

MEDIA CONTACT

John Farmer de la Torre
Director of Communications
mobile: 417.425.2587

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Catholic Charities of Southern Missouri LifeHouse Crisis Maternity Home & AfterCare Program to Celebrate Seven Years of Service to Vulnerable Pregnant Mothers and Babies on December 27th

(Springfield, Mo.) – LifeHouse Crisis Maternity Home, a program of Catholic Charities of Southern Missouri, Inc. (CCSOMO), **is celebrating its seventh anniversary this Sunday, December 27th.**

Opened on the same date in 2013, on the site of a former Roman Catholic Carmelite order nunnery, LifeHouse Crisis Maternity Home is a 24/7 transitional care facility and program serving homeless pregnant women and their newborn infants and toddler children. Mothers receive, during their pregnancy and for one year after the birth of their child, a wide range of housing, comprehensive case management, medical, counseling, educational, and self-improvement services. The program is designed to support the birth of healthy babies and assist their mothers as they work toward achieving self-sufficiency. LifeHouse provides some assistance to fathers who have committed to being in their child's life. LifeHouse's AfterCare program provides an additional two years of support and case management to former residents as they transition into work, school, and independent living. LifeHouse earned accreditation in 2019 from the Council on Accreditation.

To date, LifeHouse has been home to 151 women since opening and to their 28 children born prior to moving in. After their move in, LifeHouse residents have given birth to 96 babies including three sets of twins. Twelve healthy babies have been born since the current coronavirus pandemic was declared a national emergency on March 13, 2020.

Director of LifeHouse Michele Marsh has led the crisis maternity home since October 1, 2014. She describes the work of serving LifeHouse's residents: "I live and work in the midst of women who despite their pain and suffering and against all odds have decided that their lives are a sacred gift to themselves and others. They are radiant with purpose. These pregnant homeless women come to us without trust and little or no self-esteem. They have trauma-filled histories of generational poverty, addictions, domestic violence, trafficking, rape, and poor physical and mental health from years of little access to care." As Marsh is currently transitioning into her new role at CCSOMO as Director of Special Projects, she reflects on her LifeHouse tenure: "This is not the easiest place to work and the early years were especially difficult at times. Even so, I can honestly say that no matter what challenges we have faced, I have always trusted in the purpose and value of LifeHouse. My heart is filled with gratitude for all of the lives that have been impacted dramatically."

Cindi Kopel was hired on September 28, 2020 as the new Director of LifeHouse. "My hopes for the coming years are to continue the amazing traditions, support systems and leadership that is already established here. There is an amazing team of people, both staff and volunteers, who work each day to help those in need."

LifeHouse is funded by a variety of grants and private donations. Its largest annual fundraiser is CCSOMO's annual Dinner for Life, typically held in September. LifeHouse has throughout its existence yielded a significant economic impact to the community. For example, an average-length one-month stay in a neo-natal intensive care unit is \$100,000 per baby. Through services and education provided by staff at LifeHouse, most of those health care dollars are saved. Residents are in constant need of donations including baby items, hygiene products, or monetary gifts. Anyone interested in donating or volunteering is encouraged to contact CCSOMO at 417.720.4213. Interested persons can learn more at www.ccsomo.org.

Catholic Charities of Southern Missouri is a faith-based 501(c)(3) agency whose mission is to provide quality, compassionate social services that meet local needs. CCSOMO provides a wide variety of programs throughout the 39 southernmost counties of Missouri. CCSOMO serves people of all faiths.