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# **Giving "Life" A Chance -**

## **A Shepherding Home Program**

Submitted by:

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## **Giving "Life" A Chance - A Shepherding Home Program**

### **Introduction**

The following is a true story. The names have been changed to protect the identity of those involved.

Kimberley took a deep breath as she approached her parents' bedroom door. She pondered all week on how she would give them the news of her pregnancy. She dated Steve for six months before giving in to his sexual advances. Kimberley believed he was sincere when he spoke to her of love and marriage. But, now she was left to face the reality of his empty words. Shortly after their first sexual encounter, Steve broke off their relationship. When she informed him of the pregnancy, he encouraged her to get an abortion. After all, it would be an easy way out, and her parents would not need to know. Kimberley remembered testimonies from several girls at school describing their abortion experiences. She understood abortion to be the killing of a baby and knew it was not an option for her. Despite this, she lived with the fear that her parents would soon recognize the physical changes in her appearance that were occurring as the baby grew inside her. She could not keep her secret any longer. Kimberley whispered a silent prayer as she turned the doorknob to her parents' room and walked inside.

Kimberley's parents listened in a state of shock as she broke the news of her pregnancy to them. How could she have allowed this to happen? Just two weeks ago they were making plans for their daughter to attend college. Today, they were facing the reality of becoming grandparents. The tension between Kimberley and her parents grew more intense with each passing day. In a cry for help, Kimberley's mom contacted a local crisis pregnancy center. The

volunteer listened as she poured out her feelings of hurt, anger, and disappointment. Her words reflected the pain she was feeling, "Kimberley has made her bed. Now she must lie in it." Her parents considered sending her away to a maternity home, but she had only a few more months of high school remaining before graduation. The tensions were tearing the family apart. Kimberley felt as if she could no longer live at home. If only there was another option. . .

This is just one of several individual cases which have occurred in Kosciusko County where a woman in pregnancy was in need of alternative housing. Each case was unique with different issues and circumstances. But all carried a common thread, the need for temporary or long-term shelter.

For Kimberley, an alternative housing program or shepherding home (the term used in this report), would offer the freedom to consider pregnancy options without the pressure of a stressed family environment. Her parents also need time to work through their own feelings of disappointment, anger, and confusion. A Shepherding Home Program would provide housing and care for their daughter during this time of family crisis without disrupting normal work and school schedules.

For a clearer understanding of the topic of Shepherding Homes, let us define the terms most commonly used in this report.

Shepherding Home Program - A program specifically designed to provide for the needs of a pregnant woman, both physical and emotional, by placing them with caring families within the community.

Extended family living - A term used when describing the Shepherding Home Program.

Host family - A family who opens their home to a pregnant woman in need of temporary or long-term shelter.

Temporary shelter - Housing provided for 2 - 4 weeks.

Long-term shelter - Housing provided for 4 weeks or more. Generally includes the duration of the pregnancy up to the post-partum, six-week medical check up.

Although the Shepherding Home Program sounds like a simple solution to a serious problem, as with any program involving the public it is not without risks. These risks may include: placement not working out due to personality differences, theft from host family by client, or possible lawsuits.

“Is there a need for a Shepherding Home Program in Kosciusko County, and is the program worth the risks?” This report will address this question by considering the points of community need, community impact, and the cost factors of a Shepherding Home Program.

### **Community Need**

In order to determine if there is a need for a shepherding home program in Kosciusko County, we studied input from three different sources; other social service agencies that already exist in our local community, the Heartline Pregnancy Center in Kosciusko County, and a pregnancy center in a neighboring county that developed a similar program several years ago. Our study had a goal of identifying a need for such a program IN our county, as opposed to a referral program that would require relocation of the client to a different county or state.

We felt it was important to talk to and solicit input from several Kosciusko County social service agencies that would be most likely to encounter homeless, pregnant women in the course of their service to the community. The agencies we talked to were the Beaman Home, a shelter for victims of domestic violence; the Health Department; the Salvation Army; the Warsaw

Housing Authority; Combined Community Services, a general assistance and referral agency; the Prosecuting Attorney's Office; the township trustees; the Division of Family and Children's Services (Welfare Department); and the Otis R. Bowen Center for Human Services, Inc.

Telephone surveys were completed and included the following questions:

- ▶ Are you aware of any agency or organization that offers long- or short-term housing to pregnant women, or pregnant women with children?
- ▶ Do you see this as a need in this community?
- ▶ If yes, how many individuals per month do you anticipate would use this service?
- ▶ Would you make referrals if shepherding homes were available?
- ▶ Do you have any comments on this issue?

The results of the survey showed that none of those contacted were aware of any agency in our area that offers housing for pregnant women. About half of those contacted saw this as a need in our community. About a quarter of those contacted were unsure if it is a need, and the remaining 25% said that individuals who apply for their services must reside in a home and show proof of a mailing address, so they answered "No" to this being a need in our community.

Very few of the agencies could estimate how many individuals could use a shepherding home program. These agencies do not maintain or track any statistics on homeless, pregnant women. The only "statistics" that could be offered were informal estimates.

Most of the agencies (75%) agreed that they would make referrals to shepherding homes if they were available.

A few of the comments made on this issue were, "A great idea," "We see girls who would

definitely take advantage of a short-term shelter,” and “(We) do not have contact with this type of clientele.”

Because the Salvation Army recently (February, 1995) published a Planning Study Report on Emergency Housing Services for the Homeless, we visited Lieutenant Jeff Horn to investigate the possibility of a duplication of services. Our main concern was whether their current program or a possible future shelter would serve homeless, pregnant women.

Lt. Horn said he did not believe the current services provided by the Salvation Army would be a duplication of services as they do not normally serve pregnant women. They refer pregnant and battered women to the appropriate agency that is better-equipped to serve them, such as the Beaman Home or the Heartline Pregnancy Center. They do see some pregnant women, including teenagers, but he was not aware of any pregnant, homeless women in our area.

He said their main service is to families who are looking for longer-term housing. They currently can put people up in a hotel for up to a week in an emergency situation. If a shelter were to be built, he believes it would mainly serve families, but would be available to single persons as well. The shelter project is on hold for the time being.

Lt. Horn also said if he were to encounter a homeless, pregnant client, he would most likely refer her to a program he would have access to through the Salvation Army. This would mean relocation for the women, probably to the Indianapolis area.

A second source of data to support the need for a shepherding home program in Kosciusko County was collected by the Heartline Pregnancy Center. Currently, the only other service in our county which serves pregnant women is the Teen Parents Succeeding Program which is a part of the Wawasee School Corporation in the northern part of the county. That

organization mainly provides day care services for the babies of teens so they can finish school. The Heartline Pregnancy Center provides more comprehensive services for pregnant women including counseling, referrals, pregnancy testing, maternity and baby clothes, baby items, etc.

Heartline's statistics were collected over a six-month period from August, 1995, to February, 1996. These statistics were more accurate than those gathered from the other social service agencies as these were collected for only women who met the homeless and pregnant criteria. During that time, six young women came to their agency for services who were pregnant and homeless. This number represents about one client per month. Although this may seem like a low number, these cases require a lot of time and energy. Each case must be handled carefully and requires the coordinated efforts of the agency, the pregnant client, and the shepherding home host family. Not only does this mean that there will be a large investment of energy to get the host family recruited, screened, and trained; it also means that following placement, the case will require extensive monitoring and follow up. The question that seemed to form was: How many homeless pregnant women must there be in a community to justify the initiation of a shepherding home program?

The answer to this question came from a visit to a neighboring county where a shepherding home program had been started.

Our visit was to R.E.T.A., Reason Enough To Act, an agency with several programs under its umbrella in Elkhart, Indiana. These programs include a shepherding home program, a shelter for homeless, pregnant women called "Sarah's House," and a Pregnancy Help Center. The Pregnancy Help Center provides services similar to Kosciusko County's Heartline Pregnancy Center.

The first effort to address the housing needs of homeless, pregnant women in their area began with the actual "Sarah's House" shelter in 1987. This home was purchased by five concerned families in Elkhart. This house could accommodate six (6) women at one time.

When we asked how they arrived at establishing a need, or justifying the need, for the shelter, we were surprised to learn that they did not spend a lot of time and energy studying statistics. Their feeling at the time seemed to be that if there was one young, homeless, pregnant woman, the home could serve a need. They knew that homeless, pregnant women existed in their area because they had seen them through the Pregnancy Help Center. In its first year of operation, a total of ten (10) women found a home at "Sarah's House" for some period of time.<sup>1</sup>

The shepherding home program was then added in 1989. Between "Sarah's House" and the Shepherding Home Program, RETA has been able to meet the needs of homeless, pregnant women in Elkhart for almost 10 years. They have served as few as eight (8) clients per year to as many as sixteen (16) per year.<sup>2</sup> Some of their placements are more appropriate for the Sarah's House Shelter, while others are better matched to host families in their shepherding home program.

Clients have been referred to their services in several ways: the telephone book, word-of-mouth, the Department of Welfare, Vocational Rehabilitation Program, the local hospitals, and from other local charities and social service agencies. They "market" their services by placing brochures at the schools, the Welfare Department, and the Health Department. Ironically, another referral source has been their local Planned Parenthood agency. Some of the women seen at

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<sup>1</sup>RETA Housing Statistics 1987-1994.

<sup>2</sup>RETA Housing Statistics 1987-1994.



Planned Parenthood in Elkhart do not wish to abort their babies and the Planned Parenthood agency is not prepared to deal with women who choose to deliver their babies. They then refer these women to RETA in Elkhart.

RETA does not have age limits for the women they serve, although their clients usually range in age from 13 to 35. It is interesting to note that about 40 percent of the population in Kosciusko County falls into the 10 to 34 year old age group, which would most likely be the targeted age group for clients to be served by a shepherding home program.<sup>3</sup> Also interesting to note is that statistics show that approximately 27 percent, more than a quarter, of all births in Kosciusko County are to women aged 18 or less.<sup>4</sup>

At RETA in Elkhart, the program serves its clients by helping to nurture, advise, and screen their new applicants; make placements; help women plan for their futures; make referrals to other agencies; and meet one-on-one with their clients to help with parenting skills. Their goal is to help the client decide realistically whether to parent or place the baby for adoption. They receive inquiries from families who wish to offer their homes for the shepherding home program. Following careful screening procedures and training, the host family may be matched to a client.

Between Sarah's House and their shepherding home program, RETA has placed 99 young women to date! Originally they felt one placement would be worth the effort - but they have been able to make a difference in the lives of nearly one hundred mothers and babies.

Overall, we feel there is a need for a shepherding home program in Kosciusko county. Because of the lack of any program in our community which addresses the needs of a homeless,

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<sup>3</sup>Salvation Army Planning Study Report, February, 1995.

<sup>4</sup>The State of the Child in Indiana II, Indianapolis: Indiana Youth Institute, 1993.

pregnant woman, and because there is evidence that such clients exist in our area, we feel that this program could serve a real need. We also feel strongly that there are often reasons that make sending these clients to another county or state unworkable. These reasons may include education, employment opportunities, and/or family ties. Further support for establishing this need will be discussed under the Community Impact and Cost of Program sections of this report.

### **Community Impact**

In measuring the community impact of a shepherding home program, one must first have a clear understanding of the program itself and take a look at those involved.

The program is supervised by a caseworker whose job description includes getting families to respond to the need, submitting the application, contacting references, making home visits, training and screening of host families, screening of the birthmothers, making placements, providing counseling to the birthmother and on-going support to the host family. It is important to note that the host family and birthmothers are carefully screened and references are contacted before placements are made. Before being placed into the home the birthmother signs a contract that she will adhere to the home rules of the host family and help with the household chores. The program encourages the host family to make every effort to involve the birthmother in the daily activities of the home giving her opportunities to experience healthy family relationships.

Clientele for the program originates from area churches, referrals from agencies within the community and individuals who are facing crisis pregnancies and in need of shelter.

The shepherding home offers a safe and secure living environment for the birthmother while she makes decisions concerning her future and the future of her baby. She does not do this

alone, but with the help and support of her host family, caseworker and if possible, her parents. All efforts are made to involve her parents in the goal of restoring broken relationships.

The host family and crisis pregnancy center offer the main source of support to the birthmother by providing for her immediate physical and emotional needs. Once these needs are met, the birthmother can then focus on the issues surrounding her crisis pregnancy. These issues may include getting prenatal care, education, employment, her relationships between parents and/or boyfriend, making plans for her baby's future and establishing goals for herself.

The church has the potential of offering another vital source of support both to the host family and birthmother. The church may offer the opportunity for the birthmother to reflect upon her spiritual needs and to expose her to the importance of setting positive moral standards. Statistics show that families who attend church are less likely to end in divorce than those who do not attend.

The community offers the third source of support providing education, future housing and job opportunities as well as agency referrals. Anne Pierson, founder of Loving and Caring and author of numerous manuals and resources on extended family living programs, describes her ten years of experience in opening their home to women in crisis as "both challenging and fulfilling." She states, "Opening your home as a host family to a woman in crisis is a life-changing experience, not only for the birthmother, but for all who choose to reach out in love."<sup>5</sup>

In summary, the shepherding home program impacts the community in these ways; it offers members in the community who serve as host families the opportunity to reach out to someone in need, it offers an opportunity for the birthmother in crisis to grow in becoming a

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<sup>5</sup>Loving and Caring, Inc.: Extended Family Living Program Manual, 1995.

contributing member to our community verses becoming another tragic welfare statistic, it offers the baby a positive start in life, and it offers churches and other agencies who encounter pregnant women with shelter needs a source of referral.

### **Cost of Program**

In addressing the costs of a shepherding home program in Kosciusko County, there are two opening, positive points that should be made. One is that the administration of such a program would not require the opening of another social service agency in our community. As it was explained in the "Community Need" section of this paper, a similar program was started in a neighboring county under the umbrella of an agency which was well-equipped to deal with homeless, pregnant women, the existing Pregnancy Help Center. Kosciusko County is fortunate to have a similar agency in its social services arena: a locally-operated crisis pregnancy center. This agency would be the most logical entity to offer a shepherding home program.

The second point is that due to the nature of the shepherding home program, it is the **host family** that incurs the most additional expense - not the community and not the agency. By making a commitment to take in the homeless, pregnant woman, the host family understands that they will be maintaining an additional person in their household during the term of the pregnancy. Some shepherding homes even agree to offer after-care for after the baby is born and will offer their home to mother and baby for a certain amount of time.

The host family, after being approved following a stringent screening and training process, begins to incur additional expenses as they make room for the expectant mother to live in their home. This may mean some minimal rearrangements as a room is set-up to accommodate the

woman. It will mean additional utility expenses, food, and probably transportation costs as there may be rides needed to and from school, work, or doctor's visits.

The agency plays the role of the administrator and offers guidance and support through casework. The caseworker is the person who oversees the shepherding home program, screens host families, accepts clients, and works at coordinating the many efforts that must be made to make this program work. To address the costs of prenatal care and other needs the client may have, including financial needs, referrals are made to other community services and assistance programs such as the Division of Family and Child Services, Medicaid, WIC, Project Independence and others as appropriate.

The local crisis pregnancy center could offer these administrative duties through their current paid staff and volunteers. Depending on future demand, if the program grows and expands, additional staff could be required on a part-time or possibly full-time basis. This would require additional funding which would be a responsibility of the sponsoring pregnancy center to raise.

Additionally, it should be known that in some cases, there may be a court case involved which may be due to an underaged minor, or other misdemeanor charges. A judge may order that a pregnant teen or young woman be part of a shepherding home program to ensure that they are off the streets and under the jurisdiction of a household where an adult resides. In a case where a client becomes placed due to a court order, there is a per diem rate that is paid to the shepherding home and the sponsoring agency. This per diem fee would certainly help offset costs in those cases.

During the course of our survey of the existing social service agencies in our community,

one concern that was raised in regard to the costs for this type of program is that the funding that would go toward supporting it would take away from funds that are currently being given to the other existing agencies in Kosciusko County. The two points made above do show that the majority of the funding needed would either be absorbed by an existing agency, would be supported by the host families, or would be minimal if needed to support an additional staff person.

There may be some truth in the theory that there is one "pot" of monies and charitable contributions available in our community for giving to our social service agencies. And some truth in the theory that by serving as a host family, that donor may stop giving elsewhere to make up for his/her additional expenses. There may also be some truth that the creation of another program, under the umbrella of an existing agency or not, will take away some of the monies in that "pot" of contributions. But is that reason enough to ignore a community need and to ignore the startup of a viable program to meet that need?

We will illustrate an answer to that question by asking our readers to envision our community as a dog kennel. If that dog kennel had 10 puppies to feed, and enough food to feed only 10 puppies, what would it do if an eleventh puppy came to stay at the kennel? In Kosciusko County, we like to think that we would find a way to feed that other puppy, to make the "food enough for 10" somehow be enough to feed an extra hungry mouth. We would not make that eleventh puppy starve to death. It would not be a justifiable argument to allow that puppy to starve just because we had to feed the other 10; not if that eleventh puppy was important enough to our community. And a shepherding home program in Kosciusko County for homeless, pregnant women is important enough. We believe the financial burden on the community as a

whole would be minimal, and the benefits would far outweigh the few extra monies that may be required to fund the shepherding home program.

### **In Closing...**

Remember Kimberley, the young pregnant teen we mentioned in the Introduction? In her situation, the home environment grew more intense. Her father approached her and gave her the option of aborting the baby. He told her if she agreed to this he would buy her a new car and help her make plans for college. Kimberley knew abortion was not an option for her.

She contacted her grandmother and arrangements were made for her to stay with her grandparents until the baby was born. Kimberley subsequently dropped out of school just a few months short of graduating. She continues to raise her child as a single parent, with the assistance of her grandmother and State Assistance through the Welfare Department.

There seemed to be no other options for her. In lacking a high school diploma, she could not secure employment that could sustain her and her baby to make it on their own. Her grandmother provided a place to stay, but did not offer much direction to Kimberley that could help her reach the educational and parenting resources she needed to make a difference in her life.

Kimberley became another statistic. . .

How does our community respond to situations like Kimberley's? How do we get involved to help decrease the number of situations like Kimberley's? And what do we do with ones like her who find themselves out on the street with no "grandmother's house" to go to?

This paper has shown that there is a viable option that should be explored in Kosciusko

County. We have identified what a shepherding home program is and how it could positively impact our community by not only providing a service to clients and families in need, but by preparing those clients to be worthwhile citizens in the community.

Equally important, it has shown that there is a real need in this community for such a program. This need was established by exploring other social service agencies and services in the community and by studying the start-up issues and results of a neighboring county that has successfully added a shepherding home program as an option for homeless, pregnant women in Elkhart County. Mostly, this need was established by specific statistics that have been kept by our local crisis pregnancy center which establishes that clients do exist in our area who could benefit from this program.

Further, this paper has shown that the costs for such a program could be minimized by adding the program under the umbrella of the local crisis pregnancy center, an existing agency in our county. This agency would address the start-up issues of putting an application and screening process in place; of training caseworkers and host families; risk factors and the legal issues. It also has shown that it would be the individual host families, and not the community as a whole, that would incur the most financial burden in supporting and sustaining the clients.

The community can help make a difference in these women's lives and the lives of their children. Together, the sponsoring agency of such a program along with the support of the community, can help reduce the number of "statistics" like Kimberley. Together, we can help give "life" a chance!



# Appendix

# RETA Housing Statistics

Information	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Number/Residents	10 (all SH)	11 (all SH)	10 (9sh, 1T)	16 (8 SH, 5T, 3B)	10 (7 sh, 2T, 1B)	8 (5SH, 2T, 1B)	8 (4SH, 4T)	8 (6SH, 2T)
Average Age	20	19	21	18	18	17	17.5	18
Race	1Sp, 9C	1B, 10C	1BB, 9C	2B, 1Sp, 13C	10C	2B, 6C	8C	2B, 6C
Marital Status	all single	1D	7S, 2D, 1M	2M	all single	all single	all single	1M
Education	2 HS Grad.	3 HS Grad.	6 HS Grad	2 College	1 HS Grad	4 HS Grad	2 College	3 HS Grad
	7 in school	8 in school	4 in school	3 HS Grad	1 GED, 3 Pending	3 in school	3 HS Grad	1 GED
	1 GED Pending			1 GED Pending	4 in school		1 GED	4 in school
Previous Children	2	0	9 (2/adopt)	12 in school			4 in school	
Medicaid	Inc. Records	1 no	2 no	1 no	1 no	all yes	all yes	all yes
Probation	3	2	1	3	3	1	0	1
Ave Length/Stay	1.5 mo.	3 mo.	4 mo.	3 mo.	4.5 mo.	3 mo.	3 mo. 1 wk. 5 mo.	
Father involved?	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	2
Adopt/Parent?	6 parent	1 adopt	2 adopt	10 parent, 2 misc.	9 parent	8 parent	2 adopt	1 adopt
	1 misc, 3?			2 adopt, 2?	1 molar, 1?			
Parents Married?	1	5	3	3	4	2	0	0
Baby Stats							4/abused	4/abused
							4/abused	2/abused
1994 Referrals:	1 phone book	3 word/mo	1DPW	1 IN Voc. Rehab.	1 StJoe, Birthright	1 C. Charities		2 black

The Salvation Army, Indiana Division  
 Planning Study Report: February, 1995  
 Warsaw, IN

Population distribution of Kosciusko County by age groups--1990 population:

Age	Indiana	%	Kosciusko Co.	
0-4	398,656	7.19%	5,342	8.18%*
5-9	410,463	7.40%	5,521	8.46%*
10-14	406,513	7.33%	5,118	7.84%*
15-19	427,579	7.71%	4,704	7.20%
20-24	417,635	7.53%	4,361	6.68%
25-29	448,076	8.08%	5,170	7.92%
30-34	467,033	8.42%	5,500	8.42%]
35-39	433,963	7.83%	5,083	7.78%
40-44	385,198	6.95%	4,500	6.89%
45-49	311,088	5.61%	3,585	5.49%
50-54	259,703	4.68%	3,162	4.84%*
55-59	239,692	4.32%	2,740	4.20%
60-64	242,364	4.37%	2,765	4.23%
65-69	225,935	4.08%	2,517	3.85%
70-74	176,106	3.18%	2,021	3.10%
75-79	134,740	2.43%	1,488	2.28%
80-84	87,664	1.58%	970	1.49%
85-89	47,624	0.86%	502	0.77%
90-94	18,412	0.33%	180	0.28%
95+	5,715	0.10%	65	0.10%
	5,544,159	100.00%	65,294	100.00%

\* Age categories in which Kosciusko County has a greater number of residents than the Indiana average.

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**APPENDIX II: DEMOGRAPHICS/SOCIAL INDICATORS**

	Indiana	Warsaw	Kosciusko Co.
<b>Population<sup>6</sup></b>		10,968	65,915
Ethnicity: % white	89%		97%
<b>Economic/Income/Poverty Indicators</b>			
Median household income	\$28,797	\$29,978	\$31,666
Per capita income	\$13,149	\$14,633	\$13,323
Persons below poverty	10.7%		6.5%
Population on AFDC <sup>7</sup>	3.5%		2.0%
% of Change AFDC Recipients 1985-1990	-4%		-13%
<b>Industries as a Percent of Total Employment:</b>			
Farming	2.7%		4.6%
Manufacturing	20.5%		36.9%
Retail Trade	17.9%		16.4%
Services	23.4%		18.8%
<b>Other Social Indicators<sup>8</sup></b>			
Percent of Child abuse cases			
Substantiated & Indicated	53.1%		55.4%
Birth Rate per 1,000 for			
women <19 years of age	28.9%		26.6%

<sup>6</sup>Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *County and City Data Book: 1994*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994.

<sup>7</sup>Source: *Impacting Families Through Work: Partnership for Personal Responsibility*. State of Indiana, Family and Social Services Administration, December 15, 1994.

<sup>8</sup>Source: *The State of the Child in Indiana II*, Indianapolis: Indiana Youth Institute, 1993.