



The **helpline**

Fall 2010

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Back to School issue

www.LifeChoicesCenter.org

Sheldon Burns: student, mom, "hurdle-jumper"

This year, it's not just Sheldon's kids heading back to school. She is starting classes herself—another of many steps she has taken recently toward creating a better life for herself and her children. Sheldon has been a client in the Smart Choices mentoring program for just over a year. She comes to Life Choices Center every Tuesday for two hours and spends the first hour with April Capparuccini for parenting lessons, and the second hour with Debbie McCoy for Bible study.



L to R: Debbie McCoy, Sheldon Burns and April Capparuccini.

hour session, so April connected Sheldon with a friend of hers, Debbie, for the Bible study.

Is studying the Bible something new for you, Sheldon?

Yes. My family all believes in God, but it doesn't go any further than that. I've been kind of trying to find my own way. Before it was like, 'I know there's a God.' But now I know how to follow him and live for him. That's what I want for my kids.

Debbie, what has it been like meeting with Sheldon for Bible study?

I felt totally comfortable with Sheldon from the first meeting. I could tell right away she was eager to dig in. That was so encouraging to me! April and Sheldon had started the book of John, so we finished that, and then we went through all of I, II and III John. Now we're working on Colossians. Sheldon is so self-motivated. She understands that she has made some wrong choices and mistakes in the past, and she has not let that stop her. I picture her as being a hurdle-jumper. I leave every session feeling so inspired by her!

Sheldon, how did you get connected with Life Choices Center?

My little sister was coming here and told me about it. So I started coming to the parenting classes. Honestly, I came because I needed diapers.

And now you've been coming for more than a year.

When I first came it was with the wrong intentions, but that has changed. Now I don't even care about the points. I come mainly for the Bible study—and the parenting stuff I do with April. That's helped me a lot, especially with my daughter. She used to get in trouble all the time in daycare, but now she is getting good marks in school.

April, have you noticed a difference in Sheldon's daughter?

The difference is like night and day. When we first met, Sheldon kept telling me how bad her daughter was, and she insisted on bringing her in so I could see. I said, 'that's okay,' but she insisted. The first day she brought her

in, Adrianna was biting, kicking and hitting, and she peed in the chair. So we started practicing the 1-2-3 Magic discipline technique right then and there. What really impressed me with Sheldon is that she was willing to trust us and give this thing a try. It was a big battle with this little girl. But Sheldon did it. She went home and practiced. Just a few days ago, they were at the Center when Adrianna started acting up. I watched Sheldon implement the 1-2-3 technique. At first it didn't work, so she tried it again, and Adrianna listened! I am so proud of Sheldon. She has even been getting comments from her family members about how well she disciplines her children.

In addition to the parenting lessons, Sheldon and April started doing a Bible study together and some tutoring in grammar, math and vocab. Sheldon knew she wanted to go back to school, and had asked April to help her brush up on long-neglected skills. It soon got to be too much to cram into their one-

Speaking of hurdle jumping, Sheldon, you recently started school. That can't be easy with three little kids!

Yes, but I want to be able to get a job that pays more than seven bucks an hour! I'm doing a self-paced online program for medical coding and billing. I chose to do online classes so I could take care of my kids. Eventually I want to be a physical therapist. When I finish this program, I want to get a job in a medical office, and hopefully that will open doors for me.

The students are back!

A few weeks ago my wife and I were in Wal-Mart, and a young female student approached us. She spoke very little English and was trying to locate dorm room supplies. We pointed her in the right direction. She smiled at us and continued on her way. I said to my wife, "The students are back!" I love this time of year when the Binghamton area buzzes with the energy of returning students and back to school activities.



Russ Smith, Executive Director

Over 18,000 undergraduate students attend our local university and community college. Approximately half of them are women—that's 9,000. On average in this country, about 10 percent of all college-age women become pregnant each year.* Statistically, that means 900 girls from our local college campuses will get pregnant this year! And that doesn't even count the students from area high schools—like Binghamton High School, across the street. Where will they go? What will they do?

Life Choices Center is a place they can go for help. Our caring and competent staff is ready to meet them at their point of crisis and help them navigate difficult decisions and life changes. And we're doing it without any government funding.

Earlier this year the federal government began offering grants to organizations that assist pregnant and parenting teens. In total, they will dole out \$25 million per year! It was tempting to apply for even a small chunk of that cash. But in the 18 years that Life Choices Center has been serving women and men facing a crisis pregnancy, we have never accepted government funding. Why? Primarily because we don't want any restrictions or even any possibility of restrictions about what we can and can't discuss with our clients.

Clients like Sharon, who recently said that "coming to Life Choices Center has brought God into my life." Or Mike** who told me the Bible is finally beginning to make sense after years of not understanding it.

So we won't be applying for that government grant. Instead, we'll trust God to continue providing for our needs, as he has done faithfully for 18 years—in many cases through people like you.

Would you consider making a special gift to Life Choices Center to help us remain independent from government funding and reach out to students at risk for abortion this school year? You can use the enclosed card to make your donation, or you can give online at www.LifeChoicesCenter.org/partners. If your workplace participates with the United Way's giving campaign, our United Way number is 4116.

On behalf of Sharon and Mike and the students who come to us for help—**thank you!** Support from generous folks like you enables us meet not only the physical needs of people, but also their spiritual needs.

*Guttmacher Institute
**not his real name

our mission

Life Choices Center is a frontline outreach to the Greater Binghamton Region that provides competent and caring services to women and men in unplanned pregnancies and other related situations.

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- Glenn Griffis, Member
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our regular volunteers

- Paula Alter, Della Barnes, April Capparuccini, Joanne Crosby, David Curtis, Carmen D'Achille, Lori Dayton, Evelyn Edwards, Jeanette Farr, Susie Ganoung, Sherrie Gay, Jeanne Marcello, Don Morgan, Mary Morgan, Megan Reed, Kirsten Reynolds, Tammy Rude, Jen Segrue, Andrea Smith, Susan Stoddard, Deb VanBrunt, Mary Wade, Michelle Welch, John Westerman

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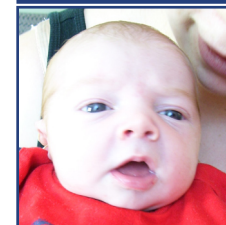
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Life Choices Center news

Welcome to the world!



Noah, April 2010



Ivan, Aug. 2010

We love celebrating with our clients when their babies are born! So far this year, we've welcomed Alaina, Arianna, Elyza, Hezekiah, Ivan, Minika Jo, Natalie, Noah, Olivia, Owen, Rakenzie, and Sophia.

Read this guilt-free!

Have you ever wondered why we continue to send out a paper newsletter in a time when finances are so tight? Surely we could save money if we just emailed the newsletter, right? Allow us to set your mind at ease. Here's how we are able to continue sending this newsletter the old-fashioned way:

- Our newsletters are printed at no cost to us, thanks to the generosity of Rod Smith, a friend of Life Choices Center.
- We get a super cheap bulk mailing rate (around 11 cents a copy).
- A couple years ago we cut down to three newsletters per year instead of four, to trim costs.

So much happens at Life Choices Center on a daily basis, and there's no way we could fit in all the great stories—even if we did a newsletter every month.



This Week at the Center is our bi-monthly e-newsletter with news and short stories about what's happening here. Email info@lifechoicescenter.org to stay connected this way.

Students, abortion & text messaging

About half of abortions in this country happen to women between 15–24 years old. In other words: high school and college-age students. Because students are so vulnerable to abortion, we have made reaching out to this age group one of our primary focuses. One small way we're doing this is by being reachable by their primary mode of communication: text messaging. Since we added a texting feature to our phone number a few months ago, we've corresponded with dozens of clients by text messaging.

Teen moms unite!



The Teen MOPS team clockwise from top left: Lynn Greene, Judy Rowe, Jean Ehn, Andrea Smith, Joanne Clements, Jess Austin, Jamie Hundley.

The new Teen MOPS group is kicking off in September. The goal of the group is to provide a comfortable place for young moms to connect with each other, hang out, share a meal, learn about parenting issues and develop relationships with women who are a little further along in life than they are and who care about them. The group is open to moms and moms-to-be age 21 and under. Please spread the word! There's more info at www.facebook.com/BinghamtonTeenMoms or by calling Lynn at 607.693.1971.

Life Choices Center's Back to School calendar



August 28, 2010
Binghamton University Fest

September 7, 2010
Fetal development presentation to Ridley Lowell students

September 21, 2010
BU's Showcase of Community Opportunities

September 22, 2010
Back2School BBQ for Binghamton H.S. students

Sept/Oct 2010
Student focus groups to help improve outreach to students

October 2010
Open house for Binghamton High School staff, our neighbors from across the street

Other upcoming events

2nd & 4th Tuesdays
Teen MOPS meetings at Crosspoint Community

September 20, 2010
Swing for Life golf tournament

November 6, 2010
Beyond the Choice memorial service

January 2011
New volunteer training

Spring 2011
Banquet for Life (typically has been in the fall)

Gemma's story, part 2

Last year we printed Gemma Newton's story. Here's a quick recap: Gemma lives in Manchester, England. Eight years ago she had an abortion, which affected her deeply. When Gemma became a Christian she didn't know how to deal with her pain anymore. "Before, I could mask it with drinking and drugs and pretend I was okay," she said. "Now I had to *deal* with it, and I didn't know how!" One evening Gemma entered an online Christian dating chat room thinking maybe she'd meet Mr. Right. Instead, she met Jill Hilkert, a volunteer with Life Choices Center's Beyond the Choice abortion recovery program. Over the next few months, Jill and Gemma corresponded by phone, email and instant messaging and worked through the Bible study, *Forgiven & Set Free*. "The study really helped me to come to terms with the abortion and take responsibility for the decision I made. More importantly, it helped me seek God's love and comfort and dig into his Word," Gemma said. "He confronted me with my fears, guilt, shame, anxiety, anger and depression—and with his forgiveness and acceptance." Gemma's life has taken some twists and turns since we published her story, and we thought we'd update you on what's been happening with her lately.



Gemma and Jill in May 2009 at a Christian Women's conference in Rochester, NY. That was Gemma's second trip to New York to visit her mentor. The first was in 2008 while they were still going through the abortion recovery study.

What are you up to these days?

For my full-time job, I travel around Manchester to hair salons to teach and assess young apprentices. But my life is taking a huge turn at the moment! I'm going through an assessment to become a foster parent for 3-6 year-olds who have come been taken away from severe abuse or neglect situations. They would stay with me about 12 months as part of a treatment program

to build their self-esteem and get them ready for a full-time family home. I am also still involved with a pregnancy center near my town. I work on the helpline every Thursday.

Have you had a chance to share your story with others?

I have shared about my abortion with my church and with people on the help line. I've also shared with friends and some of my stu-

dents who have been in a crisis pregnancy situation.

Have you stayed in touch with Jill since you finished the study?

My relationship with Jill is amazing. We are always in touch and talk by phone a couple times a week. I am soooo blessed that we have a close relationship, emotionally and spiritually, despite the thousands of miles. I will love her forever!



Team Tie-Dye won the award for having the fastest team average (32.5 minutes). They also won "Best Team Spirit" award, for obvious reasons. L to R: Nikki & John Turner, Emily Wilcox, Zach & Stephanie Smith, Tyler Rathmell, Dan & Rebecca Rathmell.

Run/Walk for Life 2010

Around 80 people participated in the Spiedie Fest's Kelly LaBare 5K race on behalf of Life Choices Center. It was a gorgeous August morning, the park buzzed with activity, and it was a great race. Lots of



Rachael Grubb won our fastest female award with a time of 22:59.

people at the Spiedie Fest saw our shirts and asked about them, generating some good publicity for Life Choices Center. The event brought in around \$9,300—just shy of our \$10,000 goal. We're already looking forward to next year. It's not too early to start training!



Nori Martin was our top fundraiser with a grand total of \$762!