



St. Mary's
Services

ANNUAL REPORT FY 17-18

A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Who We Are

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In This Report

Our Mission and Vision

Letter from Our Executive Director

What We Do

- Maternity Counseling Program
- Adoption Program
- Teen Parenting Program

Financials

Impact

How You Can Help

Who We Are



Mission

St. Mary's Services builds stable families that result in stronger communities. We open our hearts and arms to everyone, treating all with the dignity and respect they deserve. We ensure the well-being of children by providing holistic support for the adoption journey both pre- and post-placement; delivering teen parenting programs; and offering counseling services for any parent experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, postpartum depression, grief over the loss of a pregnancy, and/or difficulty in adjustment to parenthood.

Vision

Every Child Deserves a Good Home.



Joanne Bratta | Executive Director

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce you to the world of St. Mary's. St. Mary's was founded in 1887 by the Episcopal Sisters of St. Mary, where they assessed the community for its needs and based services on their findings. We have had many transitions in service, but all of them surrounded the help that both women and children have proved to be essential to their well-being. Since the 1950's, St. Mary's concerned itself with Adoptions which we carry on to this day with grace, experience, and compassion.

Today, we have added services, one of them named "Hopeful Beginnings Teen Parenting Program" which meets our vision in that our education and counseling in this program meets the definition of our ongoing vision, "Every Child Deserves a Good Home." It also opens the possibility to adoption, in that these young women desperately need options counseling and if they participate in the program, will become great mothers. Since the partnership with District 214 began, our Teen Mothers have since graduated from High School or progressed onto the next grade 100%.

Our longtime partner had to close its doors in October of 2017, and St. Mary's stepped up to the plate and offered free and confidential counseling for postpartum depression, grief and loss over a pregnancy, and adjustment to motherhood. We also have a baby closet run by a group of volunteers. All of these services are free and provided by social workers. The understanding is if the mother is well and prepared for her role with joy and a spirit of excitement, the child will be in a good home.

However, in many cases, we are realizing through research and education, that there are barriers to this type of feeling after delivering a baby or a previous loss of a pregnancy can impact a new baby. This interferes with the health and well-being of the baby. Therefore, we are providing these services free to our communities.

Oftentimes, these services are not covered by traditional insurances. We feel it is a calling and meets our mission statement.

We thank our community, our volunteers, our donors, our incredible staff, and you! Together, we can make a difference in the lives of women and children. Please feel free to call us if you have ideas or know someone who needs us!

Sincerely,

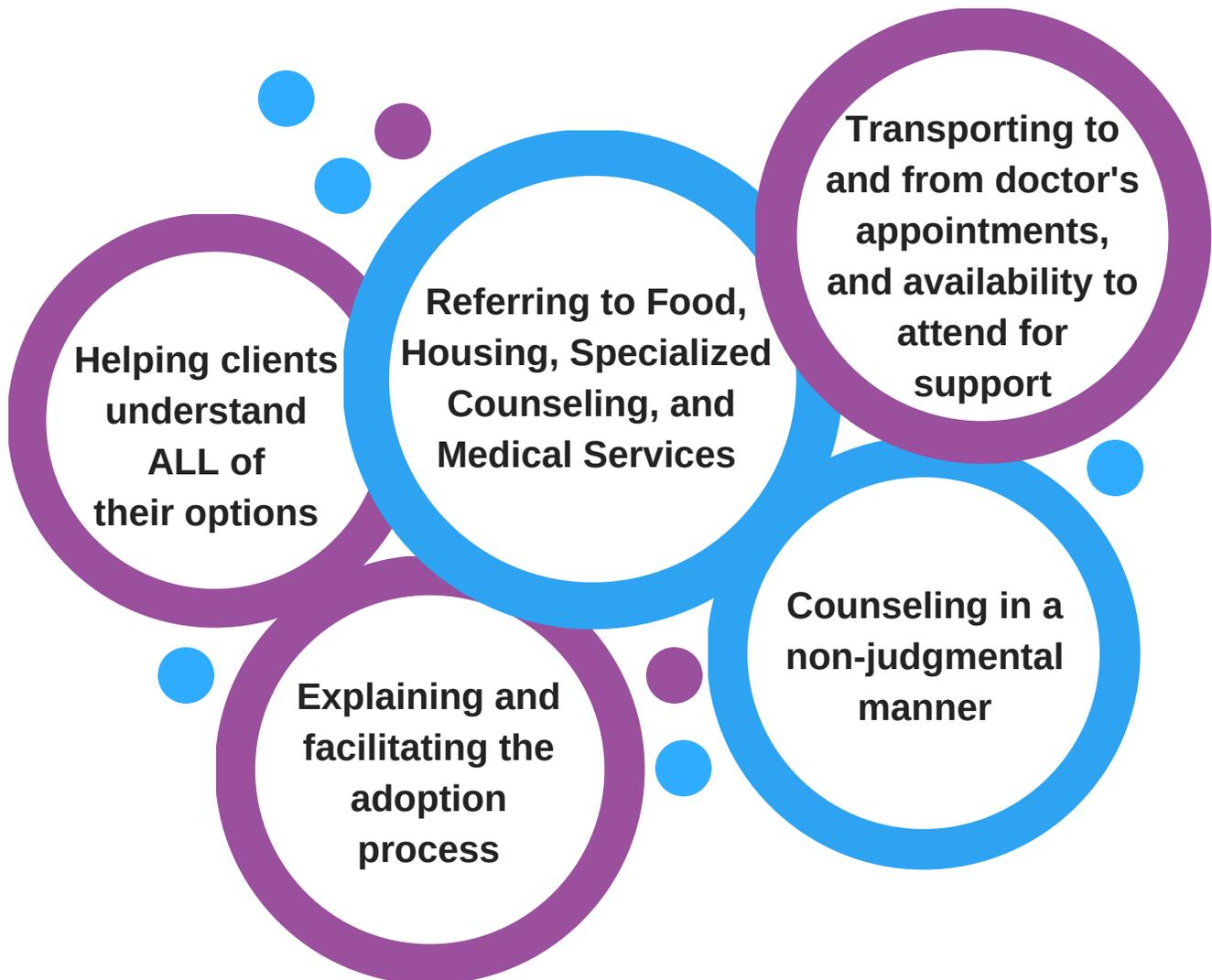
Joanne Bratta
Joanne Bratta

Executive Director

What We Do

Maternity Counseling Program

St. Mary's services' professional counselors serve many women facing unplanned pregnancies by providing confidential support and offering many resources to help guide them through their pregnancy journeys and equipping them to make the best decision for themselves and their babies. St. Mary's also provides extensive post-placement counseling for our maternity clients; we remain as a support system for many years.



A Brighter Future

Melanie's Story



Melanie discovered she was pregnant late into her 3rd trimester. After discussing her options with her parents, she made the brave decision to consider adoption for her unborn child. Melanie had goals she still wanted to accomplish in life and did not feel she was ready to raise a child. She also wanted her child to grow up in a stable, two parent household and felt adoption was the best option. After reaching out to a local adoption agency and not getting a call back, Melanie and her family felt concerned, anxious and a variety of other emotions as delivery was coming closer as each day passed. Their second call was to St. Mary's Services where they were able to speak with a social worker immediately. The social worker provided comfort during that emotional initial phone call. An appointment was scheduled shortly after the call as Melanie and her family were eager to learn more about adoption and her rights. Over the next month, Melanie, her family and her St. Mary's Services counselor met frequently. Tears were shed and excitement surrounding the future was discussed during each visit. Above all else, Melanie was empowered to make the decision she felt was best for both herself and her child.

After a healthy delivery, Melanie invited her counselor to the hospital and was excited to care for her son for a few days before her hospital discharge. The day Melanie was released from the hospital was an emotional one but she pushed through and reminded herself of the selfless sacrifice she was making to ensure her son would get all that he deserved in life.

Melanie and her family opened up about their appreciation regarding the care they received through St. Mary's Services during such a challenging time in their lives. Melanie continues to have an open relationship with the adoptive parents she selected to raise her child and they communicate frequently. Melanie is happy to see her child grow and thrive and is looking forward to all that is to come in both of their futures! She feels thankful that St. Mary's was a strong source of support for her and that they connected her with a loving and stable family who love her son to the ends of the earth.

What We Do

St. Mary's Services' Adoption Program

St. Mary's Services' Adoption Program has served couples and singles for many years, assisting them in creating families through adoption. To these candidates, we offer counseling, support, education, home visits, workshops, ongoing communication with birth parents, and post-placement support. If any of our adoptive family candidate's welcome a child 1-3 years of age into their homes, even greater support, care, and instruction is given in order that the adoptive family provides a nurturing, healthy environment for the child. The overarching goal is to provide good homes for the children in all situations.



These ten families welcomed children into their loving homes in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

Because She Was Loved...

Sal & Patty's Adoption Story



From the moment we began talking about getting married; having a family together was always a part of the conversation. We tried in vain to grow our family in the years following our marriage, but it appeared it was not in the cards. By the end of 2016, we quickly changed our focus and began the search for a local adoption agency. We quickly agreed that St. Mary's checked all of the boxes for us. Local...check. Not too large...check. Been around for a long time...check. All of that was determined before we even spoke to anyone with St. Mary's. After our first meeting, our initial assumptions were only reinforced. We were exactly where we were supposed to be.

Over the next year, we were guided through the process by our social worker (Jennifer). We went to as many seminars as we could that were sponsored by St. Mary's, we completed our adoption book that would be presented to birth mothers, and completed our home study. After that, the most difficult part of the adoption process began...THE WAIT. We made the conscious decision to not be notified every time we were presented to a birth mother. The adoption journey is enough of an emotional roller coaster without adding to it. We went on with our life knowing we were waiting, but not discussing it too often or taking much action regarding the adoption. Everything changed on March 22, 2018.

Late that morning, Jennifer called us to tell us about a little girl that was born on March 18th. The young mother (Jackie), while an addict, still was able to make the selfless decision to place her daughter up for adoption. Jennifer explained all the baby was exposed to (Jackie had been very forthright) and asked if we were still willing to be presented. With almost no hesitation, we confirmed we wanted Jackie to consider us. Just a few hours later, we received the call that we had been waiting for. Jackie picked us. After waiting for almost a year, we received a call one day, and were sitting on our couch the next afternoon with our daughter Alex. To describe those 24 hours as surreal does not do any justice. This may have been the end of one portion of the story; but our journey was truly just beginning.

When we started down the path of adoption, the most unsettling part for us was the idea of open adoption. Discussing it in the abstract did nothing to help us overcome our preconceived notion of what this meant. When you do not have a child, it is impossible to look at the concept of open adoption through any lens but your own, and that perspective is generally jaded by your own insecurities. Bringing our daughter home immediately changed our perspective and thought process. Jackie will always be the mother who brought Alex into the world and Jackie's family and history are an integral part of Alex's story. Who are we to rob her of whom she is and where she comes from?

Because She Was Loved...

Sal & Patty's Adoption Story Continued



After a few weeks of getting settled into our new life with Alex, we wrote Jackie our first letter. We filled her in with some of Alex's firsts over the last month. We again expressed our admiration for her selfless decision, and gratitude for choosing us. We also made it very clear that Alex would know who Jackie was and that she was placed for adoption BECAUSE she was loved. We explained to Jackie that Alex would know who Jackie was because she was a part of her story, but it was up to Jackie if she wanted to continue to be a part of her story. It was all predicated on fighting her addictions. During that first month, we were told that on multiple occasions Jackie expressed an unwavering belief that she made the right decision and would state she was grateful Alex was in a home where she would be loved and given the opportunity to thrive. Sadly, Jackie's addictions and other previously untreated health issues proved too challenging for her to overcome. Jackie passed away on April 30th at the age of 21.

For the next few months, we continued to settle into our new normal. We provided numerous updates and pictures to St. Mary's and were aware that many of these pictures and updates were being shared with Jackie's mother and grandfather (Tina & John). In June, Tina asked if we would be willing to meet them. Of course the answer was yes. The first meeting was very emotional for any number of reasons. Both Jennifer and Allyson were there to help navigate the beginning of this new relationship. Over the next few months, we met once a month under the direct supervision of St. Mary's. Not because we had to, but because with the level of emotions we were all feeling, we felt it was necessary to have someone there we all trusted to protect us from ourselves. With each visit, there was an increased level of comfort we all felt being around each other.

The next big milestone was we invited Tina and John to Alex's baptism in October. While it proved to be a very emotional time for both of them, being a part of Alex's special day and seeing the number of people that were there to love and support Alex brought them great joy and comfort. After that, we all were comfortable continuing our monthly meetings in a more informal manner without the supervision St. Mary's provided. We exchanged phone numbers, began texting directly, and had our next few meetings at the local McDonald's. As Alex became more mobile, we transitioned to meeting at the local library because it had a large play area for children. Next up is Alex's 1st birthday. For the first time, Tina and John will be coming to Alex's house to help her celebrate her birthday with her crazy, loving family...which they are a part of.

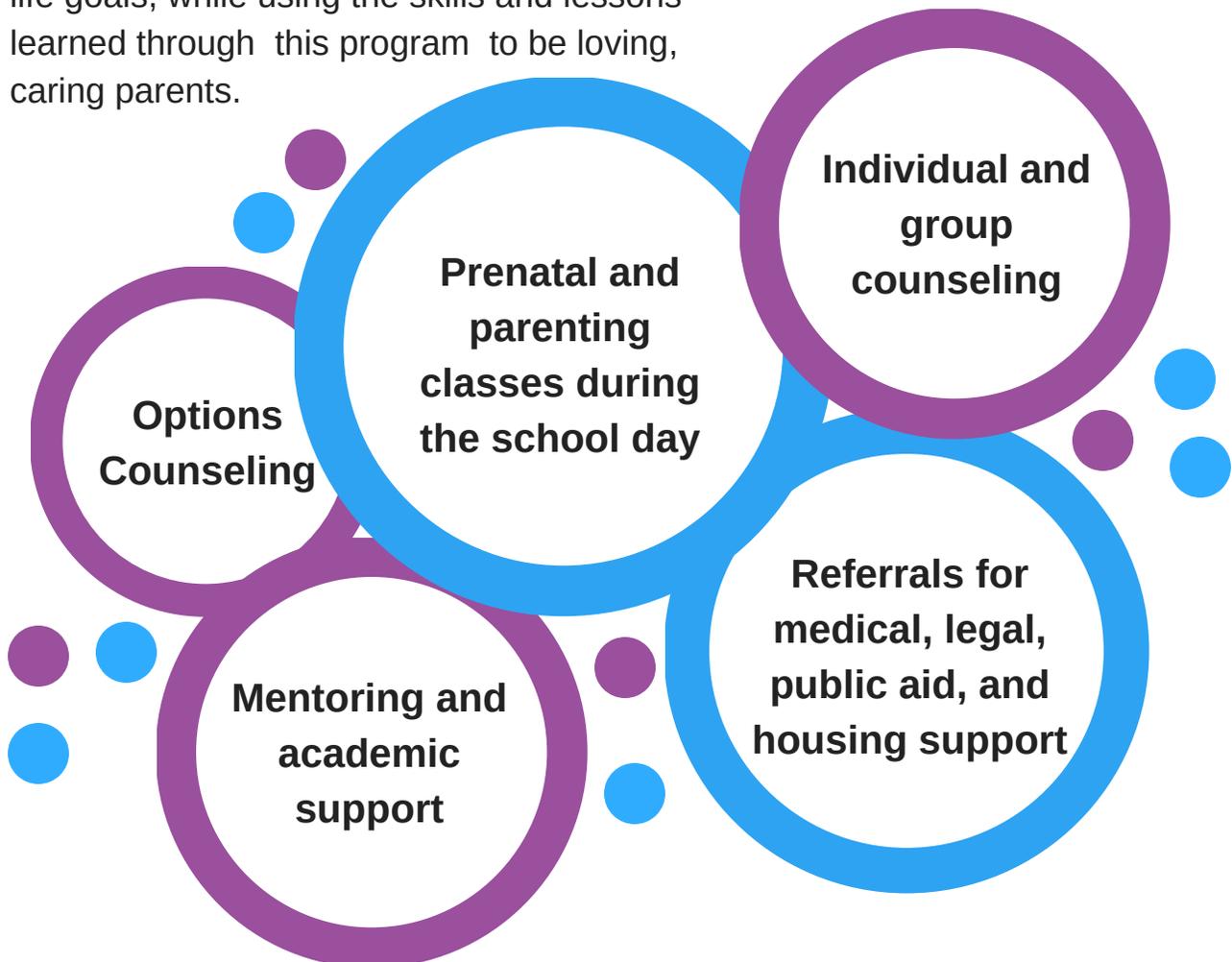
What We Do

Teen Parenting Program

In collaboration and partnership with Township High School District 214, which is comprised of six high schools and three alternative schools, St. Mary's Services' Hopeful Beginnings Teen Parenting Program offers a variety of support to teen girls who are pregnant or already parenting.

Our vision is for these students to graduate high school, and continue to pursue their life goals, while using the skills and lessons learned through this program to be loving, caring parents.

"The teen pregnancy class helped me so much with making me feel like I'm not alone & I'm not the only person going through this tough transition in life. I've learned so much that I didn't even know could happen. I wish I could have been in the class longer & that everyone in my position has a chance like me with being in the same class & meeting the people who I've met in this journey." - Lesley



Financial Position

Fiscal year ending June 30, 2018

Revenue

	FY2018	FY2017
Public Support	\$224,430	\$174,397
Program Revenue	\$279,254	\$265,222
Investment Income	\$274,229	\$417,090
*Change in Value of Perpetual Trusts	\$ 82,537	\$150,403
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,726	\$ -0-
Total Revenue	\$862,176	\$1,007,112

Expenses

Program Expenses	\$446,483	\$504,983
Administrative and Occupancy	\$161,552	\$150,525
Fundraising	\$176,483	\$137,384
Total Expenses	\$784,518	\$792,892

**Net Assets

	\$ 77,658	\$ 214,220
**Beginning of Year	\$5,950,780	\$5,736,560
**End of Year	\$6,028,438	\$5,950,780

**Donor restricted funds*

***includes Donor restricted funds*

Impact

With help from people like you, St. Mary's Services supported hundreds of clients during the 2017-18 fiscal year.



97 Expectant Women

St. Mary's Services responded to 97 clients who inquired about our maternity counseling services and provided over 507 hours of direct counseling and support to 55 clients.

Over \$7,900 was spent in order to aid these women in necessary living expenses (rent, utility, grocery, etc.) and over \$6,000 in medical services.

Helped Build 10 Families

St. Mary's Services welcomed 9 new families into our adoption programs, which made a total of 44 families that we counseled and supported throughout the many stages of the adoption process. We are proud that this support culminated in ten adoption placements and eight interstate placements.



43 Pregnant or Parenting Teens

We served 43 clients from intake through counseling and education, which resulted in 362 counseling hours. One hundred percent of our participating teens graduated from high school or promoted to the next grade level.

How You Can Help

Donate As a non-profit organization, we rely heavily on the community for resources to fund our programs and help us provide necessities for clients. Donations enable us to continue to provide free counseling services, education, and assistance to our maternity clients.

You can also donate via our Amazon Wish List; or when you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to St. Mary's Services. Gift Cards are also a great way to donate.

The biggest impact you can make is through a monetary donation. Another way you can contribute is by learning more about what we do, or by attending our fundraising events.

Refer As a smaller agency, St. Mary's always benefits from conversation about our services and our passion for those who are in need. Refer St. Mary's Services to women in your life that are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy or are suffering from a perinatal mood disorder or feeling unprepared for motherhood.

Promote "Like" us on Facebook and "Follow" us on Twitter and Instagram!

Educate Talk with your local schools about the benefits of implementing the Hopeful Beginnings program for their students and the teens in your neighborhood. Share our expansive pregnancy-related counseling services to women in your life.



stmaryservices.com

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St. Mary's Services is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services #040234-15

St. Mary's Services is affiliated with Episcopal Charities and Community Services

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