

## Fall 2020 Newsletter



*Karen Wickner, Care Coordinator, feeds one of our SON babies. Baby Aiden, just home from the hospital, snoozes contentedly.*

### — ourmission —

Pregnant homeless women in our community and their babies experience difficulties in accessing the residential care they need. While our community has a good number of services to assist women in unplanned pregnancies, there was no place where homeless women 21 and older could go to live in a safe environment. Here they can access the comprehensive services needed to provide for a healthy pregnancy or to care for their infant while addressing the underlying causes of their homelessness. We provide this safety to our residents by providing a program and structure while connecting them to medical, governmental, educational, charitable and social services.

At Star of the North, we provide not only a place for moms to stay but also a place to live in a peaceful Christian family environment. We want them to feel hope and build trust with us. Our mothers-to-be are struggling to survive but have an amazing commitment to life, their babies and to moving forward positively with their lives. We are humbled by the grace of God, which keeps our doors open for moms facing homelessness.

The care coordinators are dedicated to our mothers and babies, assisting them in learning important life lessons through this program. On September 18 we welcomed baby Aiden, who is perfect, beautiful and full of life. Six-month-old Lila is a bubbly charmer whose dimpled smile and giggles will steal your heart away.

There have been eleven moms and babies like Aiden and Lila who were helped in our first eighteen months of operations (with over 52 applicants). We must keep this home available to help fill this need; for us, there is no other choice but to serve. Financial assistance from our community is essential so we can continue to help our moms reach their goals in parenting — and in life. —  
*Karen Wickner, Care Coordinator and Executive Assistant for SON/TFLN*

# — starresidents: Year 1 —

In our first year since opening, we have been overwhelmed with the need. We have had 44 applicants and have been able to serve eight women and their babies.

These women are in need of housing for a variety of reasons: fleeing from domestic violence, overcoming drug/alcohol addiction, poverty, or lack of a positive personal support network. Referral sources include: two from our local domestic violence center, four had recently completed an inpatient opioid drug recovery program (and they cannot return once they have the baby), and two had no permanent home, either living outdoors or “couch-surfing,” arriving with a bagful of belongings.

In year one our residents have been on average 28 years old. Resident ethnicity has consisted of African-American (1), American Indian (2), biracial (3) and Caucasian (2). Our average length of stay in the program for year one was 3.4 months. At admission, five were pregnant and three had babies. All babies have been born at term (within 1-2 weeks of due date). The achievement in our 4-Phase program during their time at Star of the North includes five completing through Phase 2 and three in or through Phase 4. Our first graduate was on July 1 (see feature about Krista). Most are discharged to independent HRA apartments (6) and (1) was discharged to a mental health stabilization unit.

# — starfeature: Krista and Baby Lila —



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## Client-turned-staffer thankful for support from stellar group of women

One year ago, October 2019. Weather was turning cold, and expectant mom Krista was running out of options. “I was living in a shelter, and I was 3 months pregnant. I found out about the maternity home, so I called,” she said. “I was pretty scared, but I was so relieved to get into the home.” The peace of mind that comes to moms at Star of the North “has been really, really priceless” to Krista.

“Not having to worry about rent was a great relief. And the security. We have a locked door with video cameras. I come from domestic violence, so having the security was a big relief. Another nice benefit, she says, is being able to live alone and in community at the same time. “We have a community of women willing to help one another. We split the responsibility of chores and dinners, so I only have to cook a couple times a week.”

On April 16, her daughter, Lila, arrived. “I chose to have Lila at St. Luke’s because they have bathtubs there,” Krista said with a laugh. “We don’t have a bathtub at the house, so I took three baths before my water broke!”

As Krista was taking care of her newborn daughter and finishing her program at Star of the North, a position as night shift care coordinator opened. She went for it — and got it. She began her role July 1, and she and baby Lila continue to live in the home as well. “It’s a sleep-overnight position; we’re here in case of an emergency,” she explained. “We go through safety training that emphasizes behavioral and emotional health care.”

Krista is in a unique position because she lives in the home. It’s going very well, she says, but it’s not without some challenges. “The biggest is that I can’t get away from work. If there are any problems going on at the house, I happen to be here.”

It’s not her only job. She also is employed at Lutheran Social Services, but because of Covid, she’s currently not working. And if her schedule isn’t already full, Krista is attending Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, studying human services online and planning to become a licensed clinical social worker. Krista said she hopes to be able to stay at the home until she finishes her bachelor’s degree.

“Once I graduate, I’ll be able to afford rent in Duluth as a single person. Being here is just a Godsend for those things. I really have a chance to get myself financially set up to go on.” Krista’s journey from client to graduate to night care coordinator has been a life-changing experience.

“You know, it was kind of like being adopted by a group of women who want the best for my future; and to be reassured that I’m doing the right thing, that my goals are attainable and worthwhile so that I can just keep plugging on.”

## — campaign for a new home —

We are in need of a new home because our current building has been sold and our lease expires May 31, 2021. So if you know of a 5+ bedroom, 2+ bathroom living space with additional space for education, offices and storage, please let us know. We believe it needs to be near a bus line, grocery store, pharmacy, chemical dependency, medical, and mental health services. Based on our finances, we need to raise at least \$150,000 now to make this happen. If you want to assist or have any helpful ideas, please contact Deacon Lyle Johnson at [lyle.johnson65@icloud.com](mailto:lyle.johnson65@icloud.com).

## — starclasses —

We are grateful for **Jennifer Sundahl from ISD709**, and their program for providing weekly **Circles of Security** classes in our home. **Amy Goranson** has provided weekly **Amazing Babies** classes through the past month. **Laurie Orbeck, MSW**, from Northern Waters Clinic has facilitated regular Resident Community Meetings. We are pleased that our women also attend parenting classes at **Lake Superior Life Care Center and Women's Care Center**. **Northland Family Programs' Anna Crain** has provided mentoring for our women, as well. **Tatiana Bergum** provided a Healthy Boundaries Class for our residents during year one.

## — starvolunteers —



### WELCOME to our new Volunteers!

Marty L. (Maintenance and Food Banks assistance), Nicki K., Andrea B., Nancy S., M.J. J., Dawn C., Royleen N., Linda N., Trish M., Katie W. (admin) and Liz H. (Grant Writing)

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## — stardonations —

Thank you to all of our donors of Time, Treasure and Commodities! We are so thankful for the amazing support we continue to receive from our community. **Twin Ports Trailer Trash CEO Bernard McCarthy** (shown at right) surprised us in April during COVID with a truck full of donations they had collected!

Personal items for our moms continue to be our most needed, such as sheets (full and queen), adult quilts, towel sets and baby monitors. Household items such as toilet paper, paper towels and cleaning supplies are always welcome. We keep a current list of needs on our Star of the North website and Facebook through our [Amazon Wishlist](#).

A special thanks to the **Christ Child Society** for continuing to provide layettes for our new moms and **Kettle River Pizza** for their monthly delivery of YUMMY pizzas.

Church partnerships with St. Lawrence/Holy Family, St. Benedict's (Giving Tree), St. John's (Giving Tree) and Immaculate Heart continue their support.



