



OUR LADY'S UPDATE

Volume 5

Fall/Winter 2006

*Offering
Dignity, hope, and
sanctuary to women
in crisis pregnancies*

An Angel To Guide Them

Our Lady of the Angels shelters homeless pregnant women

By Heather Lee, Temple Daily Telegram

From the outside, it resembles the houses around it: humble, older, inconspicuous. On the inside, it feels like a home, warm and inviting; and, in many ways, it is a normal home—a home with four mothers, young mothers-to-be, and children. This is Our Lady of the Angels, the only local emergency homeless shelter for pregnant women. Four women help run the shelter, which began in October, 1999: Sisters Teresa Cruz, Lilia Solorio and Petra Salgado, and Ana Colon, social worker and director of Our Lady of the Angels.

“It is an emergency shelter because there is no long admission process,” Sister Teresa said. “Other shelters do background checks and have a waiting list. We can take women literally off the street.” As was the case with one woman, who knocked on the door one day. She was pregnant, was living in a car outside a friend’s house, and had heard of the shelter from another pregnant lady at the bus station. “We took her in,” Sister Teresa said.

The reasons these women are homeless vary. Sometimes, they are trying to escape an abusive relationship; other times they’re thrown out of their home by their families. Whatever the reason, Our Lady of the Angels wants to help. “The only criteria is that they have to be homeless and pregnant,” Mrs. Colon said.

The three sisters live at the shelter, which has 11 beds. The amount of time a woman can stay varies from case to case, but it is usually about three months. After the baby is born, the mother may stay an additional six weeks. “We put them on a service plan with Ana,” Sister Teresa said. “That includes identifying their goals, whether it’s finding housing or reconciling with their families. Part of what we’re trying to do here is help them develop their individual skills.”

The amount of time it takes a woman to leave depends entirely upon her determination, Mrs. Colon said. Once admitted, the process of becoming independent is not an easy one. For one thing, if she is to stay, the mother-to-be must abide by the rigid schedule set up by the houseparents. Everyone must be out of the kitchen by 9am; bedtime is strictly at 11pm; there is no T.V. before 5pm; and the women must attend the church of their choice. “We try to provide them with a stable, loving environment,” Sister Teresa said. “That’s what they really need.”

The women are also required to take parenting classes at the Hope Pregnancy Center, and attend a Tuesday night Bible study class, taught by women volunteers from the community. The topic of this class is purposely titles “Women of the Bible,” Sister Teresa said, because each of the women discussed should be someone one of the women can relate and look up to.

HIGHLIGHTS

- More grant applications completed
- Forth Annual OLAMS Fundraiser January 19, 2007

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"We don't force them to become religious or be Catholic," Sister Teresa said. "But we believe that having a prayer life can ease the spiritual and mental load. We find it's a lot easier to deal with things when you refer to a higher power." "We just plant a little seed, and it does the rest," Mrs. Colon said.

There are some women that the shelter cannot take on, Sister Teresa said. Those who are a possible threat to themselves or others, and those with serious mental illness, are referred to the proper resources.

Women who are admitted may have up to three children with them, aged infant to 11 years old, Mrs. Colon said.

The women can also receive counseling, free of charge, from graduate students at the University of Mary-Hardin Baylor, Sister Teresa said. "When they first get here, many don't want to talk right away about

what happened to them," Sister Teresa said. "So we have to develop a sense of trust in each other."

Years ago, a group of women from different Catholic churches became concerned with the needs of pregnant women. They founded the Gabriel Project, named for the angel who informed Mary of her destiny to give birth to Jesus. The Gabriel Project found one of the needs of many pregnant women is a place to go, Sister Teresa said.

In the mid-1990s, a group of men and women formed the board of directors for Our Lady of the Angels, and thus, the shelter was born, helping many women during perhaps the biggest of life transitions—the road to becoming a parent.

Sister Teresa, originally from Chicago, IL, and Sister Petra, originally from Mexico, have both been with the shelter since its beginning. Sister Lilia, also from Mexico, has been a

houseparent since this past summer and Mrs. Colon, originally from Puerto Rico, has been a director for over a year.

"It's a wonderful experience," Sister Teresa said. "Anything a parent has done, we have had to do. We've gone through the good times, and we've gone through the sorrow of miscarriage." "It's been like a school for all of us," Sister Lilia said. "We've all learned so much."

Our Lady of the Angels is supported by private donations. The shelter is funded through the United Way, and receives donations from the Austin Food Bank and Martha's Kitchen. To make a donation, mail or drop off money or goods to Our Lady of the Angels, the address is 613 S. 9th St., Temple, 76504.

"We've been operating several years now," Sister Teresa said. "I say we're on the Good Lord Protection Program."

Our Benefactors keep us going...and going

OLAMS appreciates all of the volunteers and donors who give so generously of their time, talent, and treasure to make this ministry possible. Here are just a few of the gifts OLAMS has received this year:

Labor and material for renovation of retreat house - Wilsonart International

Volunteer appreciation dinner sponsor - Janell Kasberg, Cyclone Corral

Labor to paint shelter and storage buildings - Jerry Samu

Commercial lift use, power washers & sprayers, wages of two workers to paint shelter - Bruce Matous

Tables, chairs, bed, carseat - Cynthia Furr

Turkeys - Frank Freytag

Health Surveys - Lillian, Sifuentes, RN

Volunteer Houseparenting and errands - MaryAnn and Ed McCrea

First Aid class - Thomas Pechal

Baby Clothes - Margo Wyatt, Jimmy Lara, Belinda Kohl-Thomas, Shar's Consignment, Anna Payne, Talitha and Ty Kaplan, Christ the King Church in Belton

The following organizations selected OLAMS as their charity to sponsor in 2005: St. Jerome's of Waco Pro-Life @ \$3,070 & World Savings Bank @ \$7,000

**OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS
MATERNITY SHELTER**

Forth Annual Benefit Banquet featuring:

- **Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond**

Bishop of Austin

- **The Cordi-Marian Sisters**

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2007

BELL COUNTY EXPO CENTER ASSEMBLY HALL

301 WEST LOOP 121 in BELTON

Social & Silent Auction begins at 6:30p.m. ~ Dinner at 7:15p.m

\$40 per person OR reserve a table for EIGHT for only \$300.00

Call St. Luke's Catholic Church for reservations (254) 773-1561

Deadline is January 12, 2007

Our Lady of the Angels Maternity

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Temple, TX 76504-5569

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If you receive more than one newsletter, please share with others, and call the shelter so we can update our records. *Thanks!*

This holiday season, please consider giving to those less fortunate. There are many "angels" who come to the shelter needing help. Your donations are greatly appreciated!!!

✂

Please make check payable and mail to: **Please Print:** **Amount enclosed:** _____

NAME _____

Our Lady of the Angels Maternity Shelter **ADDRESS** _____

613 South 9th Street

Temple, TX 76504-5569 **CITY** _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

Please call the shelter with your questions. **PHONE** _____ **WORK** **HOME**

We do not share or sell any of your contact information. **E-MAIL** _____

AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF YOUR DONATION WILL BE MAILED TO YOU. PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH.