

# First Choice QUARTERLY



WINTER 2023

ISSUE 32



First Choice  
FOR WOMEN

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

Kailee McKnight



If you attended our banquet, you know that we have had a very lean year. The cause? The loss of two major donors who passed away and the rough economy that has led to a decrease in giving. Another factor could be the blessing of becoming debt-free, perhaps giving the impression that the need no longer exists. The result? A decrease in the hours our locations can be open and staffed, as well as fewer cribs and other items that can be shared with those in need. Though we have retained many of our volunteers and clients, we have a hard time opening spots for new clients on a regular basis when we are operating for fewer hours with reduced staff. Through this lean season, our team members have worked to the best of their ability to meet the needs as time and funds allow. Some might say that an easy solution to these financial problems is to cut staff. But without the team we have, we lose the environment they have created and hinder the streamlined approach to our services that has been

successfully generated over the past two years. Others may suggest that we cut “unnecessary” programs. But as we look at our target mission at First Choice, we are convinced that we are only providing necessary programs. Which of these can be eliminated?

**Ultrasounds** allow expecting parents to see life up close. They show that there is an actual baby in the womb, not just a clump of cells.

**ParentCare** provides baby items like cribs, wipes, and diapers, and helps families beyond the birth of a child. When we can make available clothing, blankets, and formula, we show tangible support to parents, guardians and their babies.

Three new programs have been established over the past two years, our Fatherhood Initiative, the Mobile Unit, and Toddler Milestones. **The Fatherhood Initiative** has become an anchor for our male clients. Dads are often relegated to the sidelines of a pregnancy decision, but they can now meet with male volunteers who empower them to have a voice. Confident, involved fathers lead to more stable families and better outcomes for their children. **Toddler Milestones** partners with parents and guardians to achieve school-readiness through research-based pathways for each stage of toddlerhood. This new program was made possible by the George and Francis Ball Foundation.

Another major service to our community is our **Healthy Relationships Program**, otherwise known as Creating Positive Relationships. The teaching of our **Creating Positive Relationships** curriculum in the local schools gives us an opportunity to be a light in a place where the heart cry of God is not usually welcome. We can encourage young people to consider abstinence and help them to develop all-around healthy relationships with parents, family, and friends. We can open a safe space for teens to share their thoughts and ask questions. We can engage them in serious conversations and show them how to initiate those same conversations at home. A small but mighty team makes this program possible in Delaware, Madison, and Grant Counties, and it is offered free to all schools because of faithful friends like you who donate to cover the costs. But the current volunteers are spread very thin, and we are unable to expand without the ability to add more instructors.

Suppose this program were to be cut. That decision would put about \$45,000 back into the budget of First Choice, but at what cost? We would lose this unique service, a prophylactic measure that helps teens avoid unexpected pregnancies during the educational years. We would miss the opportunity to be a part of bringing up our youth in the way they should go, miss the chance to encourage them to get the quality education and social tools they will need to provide and care for a family when the time is right.

The programs listed above, and the impact made on many lives by these programs, were **made possible by you and can only continue with you.** "It takes a village" is not taken lightly at First Choice, and it rings true from our inner core to the outside hands that fund this mission. Together, we can achieve a community in which every individual is respected, and every child is wanted, cared for, and nurtured.

This year, our board created a fundraising campaign for **#60clients-in160days, with a goal of raising \$96,000. We have received \$62,000 so far.** We have also been blessed by fundraising friends with the promise of a **matching gift of up to \$10,000** to help us finish this year with a record "bang." We are praying that we will not just reach but surpass our goal.

We know that there are many extraordinary nonprofits that you could support and have supported this year. That's why **we are honored and extremely grateful when you choose us;** when you choose to help moms, dads, guardians, foster parents, and babies in your community through your financial gifts to First Choice.

**For 2024, First Choice has a planned budget totaling nearly \$550,000 to sustain the programs we offer and provide ultrasound exams in both of our centers.** We shared at the banquet this year our theme from Hebrews 10:24, **"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."**

Will you help us? With your support, we will continue to make a significant impact in east central Indiana.

Please remember that all mailed payments **MUST** be postmarked by December 31, 2023, to be included in your 2023 giving record.

**Thank you to those who attended our Annual Banquet. We raised nearly \$100,000 because of your support!**



# Brenda Hartsock

## Volunteer Spotlight

Brenda heard about First Choice in 2015 when a staff member visited the Tuesday Women's Bible Study at Union Chapel Ministries. "I was drawn to the ministry because my daughter is adopted. I am thankful that her birth mother chose life. I saw this as my way of giving back."

She serves as receptionist on Thursdays, greeting clients and creating a welcoming atmosphere the moment anyone walks in our doors. She also helps with many administrative duties, which is such a blessing to our staff and volunteers. In her free time, Brenda likes to read, volunteer at church, and spend time with her dog Tasha.

Married for 53 years to her dear husband, Don, Brenda had been widowed since March 2022. "First Choice is a family. Since my husband's passing, the staff and fellow volunteers have surrounded me with love and care." Thank you, Brenda, for your faithful service to the clients of First Choice for Women.



We love and appreciate you!

# Shannon Bryan

## FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE ADMINISTRATOR



We are so excited to see the Fatherhood Initiative steadily growing! We served 26 men in the 2021 launch year, made a significant jump to 129 in the second year, and we are currently on pace to surpass that number as we end this year.

A new offering that is drawing men to our program is the online Dr. Dad course and its related CONNECT workshop. We have had three workshops this year, and each has seen an increase in men and their partners participating. These workshops are intended to strengthen parental partnership, create community with other expectant couples, and connect couples to local churches. The most recent CONNECT, held at New Life Presbyterian Church in Yorktown, had the additional bonus of having members

of its Making Life Disciples, Sunday school class present to share the evening with our clients. Our client couples and church couples enjoyed a great meal together, played games, and had warm and lively conversation. At the end of the evening one couple, who was visibly nervous when they walked in, said that they were so very glad they had come, even though they were initially hesitant. A couple that regularly attends Parent Care in Anderson was asked about the evening, and she said, "I was so happy to see the look of accomplishment on the face of my partner when he received his Dr. Dad grad certificate. It's so nice to see him and the other men recognized for wanting to learn more about being a good dad." These are the moments that sustain us in our work.

So what is Making Life Disciples, and how does it fit into the Fatherhood Initiative and First Choice? MLD is a way to equip the local church to be "first responders" and to offer compassion, hope and help to men and women facing unexpected pregnancies. It also creates a non-political way to increase the life-affirming knowledge of your church. There are currently two churches in our area working through this course. Would you be interested in becoming part of that number? Have a conversation with your leadership and connect them with us!

# Seeking the Truth

MICHAEL DEUTSCH, BOARD CHAIR



I had so many thoughts as I was considering what I was going to write. There was a recurring thought about something Jesus said in John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me, and I in you, you will bear much fruit, apart from me, you can do nothing."

That verse is so true for all of life. The world would lead us to think we can do all things on our own and be connected to nobody. But Jesus reminds us that, in all we do, we must be connected to Him if we want to bear good fruit. We are called to be holy, just as He is holy. But we cannot do that unless we are connected to the vine. He is our life source.

It's the same with First Choice for Women. We can do nothing without the power of Jesus. We must be connected to Jesus and embrace the power of the Holy Spirit. When we hear the transformational stories of men and women who have had their lives impacted in the name of Jesus, we know the power of the Spirit of God has been at work in their lives. How cool is that?

As we move towards the end of the year, we would ask you to consider joining or continuing in the mission and vision of First Choice for Women, as we make a difference in so many lives.

Have a great Thanksgiving and Christmas!  
Rev. Dr. Michael Deutsch  
Chairman of the Board



# Healing the Little Girl

MELISSA SMITH

I was given the privilege of spending time in the White Mountains of Arizona at a Psalms 51 Ministries retreat. Psalms 51 Ministries seeks to equip women who have experienced healing from life's traumas and found wholeness in Christ. Through this retreat, I came alongside other Christian women to walk through this process. I took the journey toward healing and wholeness and then was equipped to extend this to clients and other Christian sisters. This experience has provided First Choice for Women the opportunity to offer a deeper level of hope and healing through the Psalm 51 curriculum.



We want to provide tangible items for our clients, but also the tools they need to work on healing any past traumas. This, in turn, will lower our infant mortality rates and increase their children's readiness for early education. Healed women in homes equals safe and healthy children.

The bottom line is that our culture is broken. One in three women has been molested as a child. One in five has had an abortion. Domestic violence cannot be accurately measured because so many suffer in silence. Many women and children have suffered great damage even without physical abuse because of on-going emotional and verbal abuse.

Many women look to God for answers to their pain. But sometimes, even if they find a church, they sit in the pews week after week, broken, wounded and hurting, still having nowhere to go with their pain. Then there are the women that haven't looked to God yet. Where are they finding their answers to their pain? First Choice for Women wants to help. While we are teaching lessons on "toddler tantrums", we can also be walking beside the mother, teaching her to finally surrender her past trauma to a loving God. Think of the freedom clients are, can, and will be able to experience.

It's time to help our clients remove the mask and ensure that they no longer suffer in silence. With Psalm 51 Ministries providing "Giving God Your Worst" and "Breaking Shackles of Shame" curriculum, women will find healing.

If you want more information on using this material in your organization or church, email [info@firstchoiceforwomen.org](mailto:info@firstchoiceforwomen.org).

# Expect the Blessing

LESLIE HATCHER



“First Choice for Women seeks to achieve a community in which every individual is respected and every child is wanted, cared for and nurtured.” We endeavor to fulfill this Vision Statement daily through our compassionate, free services such as pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, material assistance and parent education for both mothers and fathers. Our focus at First Choice for Women will always be to serve new parents throughout the pre- and post- natal period, but we are in a unique position to serve these families through the toddler years as well, and build upon the relationship that began during pregnancy. For example, many parents of toddlers do not have the tools to ensure that their child is ready to succeed in school.

We see toddlers on a daily basis, but have never offered any milestone/school readiness assistance! Thanks to generosity of the George and Francis Ball Foundation and the support of community partners such as BY5, Chances and Services for Youth and TRC Head Start, we developed the Toddler Milestones Program. We view this as a tremendous opportunity to address a community-wide goal while simultaneously serving our client families in a holistic way.

With our Toddler Milestones Program, we aim to guide parents and guardians through research-based milestone pathways for each toddlerhood stage. Our 15-lesson program will take one, two, or three-year-old children through play-based learning directed at achieving specific communicative, social emotional, motor, sensory, and executive function milestones. Each child earns small toys, books, and activities along the way that build milestone skills through practice and play—all while earning Baby Bucks to shop for necessities in our ParentCare store.

This program will also allow First Choice volunteers and staff to deepen relationships with clients. Only through genuine connection will opportunities arise to share the hope found in the ultimate parent, God the Father.

If you are interested in joining us in our vision to achieve a community where every child is wanted, cared for and nurtured, please email us at [info@firstchoiceforwomen.org](mailto:info@firstchoiceforwomen.org).



# Bessie Smith, RN

NURSE MANAGER



How to begin this story...*For everything there is a season—each one reach one*—who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Each of these quotes could be a beautiful lead-in to the story of a recent client encounter at First Choice for Women. What a privilege it is to be the hands of Jesus, reaching out to the individuals who come through our doors for help with life's sometimes difficult and unplanned circumstances.

Emily,\* a 44 year-old international graduate student, came in for a pregnancy test and stated she was "undecided" about what to do with her pregnancy. She was considering abortion because she felt she was "too old" to have a baby. After conversing with Emily about herself, her background, family, education, and faith, we had built some rapport and trust. With her permission, we discussed her pregnancy options: parenting, adoption, and abortion.

Emily stated that she was a Christian, and that, if she had an abortion, she felt it would be "hard to pray." By the end of our visit, she was definitely leaning toward parenting and was asking about pregnancy resources, which I gladly provided. Emily allowed me to pray for her and expressed genuine appreciation that I would do so. A few days later, at her ultrasound appointment, she told the sonographer and me that her plan was to carry and parent her baby! On her exit questionnaire, her prayer request was for a "healthy pregnancy." Wow! What a change...from undecided/considering abortion to carrying/parenting and asking prayer for a healthy pregnancy!

Emily's story is one of many examples of how FCW is helping clients with tough decisions by coming along beside them in difficult circumstances and making a difference in their lives. Thank you for partnering with us through your prayers, material donations, and financial support to serve others and show them Christ's love! I think you may agree that appropriate quotes to end this story are *Where shall I the praise of Christ begin and To God be the glory, great things He has done!*

*(Shared with permission; \*name changed to protect privacy)*

# Backpacks for Newborns

To wrap up our church spotlight for the year, we chose to share something special that happens within the church members but outside the church walls.

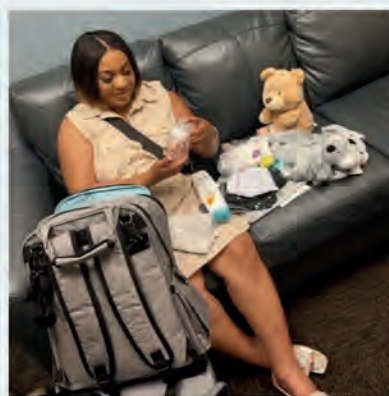
It is a wonderful blessing when a member of the body of Christ senses a need and then responds, "Here I am, Lord." At First Choice, we have seen this lead to beautiful outcomes. One example is the ministry of Jeff and Bev Salmon.

"I felt God leading me to help young mothers," notes Bev. "Then I had the idea to provide expecting mothers with some brand-new items as they get close to their due date. Every mom wants some beautiful, new items for their baby." This led Bev to speak to the staff at First Choice for Women for guidance. Together, we determined that a diaper bag backpack full of newborn items would be a wonderful blessing for expectant moms at First Choice. The project began with Bev and her dear friend, Carol Unger, who went to be with the Lord two years ago. "We always prayed over the bags, asking God that the right momma would get the right bag."

Now this ministry is a family project for the Salmons. Son David, niece Bethany Williams and some members of their church (Trinity Baptist) all contribute items for the backpack. They include a receiving blanket, three new outfits, socks, bottles, baby bath towel, bibs, a stuffed animal, and a rattle toy. These are all packed into a new backpack diaper bag along with a Bible, spiritual tract, a personal note and a beautiful scripture quilt, made by Willa Behm of Grace Baptist Church, Muncie and her sweet friend Ina Neal.

"Our family has been so blessed," added Bev. "God has always provided what we need, including items for this ministry. It is a huge blessing to be a part of something God is doing. Knowing how much the girls appreciate the bags warms my heart."

One of the recipients, Samantha, cried when she received the bag from her client advocate. She and her teenage daughter opened the backpack and removed all of the items, marveling at the cuteness of each. "This is my baby shower," she exclaimed. And we shared in her joy. Thank you, Salmon family, Willa Behm, and all those who contribute to these wonderful "blessing bags."



# How Your Donation Helps First Choice



**\$9** Average cost of a pregnancy test

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**\$110** Average cost of a car seat

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**\$100** Average cost of a bassinet or pack and play

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**\$215** Average cost of a crib and mattress

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**\$250** Average cost of an ultrasound

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**\$1,315** Average cost to save a life  
*(From initial engagement to on-site counseling & education)*

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**\$1,600** Average cost to serve one client for a year  
*(From pregnancy test to ongoing parent care)*

# Yes, I Want to Stand Together for Life

## We received a matching gift for our year-end appeal!

As the year comes to a close, **we are working to achieve our \$96,000 goal for #60clients-in-160days. So far, we have received \$62,000.** That means we have \$34,000 yet to raise.

Your donation to First Choice will now be matched, dollar for dollar, doubling the impact of your gift. This is HUGE. **Thanks to our matching challenge, your gift can be doubled, up to \$10,000!** Success in this effort will help us continue to save and change lives through the provision of free ultrasound exams, free baby items to new moms, and so much more. **Will you partner with us today?**

**Together, we can CHANGE so many lives. Please support our campaign for #60clients-in-160days.**

**Designation:**  Muncie  Anderson

**One-Time Gift**  **Recurring Monthly Donation**

\$15  \$25  \$50  \$100  \$250  \$500

\$1,000  \$2,500  \$5,000  \$10,000  \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Check Enclosed**  **Charge my credit card** (complete section below)

MasterCard  Visa

YES! I want to become a monthly giver. Go to [www.firstchoiceforwomen.org](http://www.firstchoiceforwomen.org), click the GIVE SOME HELP button then click on the DONATE menu OR Complete this form and mail it to:



**3020 N Oakwood Ave,  
Muncie, IN 47304**

Or

**6 W 8th St, Anderson,  
IN 46016**

Card# \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Three Digit CVV (on back of card) \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Charge me \$ \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of each month

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Choice is a 501 C 3 not-for-profit ministry; donations are tax deductible as permissible by law.

TIN #35-1695860

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# Interested in other ways to give?

## Client Needs

Size 5 and 6 Diapers • Baby Hygiene • Bottles Brushes • Wipes • Training Pull Ups all sizes

## Center Needs

Trash Bags • Puffs Kleenex • Paper Towels • Toilet Paper • Copy Paper • Lysol spray and wipes

## AMAZON SMILE IS NO MORE: SIGN UP FOR KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS

Amazon has ended the Amazon Smile program where Amazon would make a small donation to your designated charity with each Amazon purchase you made.



Amazon cited the reason for ending the program as "not having enough financial impact."

Kroger is one of the only entities left that makes a financial contribution to Life Centers, but you have to sign up. Once you link your Kroger Card to an organization, all you have to do is shop at Kroger and swipe your Shopper's Card. It costs you no additional money!

To designate First Choice for Women as your charity of choice in the Kroger Community Rewards Program visit the [website](#), set up an account and enter number below when it asks you to enter a "NPO#" (non profit organization). When shopping at Kroger and using your Kroger Plus Card, you can give to First Choice. This program allows Kroger Plus members to designate First Choice to receive a percentage of what they spend at Kroger.

First Choice nonprofit number: DW443 or UU404

## ESTATE GIFT (IN YOUR WILL)

The most popular way of providing long-term support for a meaningful charitable organization is to make a gift in a will. With some foresight, you can make a gift in your will that fulfills specific planning goals as an integral part of an estate plan.

## CHOOSE LIFE LICENSE PLATE

Ordering a Choose Life license plate is as easy as 1-2-3.



Visit <http://www.in.gov/bmv/2620.htm> to find the Choose Life plate. Select "Order or renew your plates online" and enter your information. Your new specialty plate will arrive in the mail within 14 days!

You can also get a Choose Life license plate at your local BMV. Every year your plate is registered, \$25 will go toward the pregnancy resource center in your county.

## MAKING A QCD

"Over age 70 ½, have Traditional IRAs, interested in potentially reducing your income taxes??? Please discuss with your CPA/tax preparer if using the Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) would be beneficial to you. Upon reaching age 73, account holders of Traditional Retirement Accounts (IRA, 403b, 401K, etc.) must take an annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from the account. The IRS permits the account holder to send the RMD (or more up to \$100,000) directly from the Traditional IRA only, to a 501(c)(3) as a QCD and therefore not have to include the withdrawal as taxable income. With the 2018 tax law changes that increase the Standard Deduction, many people will no longer itemize and therefore get no tax benefit from making charitable contributions. Utilizing the QCD allows people to continue to make contributions and eliminate those gifts from taxable income. Please discuss this strategy with your CPA/tax preparer if you are over age 70 ½, have Traditional IRAs, and are interested in reducing your income taxes."

# Thank you to our sponsors!



Karen Haller, Pam Wanger, Don & Bessie Smith, Rick Morris, Dee Moore, Jeff Long, Katy Maggart, Phil & Linda Gibson, Michelle Houk, Christa Lewis, Ryan and Ashley Hunter, Reed Levitz, Judi Calhoun, Melissa Smith, Gary and Debbie Vaughn, Will DuBois, Dave & Jen Brand, Chris Andrew, David and Cathy Grollimund, Peggy Anderson, Alexandria First Baptist, Legacy Life Security, Union Chapel Tuesday Morning Ladies, Muncie First Brethren, University Christian Church, Holly McCollum, Kingston Ave Baptist Church, Swift & Associates, Brooklawn Services, East Side Church, CommUNITY Church, DCRWC, Peacock Fams, Whiting & Company LLC, DW&A, HoneyBee Boutique, Renewed Designs, Carol and Robert Gouker, Margaret Niccum, Aaron & Liz Gardner





# Upcoming Events

## Baby Bottle Fundraiser

Choose the date that works best for your church or business!

Schedule a guest speaker, information booth, baby bottles, baby showers for your church, Bible Study group or Business today!

Contact Kailee at

[kailee@firstchoiceforwomen.org](mailto:kailee@firstchoiceforwomen.org)

## Volunteer Appreciation Week

April 14th – 20th

## Walk for Life

Saturday, May 18th 2024

## Annual Fundraising Gala

October 2024



3020 N Oakwood Ave  
Muncie, IN 47304

6 W 8th Street  
Anderson, IN 46016

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