



PHOTOS BY JIM FRANCIS

# The Pregnancy Center moves to new, larger location at 7 Caring Way

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The Pregnancy Center has come a long way since 1991 and its early days off Main Street in Jasper. But the center's latest move—just across the street—is the most momentous and far-reaching for the non-profit's future.

The Hammill Family Foundation's gift of a newer, four times larger building—including a lengthy list of major renovations to bring it up to code (and date)—has provided The Pregnancy Center with the space and unlimited opportunity to fulfill its mission beyond what anyone could have imagined a year ago. (See "Hammill Family Foundation: dedicated to helping improve lives" on this page.)

It's been a busy—sometimes frantic—seven months for Executive Director Patricia Page and her team, beginning with the closing on the new building January 22 and then months of renovations before the mid-June move from Church Street to 7 Caring Way—the first building on the left.

"As wonderful as the new location is now, back in January the building needed a lot of work," explained Page. "It seemed like everything either needed to be replaced or repaired. We had to install a new HVAC system, windows, flooring and lighting then repair plumbing and roofing," she said.

To make the floor plan work for The Pregnancy Center's needs, walls were removed, new ones added and then sheet rock was installed and painted. Furniture was purchased along with additional racks and shelving. Outside the parking lot was repaired and landscaping added.

"Now there are rooms for private and family counseling, classes, meetings and the very popular and expanded Angel Babies Boutique," said Page. "Literally hundreds and hundreds of volunteer hours were given for packing, moving, cleaning, planting, oversight of sub-contractors, managing, organizing, and just plain hard work!" she added.

With repairs, renovation and moving completed, Page, her staff and volunteers are eager to greet new clients and show their new facility to old friends. "We are so grateful to Dick and Sue Hammill who have made all of this possible through their foundation. Now, because of their inspiration and generosity, we will be able to provide more services and support to help more families thrive and offer hope for a brighter future."

#### Expanded client services

The Pregnancy Center has grown its services too. Originally, providing free pregnancy tests, counseling and abortion alternatives, it now offers a wide range of free and confidential services to anyone in the North Georgia area, said Page.

"We welcome clients who are pregnant, have small children or may be dealing with relationship conflicts, marriage problems or even child training issues," she said. "We encourage them to come to The Pregnancy Center to find out about our Earn While You Learn (EWYL) programs. After each lesson is completed the client is paid in baby bucks."

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## The Pregnancy Center offers help, hope and healing

The Pregnancy Center is more than a place for classes and testing. For many women—often young and unmarried—the Pregnancy Center is a personal refuge offering friendship, acceptance and the sense of belonging.

The tangible help provided by compassionate staff and volunteers is always accompanied by genuine caring and gentle guidance.

"They don't judge you—never once. They welcomed me with open arms. I became part of the Pregnancy Center Family," Angela told *Smoke Signals* during an interview at the Angel Babies Boutique.

Angela graduated from college in Kansas in May 2019. She was 20 weeks pregnant—and alone—when she arrived at her mother's home in Jasper. She turned to the Pregnancy Center for help and support, took parenting classes and today enjoys shopping in the Angel Babies Boutique and catching up with her friends at the center.

"I used the Earn While You Learn program, which gives baby bucks for purchases in the Pregnancy Center store. I had access to the Mommy Store where I was able to get three free items after every session," she said.

Determined to have her baby and to have a way to support her family, Angela began an online Master's degree in higher education and education leadership in August 2019 while she continued classes at the Pregnancy Center. As she was finishing her degree work she went into labor, giving birth to Melanie, her beautiful daughter. She is grateful to the

Individual counselors work one-on-one with clients taking part in the EWYL classes. By participating in the EWYL programs clients can earn baby bucks to spend in The Pregnancy Center's Angel Babies Boutique to purchase maternity clothes, baby clothes, diapers and wipes, baby items and more. Expectant moms can earn points—baby bucks—toward merchandise from the boutique. "They can basically buy everything they need for the nursery by earning baby bucks through participation in the learning program," she explained.

"We're also expanding an Earn-While-You-Learn program for fathers with male mentors," said Page. "Raising a child is a two-parent task. Ideally, children need the love, involvement of both a mother and father and support from their families."

The Mommy Store, Diaper Bag Ministry, Earn While You Learn program, and Angel Babies Boutique offer gently used clothing and baby supplies for the mom and baby. The Center also offers referrals for free First Trimester Ultrasounds, Fatherhood programs and Childbirth Preparation classes.

#### Vision for the future

With the new space The Pregnancy Center is exploring new services and counseling. "Our goal is to be able to offer classes/services for whatever the need is," said Page. As well as supporting ways for clients to connect with others with similar experiences, she wants to encourage ways for new parents to communicate and share experiences with other moms who have already raised their children.

As a trial run, she envisions expanding counseling services and



Angela and Melanie enjoy shopping in Angel Babies Boutique.

Pregnancy Center's Executive Director Pat Page for all her help and support.

"Even during COVID Pat helped me out and gave me a free box of diapers and clothes for my daughter," she added.

Angela and Melanie are living with Angela's mom. Now working as a nanny part time Angela eventually wants to work full time in education. With the support of her mother and the Pregnancy Center Angela is building a good life for herself and her daughter.

partnering with local churches and local organizations. Page plans to invite local pastors and their wives to The Pregnancy Center to meet and discuss ways to move forward to better serve the community.

Clients generally start with The Pregnancy Center early—as soon as they suspect or confirm pregnancy—and in most cases continue for at least a full year. The average cost of providing a year of services to one client costs the center approximately \$2,500.

"Some of our clients didn't finish school. We encourage them to get a GED, develop skills or enroll in training programs to enable them to support themselves. About a third of our clients are single while others are married or have a partner," said Page.

At any given time, the center averages 20 client visits a month. "We are usually working with eight or nine pregnant clients and others are taking the EWYL parenting classes online or on video. We also have families shopping in the Angel Babies Boutique regularly for formula, diapers, clothes and everyday baby supplies.

The center's services continue from confirming pregnancy through pre-school and even to classes for teens. Additional counseling is offered by appointment with lay and certified counselors on issues related to marriage, conflict resolution and all aspects of how to raise a child. The certified counselors go deeper with individuals and couples in private counseling by appointment.

Post abortion counseling is offered by women who have already been through it and want to share their experiences and what they've



Pat Page with Sue and Dick Hammill.

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learned with those considering abortion as well as those who are suffering from post-abortion syndrome.

Men are invited to participate through fatherhood counseling. To help clients rebuild their life after addiction, the center offers free addiction counseling. A couple that had been addicted and went through addiction recovery successfully is now offering addiction counseling for the center.

The Pregnancy Center also offers classes and counseling on some of the toughest issues. "We help educate clients about incest. Children need to know about 'acceptable touch,' what it is and most importantly what it isn't," Page explained. One of the EWYL classes focuses on boundaries in relationships as well as single parenting.

"We offer help, hope and healing for whatever you are going through," said Page, "plus tangible help, spiritual hope, friendship and relationships." She believes God uses open hearts and broken hearts to change lives.

Asked what she would like *Smoke Signals* readers to know about The Pregnancy Center, Page replied, "God's ways work. At The Pregnancy Center we have the resources to help anyone seeking to turn his or her life around."

The Pregnancy Center is open to anyone—there are no requirements. Donations for the Angel Babies Boutique are greatly appreciated. Gently used maternity clothes as well as clothes for babies, toddlers and children are always needed at the Angel Babies Boutique.

The Pregnancy Center stocks everyday baby needs and greatly appreciates donations of diapers (mostly size 3-6), small packages of wipes, money for diaper bags, baby items, money for car seats, pack and play cribs and crib mattresses, paper products (toilet paper, paper towels), hand sanitizer and Lysol products.

For more information or to drop off donations, call 706-253-0011. Donations are tax deductible.

The Pregnancy Center is located at 7 Caring Way—the first big building you see when taking the street to the Community of Care in Jasper. It's open Monday, Wednesday, Friday from noon to 5 p.m.; walk-ins are welcome. Saturday 10 a.m. until noon by appointment only. Angel Babies Boutique hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Friday noon until 5 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. until 5 p.m.