

LIFE ISSUES

Baby Bottle 'Brigade' to come to rescue of unborn

Local effort is part of Knights of Columbus 'Meet Life' campaign

BY JENNIFER BRINKER
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It's only fitting that a local Knights of Columbus council is forming a "brigade" in defense of the smallest members of society — the unborn.

That's exactly what members of the Knights' Council 9981 at Incarnate Word Parish in Chesterfield are doing as they prepare to launch next month a parish "Baby Bottle" campaign and larger "brigade" in an effort to raise funding to help Thrive St. Louis, a group of local pregnancy resource centers.

The local project stems back to a statewide "Meet Life" campaign (formerly known as the Ultrasound Initiative), recently launched by the Missouri Knights of Columbus, which would provide funding to purchase ultrasound machines for pregnancy resource centers. The statewide initiative also is tasking the Knights to seek ways to place pregnancy resource centers in areas of Missouri where there are none.

"An ultrasound machine gives a competitive edge to pregnancy help centers, giving young, pregnant women the opportunity to see the baby's development," state deputy John Applebaum said in a statement. "It is this advancement in modern medicine that has caused the abortion industry great concern ..."

Rob Schultz, chair of the Incarnate Word council committee overseeing the Baby Bottle campaign, added that he's convinced abortion-minded women who have an ultrasound change their minds after seeing the images of their child. "And that has had a huge impact on the Knights and how they feel they can make a difference."

'Meet Life'

State deputy Applebaum said that the "Meet Life" campaign, officially announced last month at the annual organizational meeting for the state Knights of Columbus, has a goal of reducing by one half the number of abortions in Missouri by the end of 2016.



JERRY NAUNHEIM JR.

Sonographer Linda Byrnes, left, performed an ultrasound on Shayla Taylor, right, Aug. 16 during the filming of a promotional video in the Thrive St. Louis Mobile Medical Unit. Thrive's mobile unit, which was launched in March, offers free ultrasounds and pregnancy tests. The Knights of Columbus Council 9981 at Incarnate Word Parish in Chesterfield has announced it is launching a "Baby Bottle Brigade" with the hope of raising \$25,000 for a new laptop ultrasound machine for the mobile unit. The amount raised by the local council would be matched by the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council as part of its Ultrasound Initiative. Bridget VanMeans, executive director of Thrive St. Louis, said a new laptop ultrasound machine would cost approximately \$50,000.

The effort, he said, "establishes a bold and noble goal of giving thousands of children a chance to live and be welcomed as members of the human family. Each child is a gift from God, the author of all life, and as Christians it is our duty to love, cherish and protect His incredible gift."

The Missouri Knights have been collaborating with the Knights' Supreme Council, which established the Ultrasound Initiative in 2009 to help raise funding to purchase ultrasound equipment for qualifying pregnancy resource centers.

Joseph Dalton, a member of St. Patrick Council 2627 in Rolla who is helping coordinate the statewide effort through In His Image Ultra-

sound, said the Missouri Knights are expected to have 12 machines installed in pregnancy resource centers by the end of the fraternal year, which ends in June 2012.

In the St. Louis Archdiocese, a machine already has been placed in a center in Park Hills, another has been placed in House Springs, and South County Pregnancy Help Center is expected to receive one later this year. Dalton said other St. Louis area centers are in the application process.

The Knights also are collaborating with the Vitae Foundation to create a multimedia promotional campaign. The goal of that is to help direct women to pregnancy resource centers.

"This Knights of Columbus

campaign is one of the most exciting strategies that we have seen," said Carl Landwehr, president of Vitae Foundation, in a statement. "It is a measurable and achievable goal because most women prefer not to have an abortion. By directing them to assistance in their local communities where (an) ultrasound is available, they can be encouraged in their decision toward a culture of life."

Filling the baby bottles

At Incarnate Word in Chesterfield, the "Baby Bottle" effort is two-fold, according to Schultz.

The first part is to raise \$25,000 through the parish, school and PSR to go toward the purchase of a laptop ultrasound machine for Thrive St. Louis' Mobile Medical Center,

a 35-foot recreational vehicle that was introduced earlier this spring and provides services in North and South St. Louis and near the Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in the Central West End. If the local Knights' council is successful in meeting its goal, the amount will be matched 100 percent by the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council.

The Knights plan to distribute approximately 3,000 baby bottles during Masses the weekend of Sept. 10 and 11, and will ask participants to collect spare change over a four-week period.

Incarnate Word Knight Steve Dickhut said the council developed the idea from Lutherans for

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Knights of Columbus Council 9981, Incarnate Word Parish

Life, which coordinated a similar effort among 10 churches and seven schools, raising \$30,000. The donation went toward outfitting Thrive's Mobile Medical Unit and its operating costs.

The second phase of the campaign, said Schultz, is a “brigade,” in which the Knights will invite other councils in the St. Louis area, schools and other interested organizations to duplicate its efforts to raise funding for additional ultrasound machines and support for pregnancy resource centers in the area.

The Knights also have teamed up with fellow Knight and parishioner Chuck Neff, president of the Salt River Production Group, which this week filmed a promotional video for the parish campaign.

As it stands, there are only two clinics in Missouri that currently offer abortions, said Schultz — Planned Parenthood in St. Louis and Columbia.

“Our goal is to rid Missouri of abortions,” he said. “And with us being in St. Louis and having the Knights behind us, we have some pretty serious ammunition.”

For more information on the “Meet Life” campaign, call Doug Kissinger at (417) 336-2023 or email dkissinger@centurytel.net. Those who want to financially assist in purchasing an ultrasound machine should contact Lou Holtmann at (636) 285-1600 or email loukofc@yahoo.com. Donations can be sent to “Meet Life,” Columbian Charities, c/o Lou Holtmann, 7007 Carriage Hills Meadows, Cedar Hill, Mo. 63016.

For more information on the Baby Bottle campaign, visit www.IWknights.com; email KofCBBB@IWknights.com; or call (314) 576-5366, ext. 10.



JERRY NAUNHEIM JR.

The Thrive St. Louis Mobile Medical Center sat in front of Planned Parenthood in the Central West End Aug. 16 during the filming of a promotional video for the Knights of Columbus. The promotional video was being shot by Chuck Neff and Salt River Production Group for the Baby Bottle campaign at Incarnate Word. Neff is a member of the parish and a fellow Knight with Incarnate Word Council 9981.

Thrive brings services directly to women

BY JENNIFER BRINKER
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Thrive St. Louis' Mobile Medical Center has only been on the move since spring, but already it is having a major impact on the women the organization serves.

Last March, Thrive officially launched its Mobile Medical Center, a 35-foot converted RV that provides free ultrasounds, pregnancy testing and other services to women who are facing untimely pregnancies.

The mobile center visits three locations: North St. Louis City, on

North Grand Boulevard near North Florissant Ave.; in South St. Louis City at the corner of South Kingshighway and Chippewa; and near the Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in the Central West End.

Bridget VanMeans, president of Thrive, said two weeks ago, she learned that Planned Parenthood was no longer scheduling abortions on Thursdays, the day the RV is parked near the facility.

“Our vision here is very clear ... and it has not just to do with the impacting of abortion here in the city; it's our goal, really, of ending abortion in the city.” Thrive has set

a target date of 2016, she added.

The mobile center, said VanMeans, is one of the strategies Thrive is executing to better reach out to women who might be considering an abortion.

“One of the things it allows us to do is to go into abortion-rich territories — we've been able to identify the top 10 zip codes where the most abortions are coming from. We're able to take the mobile center into areas that have never been penetrated before.”

For a woman who lives in pov-

erty, it often means her life revolves around a small, “six-block radius,” said VanMeans. “They're not mobile. Even the Lindell (Thrive location) is like another world for them.”

VanMeans said the goal is to have a second RV unit in the future. Thrive also is in need of volunteer drivers for the RV; a special license is not needed, she said. For more information on the Mobile Medical Center, call Katie Totra at (314) 783-3040, ext. 227 or email ktotra@thrivestlouis.org.

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