



March 2009
\$1.95

Insite

BRAZOS VALLEY

HEART & HOME



inside:

Real Estate Forecast
Mostly Sunny With Retail Showers

When True Love Means Adoption
A Birth Mother's Story

Investing ... What Now?
4 Step Recovery Plan

IPRSRT-STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
BRYAN TX
PERMIT 71



Unplanned Pregnancy

Where to Find Help

The non-profit group Child Trends ranked Texas first in the nation for teen pregnancies in 2007. That statistic underscores the importance of educating all women about where they can go for help when an unplanned pregnancy occurs. The Brazos Valley is home to a number of agencies dedicated to educating and supporting women through the process. And, no matter the choice, these organizations' commitment to providing medical and emotional support to area women is invaluable in promoting reproductive health care in the community.

Prenatal Clinic

The Prenatal Clinic, a private, non-profit agency, has provided prenatal care and education for low-income women with no health insurance in the area since 1985. The mission of the clinic is simple: to help low-income mothers deliver healthy babies. Statistics from 2008 show that the facility took on 811 new patients, pushing the number of women it has served to more than 12,500 since its inception.

For women planning to parent their baby but unable to afford traditional medical care, the Prenatal Clinic opens the door to ensuring their baby's prenatal needs are met. Patients' need for services is determined by the state's formula for Medicaid and an extensive interview conducted by clinic staff. If determined eligible, "It's our turn to help them," says Executive Director Steve Koran. "Our goal is to make sure the baby comes out strong and healthy." Clinic documents show that mothers of more than a quarter of the babies born in Brazos County are clinic patients.

In addition to free prenatal care, including physical examinations, vitamins, and testing, the Prenatal Clinic offers medical care after

childbirth. Family planning education and classes for expectant mothers to prepare for childbirth and parenting also are taught. Recognizing a community need, the education classes are offered in both English and Spanish. Through the clinic, social services and referrals to other care facilities and programs is available. Koran says

Educating the public about better sexual health remains key in preventing unplanned pregnancy.

— Abby Johnson, Planned Parenthood.

that clinic staff even help clients find family doctors and dentists.

Incredibly, the clinic is able to financially support the entirety of its patients' medical needs during pregnancy (the clinic does, however, charge for flu shots and copies of medical records). Equally as impressive is the low operating cost at which the clinic efficiently and effectively runs. According to clinic documents, the average cost to care for a patient throughout her pregnancy is less than \$630; on average, each patient visit costs less than \$54. Through Medicaid, CHIP Perinatal and Title V programs, as well as community donations, the clinic has survived and thrived over the last 23 years.

The support of the community, says Koran, has been the foundation for the clinic. "Government programs do not provide enough funding," he says, explaining the growth of the clinic as a result of the aid of a number of area individuals and organizations. Koran lists local churches, United Way, Texas A&M University students and the Brazos County commissioners, among others, as great promoters of the clinic through their time and monetary donations. The efforts of area physicians are also a "tremendous source" of help for the clinic, he adds. About 20 doctors from a number of private practices, both obstetricians and family practitioners, volunteer their services to see patients at the clinic. "They all come here, sacrifice their time, to help us do what we do," Koran says.

Planned Parenthood

Since the early Seventies, Planned Parenthood has served the Brazos Valley area by providing a number of reproductive health services. Though they also provide abortions, the clinic's primary workload focuses on family planning. Birth control visits, annual well women exams, pap smears and STD testing and treatment for men and women account for 94 percent of its services, according to Abby Johnson, director of the Bryan facility. "What we're really about is prevention," says Johnson, to "keep yourself healthy and protected" and to avoid unintended pregnancy.

What Johnson calls a "truly comprehensive health care center for men and women," the Bryan facility is the only center in its affiliate to offer its three clinic programs – family planning, dysplasia and abortion services – at one location. Though it does not typically offer prenatal care, the clinic will see pregnant women for their gynecological needs if they are not yet established with an obstetrician.

Planned Parenthood's role in the Brazos Valley has become more pronounced in recent years as state and federal funding cuts for family planning forces more clinics to limit their services. "A lot of the health department clinics have gotten out of family planning," because of

continued on page 23

continued from page 21

the expense, says Johnson. Residents in small and rural communities find themselves traveling to larger cities for affordable healthcare.

A member of the Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas affiliate, the local facility serves a highly varied client base. Not only is it geographically diverse, but Johnson says that it is impossible to pinpoint a "typical" client. She admits that the presence of two college campuses affects the demographic of clients, but says that there is not one target group for whom services are intended. "We want people to know that we are here for anyone who needs health services," says Johnson.

For women considering abortion, Planned Parenthood's specially trained educators provide information and counseling to help in the decision. Minors facing unplanned pregnancy in Texas must involve parents in the process. In 2005, Texas abortion laws became more stringent, requiring parental consent – in lieu of parental notification – for minors. Parents of minors meet a lengthy legal process of signing paperwork and affidavits. Workload aside, the new regulations have not posed a significant problem for the clinic, Johnson says. Whether or not the law is a help or hindrance for pregnant teens, though, is debatable. "We certainly would encourage all teens to have an open dialogue with their parents about pregnancy," says Johnson, "but we know that it is not always realistic."

Educating the public about better sexual health remains key in preventing unplanned pregnancy, says Johnson. "We are truly fulfilling our mission if people feel comfortable enough to come into our facility to receive health care."

Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach

For the pregnant woman or teen still searching for the best outcome for her and her unborn child, caseworkers at Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach, Inc. counsel pregnant women as they consider marriage, single parenting or adoption. Licensed as an adoption agency through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, the agency assists women through the legal process of adoption. Unique among most adoption agencies, APO places its attention on the pregnant client, regardless of her final parenting decision.

Founder Kim Schams, herself the mother of two sons via open adoption, modeled APO after an agency she encountered during her own experiences. "There's a lot of grief and loss involved in adoption," says Schams. "I wanted to be able to provide support for women, like my sons' birthmothers, who make this difficult decision."

Throughout their pregnancies, clients meet with Schams and her staff, who often function as sounding boards for the women when contemplating adoption. Educating clients in the realities, both positive and negative, of the adoption process is a primary effort of agency workers. The counseling sessions exhaust all imaginable topics of discussion, from health precautions for the baby to the anticipated support and involvement of the father of the baby as a potential husband and parent. Needs of the child, both material and emotional, are picked apart. In one session, the women evaluate the various family members or friends who could provide support if the woman should chose to parent the baby. Another session might explore the financial aspects of parenting by developing a baby budget, involving trips to stores to price toys, clothes, formula and other items necessary for raising a child and comparing the balance to the client's probable income. Schams says that process of uncovering the information is essential for women to make the right decision for the child. "We

continued on page 25

Patsy Zabel

REALTOR®

Dear Friends,

The last time I wrote to you I was saying goodbye and thank you for supporting The Grapevine for 27 years. That was 2001. I told you then that I was not going anywhere just fading into the background for a while. You would see me on the streets again, just in a different wagon.

I am back! I am very excited to let you know where I am and what I am doing. I am now representing Help-U-Sell Brazos Valley as a REALTOR for the Brazos Valley area. Help-U-Sell is one of the nation's leading set fee, full service real estate companies. We have been helping clients save thousands of dollars on the sale of their properties since 1976. I am proud to be a part of this innovative service.

Help-U-Sell Brazos Valley provides full service at a set fee. I work with you to help determine a market value and a marketing strategy for your property. The fee is set at the time of listing and payable at closing. No upfront fees or gimmicks...just thousands of dollars going into your pocket at the closing instead of mine.

We offer multiple internet sites that are viewed by potential buyers 24/7. Realistic pricing and consistent internet exposure, a set fee payable at closing and full real estate services...a great alternative to the traditional way of selling and buying real estate.

On average, the Help-U-Sell approach saves the customer approximately \$7,000 in commission dollars*. This is a lot of extra money going into your pocket and puts the seller in a stronger position when we begin the negotiating process. Buyers quickly realize that properties listed with Help-U-Sell are more aggressively priced and can therefore SAVE THEM MONEY as well. This is truly a win-win for everyone involved.

Help-U-Sell Brazos Valley has been offering full service real estate services to the consumers in our neighboring Washington County for three years and has consistently SAVED the clients money while helping them achieve shorter marketing times.

Please give me a call and let me show you how to SAVE THOUSANDS of dollars when you sell your property. WE SAVE YOU MONEY.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.



Help-U-Sell®

PATSY ZABEL
REALTOR®

HELP-U-SELL BRAZOS VALLEY

Office & Fax (979) 776-7863

E-mail: pzabel@hughes.net

Cell (979) 571-0475

*When compared to a 6% commission.



continued from page 23

want to help them not just have a baby," Schams says, "but to be really great parents or provide really great parents."

If choosing adoption, the client is also in charge of picking the family with whom she would like to place her child. Schams says that ensuring the mother retains those decision-making rights is important for the child, as well. "It's a big responsibility, and it shows that [the mother] was actively making a plan for adoption, for placement of her child into a great family," she says. "And that's a mother's job: to ensure the safety and well being of her kids." The client will peruse a number of scrapbooks made by waiting-to-adopt families whose qualifications match her desires for the baby's future family. Later, a match meeting is arranged during which the client and the adoptive family interview one another, and "that's how open adoption begins," says Schams. "When children grow up knowing what their background is, knowing that their birth parents loved them and didn't just abandon them," she says, "it gives a much broader sense of completeness."

All counseling services are free of charge, no matter the client's final decision. The adoptive family pays medical expenses for women who are uninsured or ineligible for Medicaid on a reimbursement basis following adoption. The method allows for APO to keep its adoption fees low by industry standards, and adoptive families are aware of the potential charges before they meet a birthmother.

As the agency continues to grow, Schams says that expanding services to single mothers is a primary goal. In 2006, APO initiated the "Mama Club," a weekly outreach for teen mothers. The program came about because statistics show 70% to 80% of children born to teen mothers will suffer from some form of abuse or neglect. The agency purchased five acres of land in 2008 and once the necessary funds are raised, the plan is to open a group home for single mothers. The home will have an on-site social worker and live-in house parents to mentor young mothers in parenting, job and life skills.

"When looking at all the options in an unplanned pregnancy, there is not one perfect choice because we've already entered an imperfect situation," Schams says. "Each choice comes with its own difficulties. We help women assess their unique situations and teach them as adults to make decisions with the best interests of their child in mind." i

Marsha S A N F O R D



REALTOR®/Broker ABR, CRS, GRI

3030 University Dr. East 100
College Station, TX 77840

Cell: 979-777-2556

Toll Free: 1-800-324-8669, Ext 121

Email: MarshaS@suddenlink.net

www.MarshaSanford.com

*"Service You Have Depended
On For 32 Years!"*



MANNINGTON

Brazos Valley Carpet Outlet

Brazos Valley's Leader in price & selection
Carpet • Vinyl • Ceramic Tile • Wood Flooring
Residential & Commercial
Sales • Service • Installation
(979) 764-4084
www.bvcarpetoutlet.com
Best of Brazos Valley '05, '06, '07, '08
Reader's Choice Award '06, '07

Aggieland Lighting Center

Brazos Valley's #1 Lighting Center
Showroom inside
Brazos Valley Carpet Outlet
(979) 695-2323

12850 OLD WELLBORN RD., STE. 300 • COLLEGE STATION • OPEN: MON-FRI 9-6 - SAT 10-3