

CROSSROADS

RUTH HARBOR
NEWSLETTER

FALL 2007



Through grace, Ruth Harbor provides a Christ-centered home, programs and comprehensive services for women and teens with unplanned pregnancies, resulting in positive life change.

From Fear to Growth Nikki Reconnects with Family and Faith

"I (and my mom) knew I needed help, but I wasn't sure about moving into a new place with people I didn't know," Nikki recalls before coming to Ruth Harbor. "However, if I went, I knew my chances of success and becoming responsible were much greater."

Nikki was struggling at home, with relationships, and in school. At age 18, the pregnancy was more than she was ready to handle on her own.

At Ruth Harbor, with the help of trained and loving staff, fear gave way to understanding and growth.

"The growth that started at that time and continues today would not have started without Ruth Harbor," Nikki recalls. "Coming here allowed me to consider the heavy temptations of the world that were pulling me down."



*Nikki at Ruth Harbor
the day prior to giving birth to Kira.*

During her pregnancy at Ruth Harbor, Nikki carefully considered her options and decided to parent. But that was not all! Her school grades went to a 3.9 average, she worked and saved some money, and she reconnected with her faith.

"I learned about God, his love, and his expectations. Not only did I reconnect with my faith in God, but I found other Christian friends to spend time with." ■



Nikki's daughter, Kira. Born in July, weighed 9lb. 2oz.

Spring Walk and Fall Banquet

Ruth Harbor Focuses on
Two Major Fundraising
Events

Did You Walk The Walk?

Ruth Harbor's second annual Walk For Life last Spring gave more than 100 supporters the opportunity to literally "walk the walk" and raise more than \$31,700 to care for young women.

Men, women, children and families gathered together at Des Moines' Meredith Trail to walk the two-mile path on a bright Saturday morning, giving of their time to truly show their support for the Ruth Harbor ministry. Although the commitment of time and money may have felt relatively small for many supporters, this year's walk proved just how great of a difference people can make when they join together for a single cause.

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Four Babies In Four Weeks!

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House Parents..... p.3

In addition to Kira, pictured above, Ruth Harbor also welcomed these three babies...



Logan - 8lb. 0oz.



Asa - 8lb. 13 oz.



Devanté - 6lb. 2oz.

Continued from cover...

"We're very pleased with the financial support that will help sustain the ministry in the coming year," said Mark McDougal, executive director of Ruth Harbor. Adding, "We're even more pleased with the great turnout of supporters and their passion for Ruth Harbor."



Last year's walk was Ruth Harbor's first Walk For Life, and brought more than 80 walkers and \$23,000 in financial support. With this year's increase in supporters and financial contributions, next year's walk promises



to be even larger. According to McDougal, it really takes a lot of volunteers to make Ruth Harbor's Walk For Life a success. "Although it may not look like a lot of work on Walk-day," commented McDougal, "there's a lot of planning that takes place months prior to the event. We're always in need of volunteers to assist with the planning,

Thanks to a small budget and financial underwriters for this annual event, nearly every dollar given to Ruth Harbor's Walk For Life goes directly to support the financial needs of the ministry – things like food, housing, transportation, staffing, training costs, and more.

and to publicize the Walk at their home church."

If you would like to be involved in the 2008 Walk For Life, please send your name and contact information to Ruth Harbor at rutharbor@rutharbor.org, or call the Ruth Harbor office at 515-279-4661.

Walkers or volunteers do not need to live in the Des Moines area, or be able to participate on Walk day – there's still a role for everyone and the Walk For Life is truly an event everyone can participate in!



Banquet; A Great "Window" to See Ruth Harbor

Ruth Harbor's Annual Fundraising Banquet, planned for **Thursday, Nov. 8**, will give attendees one of the best opportunities to see what is being done, how its being done, and the positive results in the lives of the young women being served.

After a wonderful dinner at the Downtown Marriott in Des Moines, guests will hear from young women who have lived the Ruth Harbor experience. Their stories of renewal and life change will inspire you and help you see exactly how the Ruth Harbor staff is serving their needs.

A very special guest will also speak. Anne Pierson, with her husband Jim, has been a leader and

forerunner in the Christian "maternity home" ministry for many years. While running such a home with up to 18 residents at once in rural PA, then President Ronald Reagan



Speaker Anne Pierson & husband, Jim.

mentioned their good work in a speech. As God planned it, she has been coaching and training "younger" homes like Ruth Harbor ever since, including writing much of the material used to counsel and guide young residents toward positive life-

change.

Future plans of the ministry will be shared and guests will have the opportunity to contribute or pledge toward the coming year's financial needs necessary to support the life-change of our young clients.

Those interested in attending may RSVP with the Ruth Harbor offices. Those wanting to raise the awareness of the Ruth Harbor mission are invited to host a table where invited guests can join you for the two-hour event. Again, express your interest or additional questions to Ruth Harbor at 515-279-4661 or rutharbor@rutharbor.org. ■



It Takes Heart! House Parents and Ruth Harbor Combine Experience to Serve

This month Russ and JoDee Cross are celebrating their first 9 months with Ruth Harbor AND their first 25 years as husband and wife! The Des Moines natives and parents of two college age daughters have heeded God's calling and have enthusiastically filled the role of Ruth Harbor's house parents. God has used their own parenting experiences, Russ' previous electronics sales for more than 20 years, and their experience of working together in their own small business to prepare them for their role at Ruth Harbor.

A co-worker of Russ' attended last fall's fundraising banquet and heard about the need. He spoke with Ruth Harbor and with the Crosses. "Once we met Mark and saw the house, we fell in love with the mission of Ruth Harbor. When we saw the house was actually a home and a place where the girls felt valued and comfortable, I knew this was something I wanted to be a part of," added JoDee.

First, the Crosses added their own parenting and youth work experience to the intense week of house parent training by an experienced maternity home in NC. Then it was on to the "on-the-job training" that only experience could provide. Their learning curve recently peaked when Ruth Harbor clients safely delivered four babies in four weeks!

Just like the role of parents, the role of house parents isn't glamorous. Between getting the girls off to work and school, cleaning and maintaining the house, working on the girl's care plans, connecting with counselors,

having family time and devotionals and ending each day with paper work and journaling, it takes tireless efforts and an abundance of strength to be house parents. "It's non-stop around here," commented Russ. "Although the daily activities can become overwhelming, it's the devotional times and our fun weekend activities like movies, games, canoeing, and visiting Gray's Lake, when we're building memories with the girls."

But even more important than the memories the girls will leave with new life skills, mended relationships with family and friends, and most of all, a

"Our desire is to show the girls the difference between God's love and the world's love."

clear plan for themselves and their baby – whether parenting or placing for adoption. The legacy that's

being imprinted on their hearts will make the deepest impact. "If we can show them how much God loves them and that He gave His life for them, then it's all worth it," declared Russ. "I want to instill in them that it's a privilege to be a mom. It's not just taking care of their child's needs, it's nurturing them, too. You pour your whole life into them knowing it's a lifetime commitment, that's a choice you make. No matter their life experiences, I want them to know they can do the



job of a mom. You're just as much of a mother when giving the child to someone else to care for, as you would be in parenting," says a teary eyed JoDee.

So what's helped the Crosses excel through their first few months as house parents? "The Ruth Harbor support has been amazing. Whether its volunteers, donors, or the staff and board, we have been so encouraged by each person connected to this ministry," said Russ. The Cross's church has also been a major support, not only for them, but also for the girls. "The girls have been able to see the important role church plays in daily life," said Russ. But even above those two sources of strength, the Crosses find the most encouragement from their life verse of Proverbs 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.* "Our desire is to show the girls the difference between God's love and the world's love. Daily, we pray we love the girls with God's love. We want to instill in them that no matter what they have gone through, are going through, or will go through, to keep walking forward and never dwell on the past." ■



Did You Know?

Many employers allow you to designate funds and will even **match** your gift to Ruth Harbor.

Check your employer's charitable giving program. Some companies include Ruth Harbor or match your gift to **any** human services nonprofit organization. Some examples include: Gannett, IBM, Pioneer,

Home Loan Bank, Monsanto, Equifax, Wellmark and more. State of Iowa employees can designate Ruth Harbor to receive contributions through the Iowa One Gift program. And much like the United Way program, federal employees can designate gifts to Ruth Harbor through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). In both of these programs, 100% of your contribution goes to Ruth Harbor. ■

Automatic Withdrawal (ACH) and Credit Card payments are now available for recurring donations.

To sign-up, contact the office, or download and complete the form online at www.RuthHarbor.org.

Get The Word Out!

Do you know someone that would appreciate knowing about Ruth Harbor? Suggest they provide their name and address or e-mail to our offices and begin receiving this newsletter as a friend and partner! ■

OUR MISSION

Through grace, Ruth Harbor provides a Christ-centered home, programs and comprehensive services to women and teens with unplanned pregnancies, resulting in positive life change.

OUR STAFF

Mark McDougal, *Executive Director*
Sandy Braziel, *Administrative Assistant*
Julie Wehner, *Counselor*
Russ & JoDee Cross, *House Parents*
Seth & Heather Comfort, *Relief House Parents*
Julie Johnson, *Relief House Parent*
Val Wilson, *Relief House Parent*

One additional couple is needed for our relief house parent team. If interested, please see the job description posted on our website at www.RuthHarbor.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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