



Hopeful
Beginnings

of St. Mary's Services

ANNUAL REPORT FY 19-20

A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS



847-870-8181



hopefulbeginning.org



510 N. Plum Grove Road

Palatine



information@hopefulbeginning.org

Who We Are

Board of Trustees

President

Jill Harris

Vice President

Bob Dickey

Treasurer

Brett Locascio

Secretary

Rev. Gary Cox

Trustees

Laura Aird

Rich Casey

Nancy Cowden

Christine Kelly

Mike Mulligan

Barbara Slotten

Staff

Executive Director

Joanne Bratta, *RN, BSN, MS*

Clinical Team

Allyson Stefani, *MSW, LSW*
Maternity/Adoption Counselor

Julia Alfano, *MSW*
Maternity/Adoption Counselor

Daesy Ruiz, *MSW*
Bilingual Maternity Counselor

Olivia Espinosa, *MSW, LCSW*
Teen Parenting / Outreach Coordinator

Angie Dickey, *MSW*
Teen Parenting Counselor

Fundraising/Administrative Team

Jennifer Valentine, *JD*
Grant Writer

Susan McKenna
Event Planner & Marketing/Advertising Specialist

Gina Badagliacca
Special Events Assistant

Cathy Paglia
Administration Manager



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

Creating stable families through adoption.

Supporting women through the challenges of pregnancy & parenting.

Building communities through counseling and education.

Vision

Every Child Deserves a Good Home.



Joanne Bratta | Executive Director

I am honored to provide you with a bird's eye view of Hopeful Beginnings of St. Mary's. We were founded in 1887 in Chicago by the Episcopalians Sisters of St. Mary's to meet the community's needs. A careful assessment by our predecessors was made to uncover the gap in services in the area. Because of this forward thinking, we have had many transitions in services over the years, but all of them point to child welfare and women. Since the 1950's, St. Mary's was an adoption agency, which we carry on to this day with grace, experience, and compassion.

We seek to follow the footsteps of the Episcopal nuns in making certain that we are conducting focus needs with community members to identify critical needs. We are an ethical child welfare agency providing both birth mothers and adoptive families counseling services for as long as it takes. We build and foster relationships through all of our counseling and educational programs, which include; adoption, options, prenatal/postpartum anxiety, depression, pregnancy related grief and loss, adjustment to motherhood, and teen parenting. Women and teens that start working with us are all afraid of the unknown. Our agency offers hope in the midst of darkness. By empowering them, they can begin their lives again with hope and change. We try and provide a meaningful relationship with each client that we touch. By educating, counseling, and mentoring the woman, not only does she heal, but there is a healing process for the children to. The teen parenting program has the teen mom finish her high school education, while learning how to be the best mother she can be! There will be "hopeful beginnings" even during the darkest hours for our clients.

All of our services for women are free of charge, no questions asked. Many of our clients do not have health insurance and if they do, counseling may or may not be covered. By offering our services free of charge, it ensures us that the healing can begin as soon as possible without barriers. Because of the pandemic, we have initiated virtual counseling. We can reach more women in our community and the Chicagoland and Illinois area without an issue of transportation. This is our calling and our reason for being. We thank our communities, our partner agencies, our donors, and our participants at our events, our incredible staff, and you! Together we can change the life of a child, one at a time! Please feel free to call us if you know anyone that needs us!

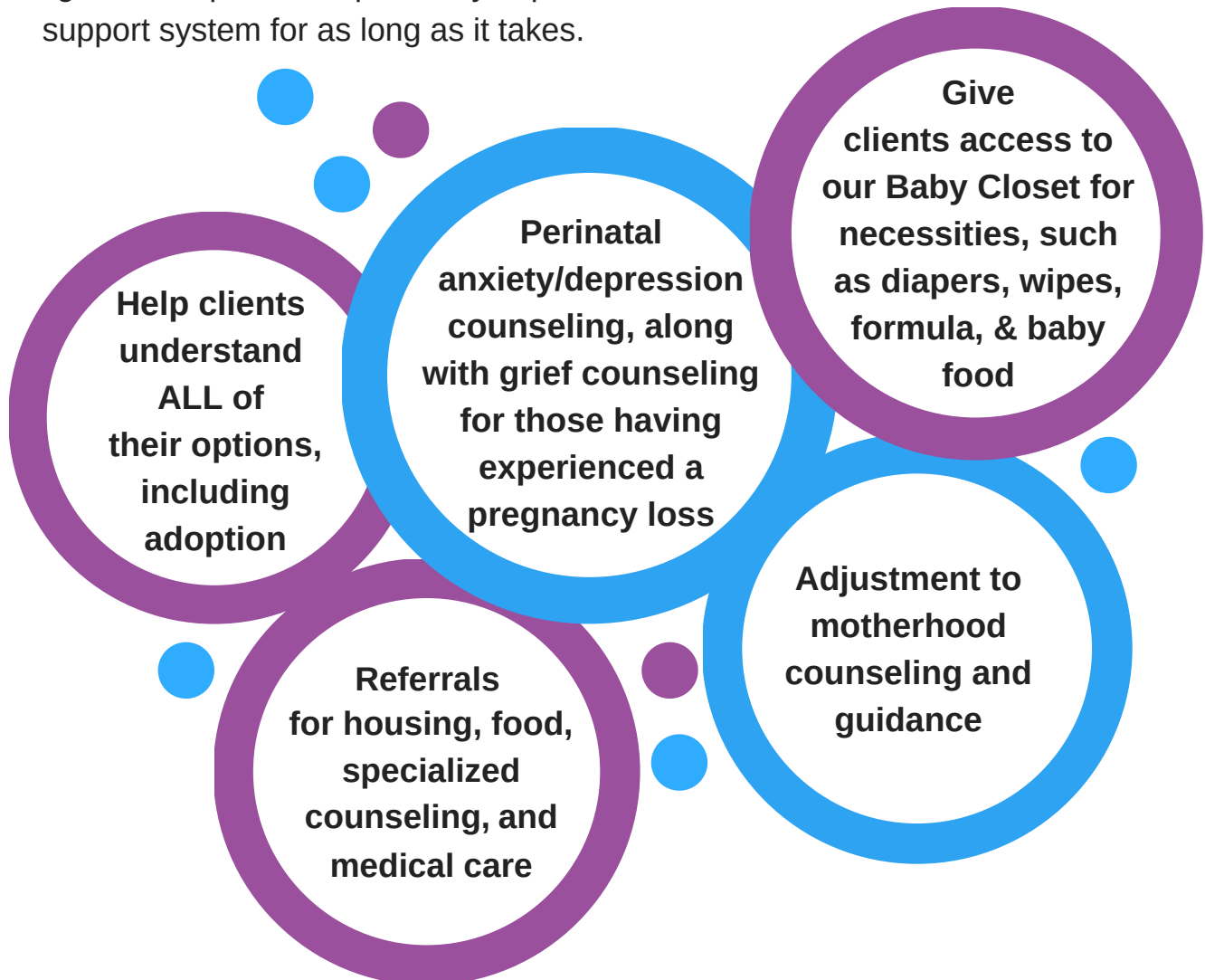
Sincerely,

Joanne Bratta
Executive Director

What We Do

Maternity Counseling Program

Hopeful Beginnings of St. Mary's professional counselors serve many women, whether they are facing an unplanned pregnancy, looking for options counseling, experiencing prenatal anxiety/depression, postpartum anxiety/depression, having trouble adjusting to motherhood, or dealing with a pregnancy related loss, we are there for them. With professional counseling, women are able to navigate their journey of darkness to one of light and hope, which positively impacts their children's lives. We remain a support system for as long as it takes.



What We Do

Hopeful Beginnings of St. Mary's Adoption Program

The Hopeful Beginnings of St. Mary's 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.



Two families
welcomed children into
their loving homes
during the
2019-2020 fiscal year



"Answered Prayers - Part I"

Sean & Ann's Adoption Story

Sean and I met each other later in life and while we were talking about getting married, we knew that we wanted to have children since we both come from large families. We also knew that being older it might not happen naturally for us. So, we also talked about the possibility of adoption. When we got married, we tried to conceive on our own and then with medical help. Many of our family and friends prayed for us to get pregnant, but it wasn't in the cards for us. Without hesitation we began to seek out adoption agencies. We prayed that we would be led to the right agency for us. Some that we spoke with felt like we were just a number, some never returned phone calls. Then we came upon St. Mary's, now Hopeful Beginnings. We made the call and immediately in speaking with the social worker felt at ease, so we set up an appointment. We made the hour-long drive not knowing what to expect or really what questions were the right ones to ask. We were a jumble of nerves. We were warmly greeted by Allyson (who would later become our social worker) and shown into a private room to discuss what the process looked like and what to expect if we chose to work with Hopeful Beginnings. She answered the questions that we had and many more that we didn't even think to ask. Sean and I left feeling reassured and like we had just left a friend instead of an agency. By the time we made it home, we knew this was the place for us.

We began our journey in the Spring of 2019. We attended the amazing seminars that were held at the agency, learned so much and met so many others who were on the same journey as us. With every conversation we had with Allison we felt more and more confident that we had made the right decision for us. We completed our home study in September of 2019 and the wait began. So many family and friends began to pray that we would be blessed with a child. We chose not to be notified when our profile book was shown because we felt the wait was hard enough without worrying about whether or not we would be chosen. Through this, Allyson would check in from time to time to see how things were going with us. Each time we were reminded that we weren't just another couple among others but rather a couple that was supported and cared about on this journey. While we waited, we prayed and others prayed too.



"Answered Prayers - Part II"

Sean & Ann's Adoption Story - *continued*



Then in February of 2020 Allyson called me on my way home from work. I didn't think much about it because she had been with us all along on this journey but this time was different. She wanted to talk to Sean and I together and asked if I would call her back when I made it home. Of course, the rest of my drive was a blur of questions running through my mind. What could she want? Did we forget to do something? Could it be? I think I made it home in record time. We called Allyson back the minute I got in the house and she told us there was a birth mom who had chosen us and filled us in on the details of the beautiful baby girl who had been born. Allyson also told us that the birth mom had wanted to bless a couple with their first child. Little did she know what an answer to our prayers her choice would be for us. I cannot tell you what a blessing our baby girl, Madison, has been to us and to our families. She is not only an answer to our prayers but to the prayers of family, friends, coworkers and come to find out, many others we've never even met.

To think that it all started with one phone call to Hopeful Beginnings answered by a kind, caring, understanding social worker named Allyson who ended up walking this journey with us. Even after our placement, Allyson and Julia continued to check in on us through our home visits. While we had to do these through Zoom and Facetime because of Covid 19, each time they shared in our joy and excitement as we filled them in on all the wonderful things happening with Madison. During this time, Allyson reached out to us through an email telling us about a couple we had met at one of the seminars. They had told her that they were interested in reconnecting with Sean and I and wondered if we'd be interested too. Allyson shared our email address with them and since then we have been able to Zoom with them and we've even been able to meet up in person with them and the baby boy that they adopted. We have so much in common and it's nice to have the friendship of another adoptive family. This wouldn't have been possible without the continued support we receive from Hopeful Beginnings. At our final home visit, Allyson made sure that we knew without a doubt that Hopeful Beginnings would always be there for us whether answering questions, sharing updates on Madison with her birth mom or giving us support as Madison grows and has questions. Along the way, God answered so many of our prayers and we will be forever thankful that one of the first ones was bringing us to Hopeful Beginnings.

What We Do

Teen Parenting Program

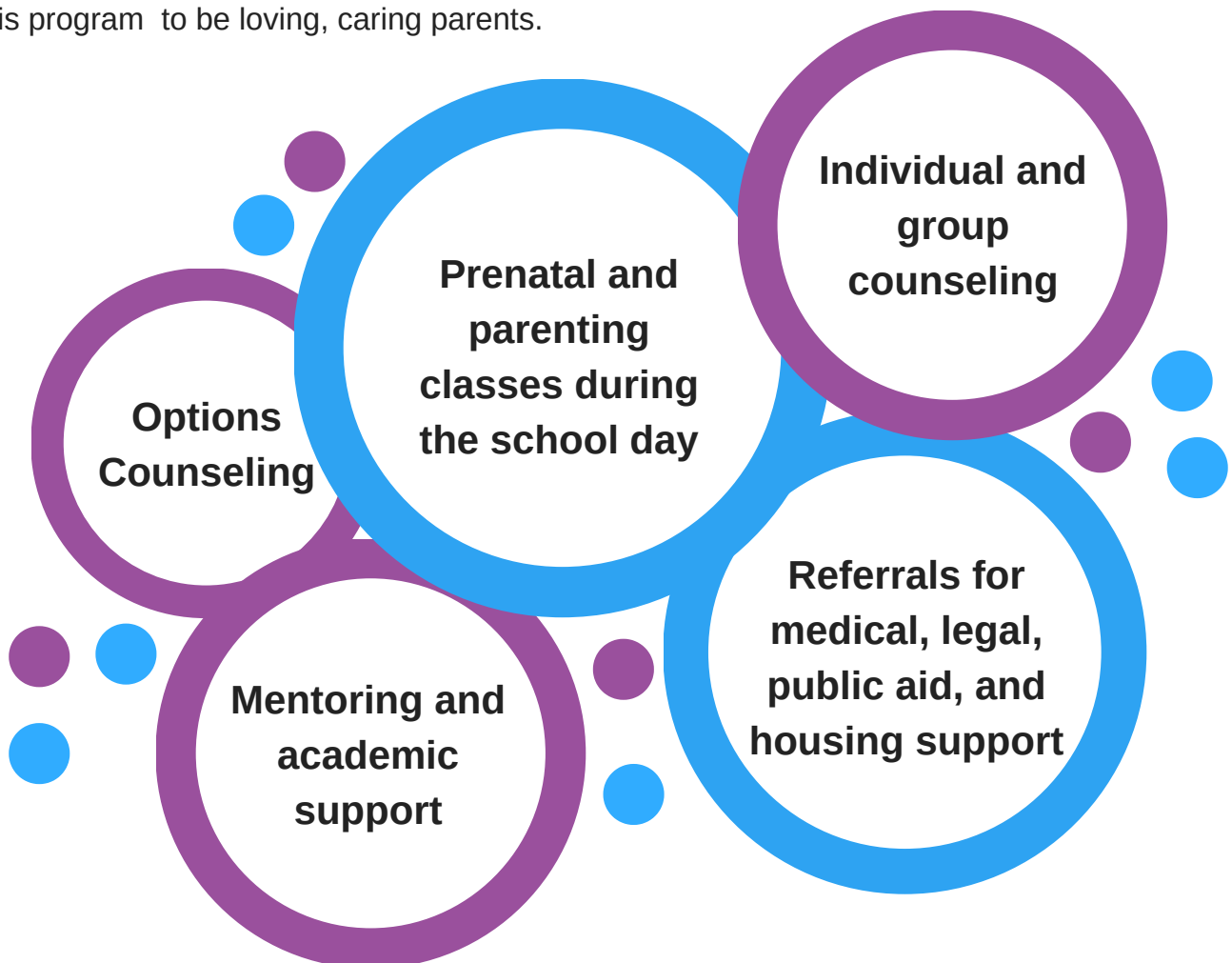
In collaboration and partnership with Township High School District 214, The Hopeful Beginnings Teen Parenting Program offers a variety of support to teen girls who are pregnant or already parenting. After graduating, each teen is eligible to receive a continuation of services, whether it be counseling, adjustment to motherhood, or case management, at our offices. We want to provide each one with a sense of stability, as well as continued support.

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.

"Hopeful Beginnings was a safe space where I could go and talk about my problems and had supportive staff be there for me. I felt like I belonged there. The girls and I made a strong bond throughout the 2 years that I was there and it felt good to be able to connect with girls my age. It really made me think ahead and push myself hard everyday, made me realize that I was capable of attending college, despite the struggles as a teen mom. Staff really made me realize that I was a strong person and that if I set my mind to things, I could accomplish. I will forever be thankful I was apart of Hopeful Beginnings because it also shaped me into a better mother to my 2 year old son."

*- Cynthia**

*name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual



Financial Position

Fiscal year ending June 30, 2020

Revenue

	FY2020	FY2019
Public Support	\$206,772	\$212,215
Program Revenue	\$202,426	\$236,271
Investment Income	\$213,298	\$242,414
*Change in Value of Perpetual Trusts	\$ 6,256	\$795,855
Miscellaneous	\$ - 0 -	\$ 77
<hr/>		
Total Revenue	\$ 628,752	\$1,486,832

Expenses

Program Expenses	\$443,585	\$440,381
Administrative and Occupancy	\$188,023	\$151,095
Fundraising	\$149,603	\$116,258
<hr/>		
Total Expenses	\$781,211	\$707,734

****Net Assets**

**Change in Net Assets	(\$ 152,459)	\$ 779,098
**Beginning of Year	\$6,807,536	\$6,028,438
**End of Year	\$6,655,077	\$6,807,536

**Donor restricted funds*

***includes Donor restricted funds*

Impact

With help from people like you, Hopeful Beginnings of St. Mary's Services supported hundreds of clients during the 2019-2020 fiscal year.



131 Pregnant or Parenting Women

Hopeful Beginnings responded to 68 new clients who inquired about our maternity counseling services and provided over 755 hours of direct counseling and support to 131 clients.

Over \$15,000 was spent in order to aid these women in necessary living expenses (rent, utility, groceries, etc.) and over \$1,700 in medical services.

Helped Build 2 Families

The Adoption Programs at Hopeful Beginnings of St. Mary's Services welcomed 14 new families this fiscal year, which made a total of 23 active families in our programs. This program provided 365 hours of counseling and support throughout the many stages of the adoption process. We are proud that this support culminated in two adoption placements and six interstate placements.



38 Pregnant or Parenting Teens

We served 38 clients from intake through counseling and education, which resulted in 407 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 Hopeful Beginnings of 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, Hopeful Beginnings always benefits from conversation about our services and our passion for those who are in need. Refer Hopeful Beginnings 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 teen parenting program for their students and the teens in your neighborhood. Share our expansive pregnancy-related counseling services to women in your life.



www.hopefulbeginning.org

510 N. Plum Grove Road
Palatine, IL 60067
847.870.8181

Hopeful Beginnings of St. Mary's Services is licensed by the
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services #040234-16

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

501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization 36-2167889