Caroline and her three children, who are in middle school and high school, were living in what she calls an "unsafe environment." She knew she had to find a way out. She found Samaritan Center in a book that listed community resources and applied. A week later, she received a call that she was accepted. Knowing it was a chance for a better life for her family, she left with the children.

"I packed a few things and clothes. I left the entire house," Caroline said.

That was more than 10 months ago. With the help of the staff of Samaritan

Center, Caroline's family is on a path to independence, happiness and eventually home ownership.

The family is utilizing Samaritan Center's full range of services including family counseling, health and safety classes, and financial classes to help the family budget and learn to save money. On-site case managers assist in providing these services. The shelter also helps to provide food and clothes.

Caroline describes the staff as extra nice and supportive. Case managers become confidants and a place to turn. Caroline said she thanks God for the help she's received.

"Staff always tells us, 'If you need something, let us know. If we don't have it or we can't help, we'll tell you where you can get help.' If you tell them your child is not feeling well or feeling a bit down, they check on your child or try to cheer them up."

For Caroline, this support is vital in helping her to provide for her family and make a better life for them. Caroline works full time as a county bus driver and attends Indian River Community College where she is taking business administration classes toward a bachelor's degree. In

addition to work and studying, she also has the typical "mom-chauffeur" duties of taking her children to activities and meetings at church and school, as well as other extracurricular activities.

"I don't think about it. I just do it. You have to stay focused. You have to provide for your kids," Caroline said.

Caroline applied to the Habitat for Humanity program, an affordable housing program that leads to homeownership. She is currently putting in the program's required "sweat equity" hours for those wanting homeownership. This means 300 volunteer hours working on homes under construction, including her own. While at Samaritan Center, Caroline has saved money and she hopes to use what she has learned in budgeting classes to build a solid financial foundation that provides a stable future for her and her family.

While on her daily bus route, Caroline sees exciting progress as she passes by her home. Come early spring, she plans to move her family into a new three-bedroom, one-bath home. The whole family is excited about achieving the American dream of homeownership.

"My children are excited to have their own space and own room. They can't wait. Since we don't have furniture, they want to know what they'll sleep on or sit on. I tell them, 'God will help.'"

F.A.Q: Diocesan Services Appeal

What is the Diocesan Services Appeal? The Diocesan Services Appeal (DSA) is the annual fundraising campaign for the five-county Diocese of Palm Beach in which the faithful are asked by our Bishop to give generously. With those contributions, the Diocese can continue to support the many aspects of our larger Church, including the 53 parishes and missions, and 19 schools throughout Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee counties. The DSA is the primary source of funding for the Diocese, providing more than 70 percent of the annual operating income. Without this appeal, the Diocese simply could not carry out its pastoral ministry and programs.

How many programs, ministries and services are funded by Diocesan Services Appeal? Some of the ministries, programs and services supported by the 2012 DSA include: Catholic schools; youth and young adult ministries; the Office of Vocations; education of seminarians; ongoing formation of priests; multicultural

offices; religious education and spiritual development; marriage and family life; communications; senior housing; Catholic Charities and its 16 program and ministries including respect life, prison ministry and substance abuse addiction. In addition, the DSA supports the central administrative offices of the Diocese of Palm Beach.

How can I support the Diocesan Services Appeal?

There are numerous ways to give to the 2012 DSA. You may make a one-time gift, or better yet, give generously through a pledge that could then be paid monthly. In these difficult times, many donors spread that payment over several months. You will receive a letter from Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito, which will contain all the necessary information and forms. Similar information will also be available at your parish. You can also make online donations by visiting us at www.diocesepb.org/dsa, and clicking on "Opportunities for Giving." For questions, please call the Office of Development at 561-775-9590.