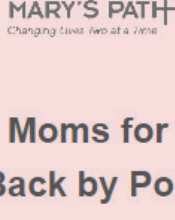


NEWSLETTER SPRING 2022



Our First Annual Moms for Moms Tribute Ad Campaign is Back by Popular Demand!

Honor Mom On Mother's Day By Helping Teen Moms and Babies

Moms for Moms

Mother's Day Tribute Campaign

Here's a way to honor your mom — or any mom or dad in your life — and support Mary's Path. That's not to say this should replace the flowers, but this gift will definitely keep giving long after the flowers have faded. **All the moms honored in the campaign will be listed in a special full-page Mother's Day tribute ad in the Orange County Register.**

May 8, 2022
Changing Lives Two at a Time

About Mary's Path

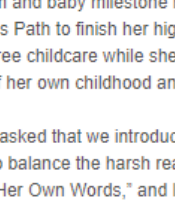
Mary's Path is a home for pregnant and parenting youth from the foster care system.

Believing that every life is a gift from God, Mary's Path empowers and equips vulnerable teen mothers and their babies for lives of dignity, hope and self-sufficiency.

(714) 730-0930 ext. 134

maryspath.org/momsformoms

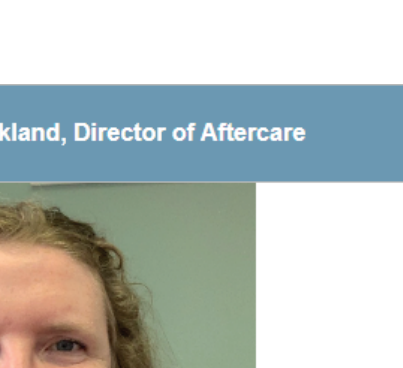
Deadline for inclusion in tribute ad is April 26, 2022



From the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Family of Mary's Path,

My thoughts of the 2022 new year are filled with gratefulness and blessings. I am often asked what a typical day at Mary's Path is like. My answer is always the same: no two days are ever alike. On any given day, I can experience the most incredible highs and deepest lows. One minute I am buying caps and gowns for soon-to-be high-school graduates, and the next, I'm taking a call from the police that one of our residents has been sexually assaulted or sex trafficked during an AWOL. My days are fortified by the strength, grace, and commitment of the staff, the Board, and all our supporters. Each gives me the courage of my convictions enabling me to change two lives at a time at Mary's Path.



Nemo and I are still committed and have faith that we will perfect our SUPing techniques through more practice!

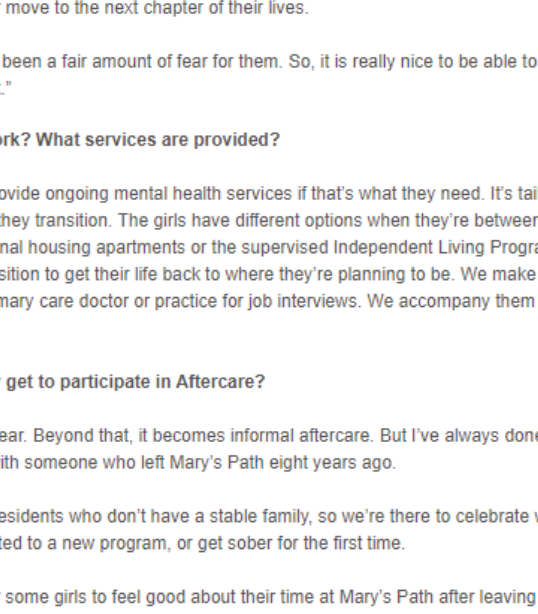
Grace, Faith, and Commitment in the Face of Overwhelming Odds

I am grateful to all our supporters who made this Christmas season and year-end giving campaign a huge success. With inflation creeping up, our costs for care, food, and transportation have risen astronomically. Donations have allowed us to maintain our high level of care for our teen moms and babies. I am grateful that our homes were at maximum capacity with babies. But it also highlighted the glaring need for Mary's Path to consider opening another facility. We are now only one of three in the entire state that serves this vulnerable population. I count my blessings with every new mom and baby milestone reached: a healthy baby born, a new family created, a teen mom safe at Mary's Path to finish her high school education, start college, find stable housing, take parenting classes, free childcare while she is at school or work, receive mental health service to overcome the trauma of her own childhood and become a mom at a time when she is still developing into adulthood. Finally, I am listening. Many of you have asked that we introduce you to our residents' stories. This has been a difficult navigation for me trying to balance the harsh realities with the beauty of the successes. But we're introducing a new section, "In Her Own Words," and I hope it helps you appreciate the path our teen moms are on. May you feel as grateful and blessed as I feel every day.

In gratitude,

Jill Dominguez

Profile Interview of Kelli Strickland, Director of Aftercare



How long have you been with Mary's Path?

I've been here 11 years. I started working at Mary's Path in 2011, working overnights on the floor in the houses while I was getting my master's in social work. After I graduated, I joined the team as a social worker and then was the lead social worker. About a year ago, when we got our therapy program going, I started working as the interim head of service with the goal of becoming the Director of our Aftercare Program, which is what I'm doing now.

And it's a natural fit for me because in the previous 10 years I've worked here, I've always loved touching base with former residents and being a support system when needed for the girls, especially those who don't have a strong support system outside of the team at Mary's Path.

It's a big shift going from being in a congregate care setting where you have access to 24/7 support and someone to talk to all the time to a partnership, an extended family member's home, or renting a room somewhere.

Can you tell us about the Aftercare Program?

It was started under STRTP (Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program in California), a new model replacing "group homes." Programs were given the option to convert into a short-term residential treatment program. Each county is modeling it slightly differently.

And that's when a big shift happened, where intensive onsite mental healthcare services needed to be provided.

How important is this to the girls?

One of the biggest things former residents tell us is that it feels kind of lonely going from a bustling, busy program to something so quiet—quieter than they're used to.

Having someone to go to when they feel like they're going through something hard is important. I'm glad [the state is] acknowledging and supporting the fact that these kids need more support, not less, when they leave congregate care.

We've seen that the program reduces some stress for the girls who are moving out and getting ready to transition. We've always had a tradition when they move out—we follow them with all their stuff and wave and celebrate their move to the next chapter of their lives.

But there's always been a fair amount of fear for them. So, it is really nice to be able to wave and say, "I'll see you next week."

How does this work? What services are provided?

In Aftercare, we provide ongoing mental health services if that's what they need. It's tailored to each girl's situation and how they transition. The girls have different options when they're between 18 and 21. They can live in transitional housing apartments or the supervised Independent Living Program option. We help them transition to get their life back to where they're planning to be. We make sure they're connected to a primary care doctor or practice for job interviews. We accompany them to appointments or meetings.

How long do they get to participate in Aftercare?

Formally, up to a year. Beyond that, it becomes informal aftercare. But I've always done that. I still maintain contact with someone who left Mary's Path eight years ago.

There are former residents who don't have a stable family, so we're there to celebrate when they get their first job, get accepted to a new program, or get sober for the first time.

It can be easier for some girls to feel good about their time at Mary's Path after leaving because living in a group home is hard. But in hindsight, they realize how much they were cared about.

When they're in Aftercare, sometimes they want even more attachment. And they can see we're not going anywhere. We don't disappear on them.

Do you have a team?

So far, it's just been me, but we're building a team, which is really exciting. So the goal will be for me to supervise the Aftercare team, not be the one providing help.

How helpful are the donations?

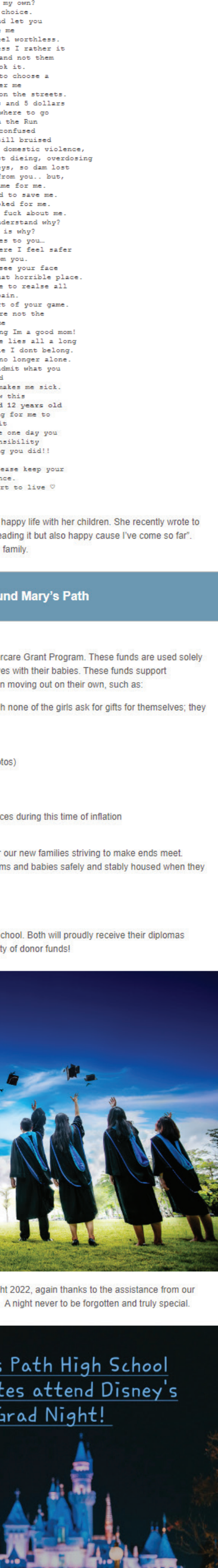
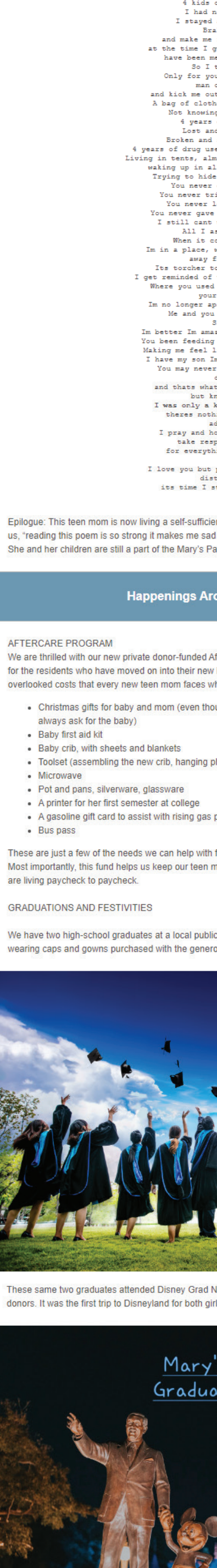
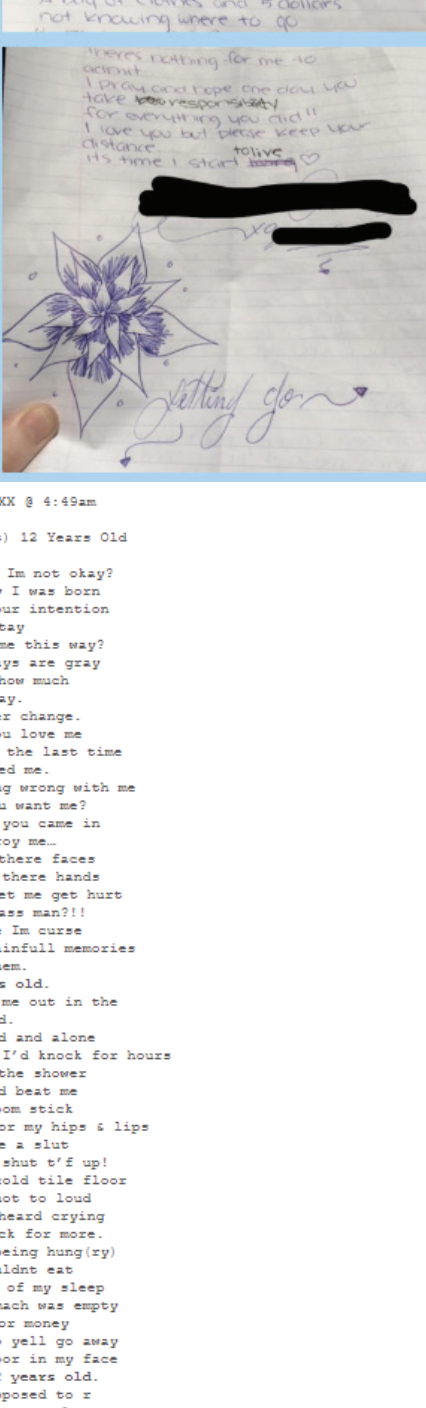
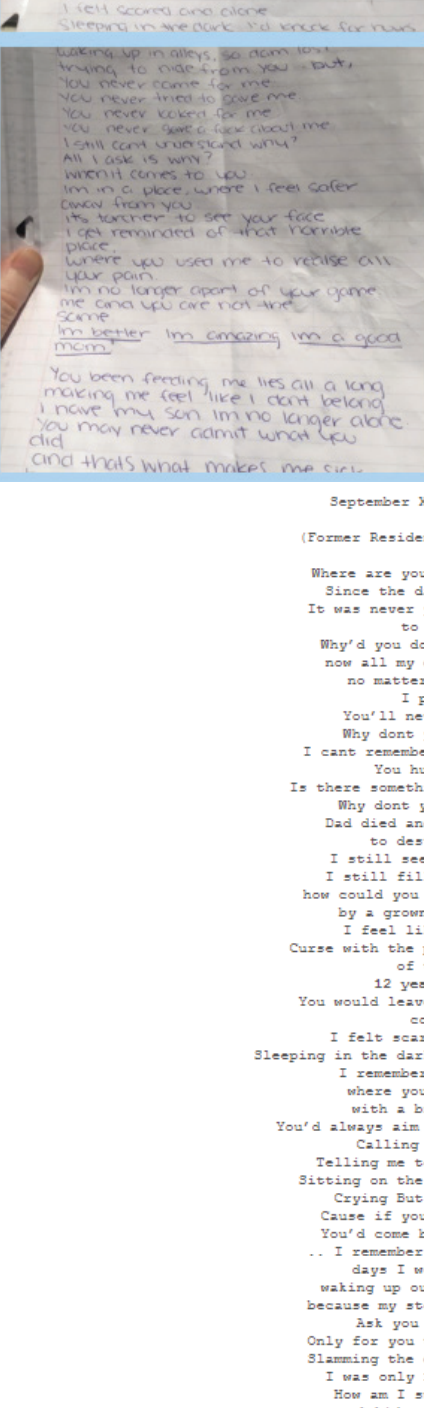
The state [funds] allow us to provide aftercare. But when a girl needs a microwave, bus pass, or car seat, for example. There's a family that has designated their monthly donations to go to the center. We've used those funds for things like calendars so the girls can track their schedules or for move-in expenses, like a hammer, pots and pans, or diapers.

The program sounds like it's been a success—helping the girls feel more secure and confident about leaving.

I'm glad the girls are open to it. And, so far, we haven't had any girls leave our program. The girls have done an excellent job at participating consistently. And it's really fun. We recently got invited to one of the girl's 2nd birthday party. It's nice to be part of their lives outside of Mary's Path.

In Her Own Words – A new series of stories by and from our residents

Trigger Warning: This poem is written by a former resident. The images of the hand-written poem are displayed in the picture. The words and spelling are reproduced as written. We have concealed the identity and all identifying names of the author at her request.



September XXXX @ 4:49am

(Former Resident) 12 Years Old

Where are you? I'm not okay?
Since the day I was born
It was never your intention
to stay
Why'd you do me this way?
now all my days are gray
no matter how much
I pray.
You'll never change.
Why don't you love me
I can't remember the last time
You hugged me.
Is there something wrong with me
Why don't you want me?
Dad died and you came in
to destroy me.
I still see these faces
I still fill these hands
how could you let me get hurt
by a grown ass man?!!
I feel like I'm cursed
Curse with the painful memories
of them.
12 years old.
You would leave me out in the
cold.
I felt scared and alone
Sleeping in the dark I'd knock for hours
I remember the shower
where you'd beat me
with a broom stick
You'd always aim for my hips & lips
Calling me a slut
Telling me to shut t'f up!
Sitting on the cold tile floor
Crying but not to loud
Cause if you heard crying
You'd come back for more.
.. I remember being hung(ry)
days I wouldn't eat
waking up out of my sleep
because my stomach was empty
Ask you for money
Only for you to yell go away
Slamming the door in my face
I was only 12 years old.
How am I supposed to r
4 kids on my own?
I had no choice.
I stayed and let you
Broke me
and make me feel worthless.
at the time I guess I rather it
have been me and not them
So I took it.
Only for you to choose a
man over me
and kick me out on the streets.
A bag of clothes and 5 dollars
Not knowing where to go
4 years on the Run
Lost and confused
Broken and still bruised
4 years of drug use, domestic violence,
Living in tents, almost dying, overdosing
waking up in alleys, so damn lost
Trying to hide from you.. but,
You never came for me.
You never tried to save me.
You never looked for me.
You never gave a fuck about me.
I still can't understand why?
All I ask is why?
When it comes to you..
I'm in a place, where I feel safer
away from you.
Its tougher to see your face
I get reminded of that horrible place.
Where you used me to realize all
your pain.
I'm no longer apart of your game.
Me and you are not the
Same
I'm better I'm amazing I'm a good mom!
You been feeding me lies all a long!
Making me feel like I don't belong.
I have my son I'm no longer alone.
You may never admit what you
did
and thats what makes me sick.
but know this
I was only a kid 12 years old
theres nothing for me to
admit
I pray and hope one day you
take responsibility
for everything you did!!
I love you but please keep your
distance.
its time I start to live ☺

Epilogue: This teen mom is now living a self-sufficient happy life with her children. She recently wrote to us, "reading this poem is so strong it makes me sad reading it but also happy cause I've come so far". She and her children are still a part of the Mary's Path family.

Happenings Around Mary's Path

AFTERCARE PROGRAM

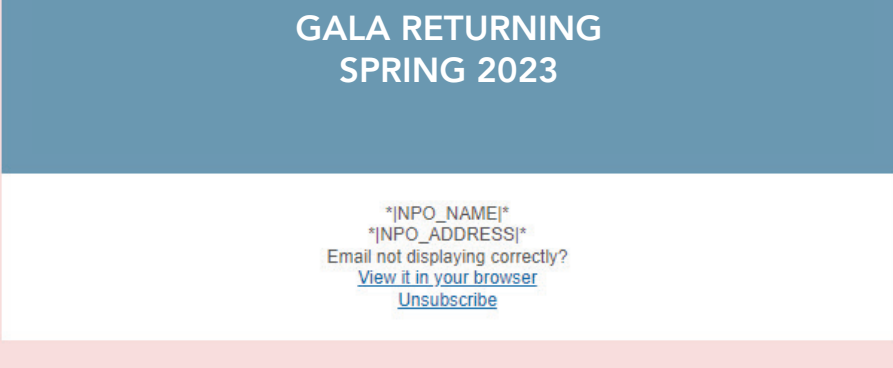
We are thrilled with our new private donor-funded Aftercare Grant Program. These funds are used solely for the residents who have moved on into their new lives with their babies. These funds support overlooked costs that every new teen mom faces when moving out on their own, such as:

- Christmas gifts for baby and mom (even though none of the girls ask for gifts for themselves; they always ask for the baby)
- Baby first aid kit
- Baby crib, with sheets and blankets
- Toolset (assembling the new crib, hanging photos)
- Microwave
- Pot and pans, silverware, glassware
- A printer for her first semester at college
- A gasoline gift card to assist with rising gas prices during this time of inflation
- Bus pass

These are just a few of the needs we can help with for our new families striving to make ends meet. Most importantly, this fund helps us keep our teen moms and babies safely and stably housed when they are living paycheck to paycheck.

GRADUATIONS AND FESTIVITIES

We have two high-school graduates at a local public school. Both will proudly receive their diplomas wearing caps and gowns purchased with the generosity of donor funds!



These same two graduates attended Disney Grad Night 2022, again thanks to the assistance from our donors. It was the first trip to Disneyland for both girls. A night never to be forgotten and truly special.

Mary's Path High School Graduates attend Disney's Grad Night!



GALA RETURNING SPRING 2023

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