

EYES ON THE FUTURE



A Future with Hope and Possibilities

BY JULIE OVERLEASE

It was a bitterly cold February morning, but rays of sun shone through the window in the chapel adjoining the living room of St. Mary's Home for Mothers (SMHM). We gathered to pray the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary and a radiant resident approaching her due date attended. Prayer is a beautiful way to begin the day. Coupled with the comforting warmth cast upon the room by the sun, the experience evoked peace for those present.

Another delight was holding and making eye contact with a beautiful infant as she cooed and interacted. Staff and volunteers growing in relationship with residents at SMHM provide blessings in

the same vein as the teacher who consistently gleans wisdom from the students. The mother gazed fondly at the bright face of her newborn and said, "It is a love unlike any other form of love." I was deeply struck by the poignance of her sincere expression of the gift of maternal love and I wholeheartedly agreed. She expressed the hopeful perspective and attitude that her present situation, moment, or thought, is not final. I shared a relevant line I recently discovered in a John Green book, "Your now is not your forever." Thinking about the possibilities for a bright and stable future motivates the mom to grow for the good of her child. Her insight was beautiful.

A mother shared her dreams for bettering herself through education with a goal of helping those who have struggled in ways which mirror her own

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personal difficulties. She wants to ultimately give back and do something meaningful and larger than herself, which is an excellent aspiration for each of us. Each day she moves deliberately in that positive direction to get herself in a better place on many levels. She strives to be the best mom she may be to her infant. Her baby inspires her to put forth the effort it takes to overcome her past and to further develop. She is grateful to SMHM for not giving up on her and for lovingly walking with her over the last months. Her life has been impacted and this is only the start of her beautiful new beginning.

A capital campaign is underway to transform the lower level square footage of SMHM to make a difference in the lives of residents and non-resident moms who only need support services. Executive Director Matt Loehr has a vision of SMHM serving the greater KC metro community and beyond, through therapy and classes that women may access live, but also remotely through electronic means. Funds are needed for work on a multi-station teaching kitchen, art studio with kiln, and a comfortable area for group therapy and parent education with media capabilities. The downstairs level of the home features a walkout exterior door that will allow services for visiting moms while maintaining the privacy and home atmosphere of the main level of SMHM.

The scope of reach could be incredible, benefitting many more moms than just those living at St. Mary's. When mothers engage in counseling services and learn parenting strategies, their children benefit. Your support of SMHM will have a long lasting positive outcome.

Have faith. Hope on! God is good.



Construction has started on the basement. This picture shows furnace units before they were moved to make space for group therapy



Meet Nathan!

Born February 19, 2023

6 lbs. 8 ozs.
18" Long

Mother and baby are doing wonderfully.



The furnace units have been moved and plumbing is being updated for the teaching kitchen and additional bathroom.

Staff Spotlight: Dr. Matt Loehr Executive Director



Meet Dr. Matt Loehr

My wife, Linda, and I have been married for over 35 years. We reside in Kansas City North and attend St. Andrew the Apostle Church in Gladstone, MO. We have five beautiful children and five grandchildren. Linda is retired from teaching in the KCMO Diocese. She taught middle schoolers for over 20 years. Linda is also a graduate of Benedictine College.

What educational endeavors and professional experiences in counseling prepared you to lead at SMHM?

I completed undergraduate work at Benedictine College and graduate studies at Kansas University, where I hold a Masters in Social Work. I received my Ph.D. in Family Studies from Kansas State University. My professional experience has been working with children and families in foster care and treating the effects of trauma that has impacted them. I have worked in the social services field for over 30 years and have been a provider, administrator, and an educator in both undergraduate and graduate programs in Social Work.

How did you feel when you first learned about the vision for SMHM, back when it was simply an idea -- not a physical place?

I always felt excited and thrilled about the vision for SMHM. I believe that this population's service needs are severely underserved. We can assist these families with case management, walk with them in prayer and serve as a source of support. Additionally, having a residential program that can provide housing and longer term services for those who are struggling with homelessness and mental health issues is beneficial. Early on we looked at how we could support moms in different churches in the metropolitan area. Seeing this through the lens of having SMHM brings so many possibilities.

Please share about the work you do as Executive Director.

As the Executive Director, I do a little bit of everything here. We are a small staff of six full time and five part-time workers who operate a 24/7 program. The most critical parts of our Mission are the Mass and Eucharistic celebrations we hold weekly here in our chapel. We understand that it is through our faith and trust in Christ that all things are possible. I try to never miss this opportunity, as it helps center us on what is making all these great things possible here. It is God.

Reflect on the good that is happening at SMHM.

The good that is happening here is tremendous. This is not only seen in our data but in report measures used to evaluate our moms for depression and anxiety. We have already been a witness to eight babies being born since our opening last April and see our services expanding once we complete the basement renovations for downstairs. We are working with our referral sources on how we might better transition our moms into our services and involving community partners to help.

What is your high point since the home welcomed the first resident?

The high point for me was when we started to have Mass at our site. While we accept moms of all faiths and no faiths, we are influenced by our Catholic traditions. It is in the power of prayer and showing compassion that we are offering hope in a place of darkness for many of our moms. Their futures are brighter because of St. Mary's Home for Mothers.



Our babies born in November 2022 are growing so quickly!

CURRENT NEEDS

- Simply go to Target's Gift Registry Site: www.target.com/gift-registry
- Search for An Organization: St. Mary's Home for Mothers in Liberty
- Shop and Target will deliver the items to us and update our list!

Deacon's Corner

BY DEACON KEVIN CUMMINGS

This winter at St. Mary's marked the beginning of our next exciting phase of growth and expansion. The long awaited construction of our Basement Project will utilize more than 4,000 square feet of formerly unused storage space. The plans have been carefully designed and formatted for our residents and off-site Pregnancy Resource Center moms so they all may benefit from extensive areas of education, training, and treatment support groups. With more than half of the funds needed to finance this endeavor already raised, permits and construction bids have been submitted and building will begin by the end of January 2023! (Well underway by this newsletter's publication.)

The St. Mary's Home for Mothers Board of Directors and our staff spent many hours consulting and evaluating the many needs of our residents and considered how these additional improvements could meet and exceed the needs of our mothers now and in the future. Much thought and planning was put into all phases of development for this important new space. Generous pledges from our benefactors to underwrite the completion, along with current donations toward our Basement Project, will allow us to realize a summer opening.

The floor plan will include an education and training kitchen area, an art instruction and pottery production room, and spacious, open-concept meeting rooms for group and individual support; along with state of the art educational computer and audio-visual technology for sharing our instruction and comprehensive learning activities with remote viewers. This will vastly increase our scope of outreach and impact to benefit many women.

An indoor plant/seedling growth garden will supplement our nearby outdoor gardens. Two additional bathrooms and separate access to the facility from the rear of the home will allow for resident privacy, along with convenient parking and entry for our visiting moms.

These additions are essential for the care, development and support of our resident moms; along with the outreach and support of our Pregnancy Resource Center moms who are not in need of a residential component.

To enhance spiritual support, we will begin a monthly Benediction Liturgy Service in the SMHM chapel. The Catholic church has emphasized, most recently, in a three-year initiative, the importance of Eucharistic Adoration for all the faithful. We feel this spiritual exercise will greatly assist ALL involved in our ministry to expand the faith, hope, and charity of those we serve at St. Mary's Home for Mothers!

We continue to pray for all of you at our Masses, and hope you can attend one of our weekly religious celebrations each Wednesday at 9:30 am.

May God bless you and your families.



SCAN ME

Love our video?
Consider sharing it
to spread the word
about SMHM.

What's Happening at St. Mary's?



Knoxville Catholic High School visited for a day of service work. It's Bishop Johnston's alma mater so he joined for Mass and work!

HOW TO DONATE

Mail:

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www.smhfm.org

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