



Several Sources founder Kathy DiFiore with one of the thousands of people helped by the shelters. (Photo credit: [severalsourcesfd.org](http://severalsourcesfd.org))

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## Several Sources Shelters: Where There's Always Hope

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Patty Knap

Every pro-lifer has heard the pro-abortion charge that pro-lifers don't care about the baby or her mom after the birth. We're all just about "don't have an abortion," and after persuading the young pregnant mom to keep her child, we disappear from the scene.

Try telling that to any of the thousands of young women Several Sources (SS) maternity homes has helped way after the birth of their child!

Over the past 35 years, young women in unplanned pregnancies have found their way to Kathy DiFiore when they had nowhere else to turn. She has spent more than half of her life as the “shelter lady,” taking vacant convents and other buildings in New Jersey and turning them into shelters for unwed pregnant women.

When DiFiore took a pregnant teen into her New Jersey home in 1981, she had the experience of having been homeless herself. She'd left an abusive marriage and bounced from friend to friend. “No one can understand what that feels like unless they experience it,” said DiFiore. “But while I was homeless with only the clothes on my back and moving from friend to friend, I always had God in my heart. He was always walking beside me. It truly was the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi that comforted me most at that time.”

Eventually she found a job and a home, but the experience of homelessness stayed with her. The life of St. Francis inspired DiFiore to take in a woman who had adult acute leukemia, and an elderly woman who needed a temporary place to stay. “I thought, what better thing to do (next) than to take in a pregnant teenager — so I ran an ad in the personal column of a local paper: ‘Pregnant? Need Help? Call.’ And the pregnant teens started to call me for a place to live.”

After housing several pregnant women free of charge, DiFiore faced a fine for “operating an illegal boarding house.” A congressional bill was introduced to exempt non-profits from the law. The bill wasn't moving. DiFiore contacted Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who was in New York at the time. A letter from Mother Teresa helped convince those opposed to the legislation to change their minds. DiFiore and Mother Teresa remained friends from then on.

“This is the most compassionate person I've ever met in my life,” says benefactor Christie deNicola. She first learned of Several Sources as class mom for her daughter's Catholic school. Every year the school held a baby shower, with students collecting money from their allowances, babysitting, etc. for the baby-saving work of Several Sources. All the money collected was then used to purchase baby clothes, diapers, car seats and more.

“It was just so great when Kathy would come to the school herself with one or two of the babies staying at the home, so the students could see directly who they were helping. They'd present Kathy with the gifts they'd purchased, and she would tell them about how it helped the young moms.”

Quite a few Catholic elementary and high schools in the area continue to hold baby showers or baby bottle campaigns. “I was so intrigued by learning of SS right in my neighborhood. I started dropping off things now and then, and eventually my husband and I became involved financially supporting them. These homes are really having an impact. It's so great to see charity in action.”

Several Sources now runs three pregnancy shelters that provide free housing and prenatal care to women in need. Parenting, bible study, and chastity education are key components of the shelter programs. They also run a daytime shelter called Ladies and Babies Rest in Newark, which complements the nighttime shelters in the city available for the homeless only to sleep. In 2012,

Several Sources launched the Gift of Hope Sonogram Center in Englewood, where women can receive a free sonogram, counseling, and direct contact with shelters and their resources. Research has shown that 85% of women leaning toward an abortion choose life after seeing the baby's ultrasound, and tragically, abortion centers won't show their pregnant clients their ultrasound photos.

Several Sources has no age restrictions. Those who have stayed with SS have been as young as 11 and as old as 41. Currently on their Board of Directors is a woman who was 14 and pregnant when she came to stay. Now in her thirties, married with three children, her daughter brought tears to everyone's eyes at a recent fund raiser when she said five simple words, "Thank you for my life."

One especially beautiful aspect of the maternity home in Ramsey, New Jersey is the Garden of Life, based on the apparitions of the Blessed Mother to St. Catherine Labouré. The backyard has been turned into a peaceful setting dedicated to the Blessed Mother, with beautiful plantings, benches, and pictures of babies that have been blessed by their time at the home. A benefactor donated a large statue of the Blessed Mother. As each new young woman comes to stay at the home, she is welcomed by a walk through the prayer garden with Kathy to show her the love of God for her and her baby. DeFiore says:

I take her to 'six stations' and explain our Catholic belief that, since Mary was given her soul immaculate at the very moment of conception, all preborn babies must also possess a soul from the moment of their conception. I ask her to consider the soul of her child. I then tell a pregnant woman that, at this special time, she is the custodian of the physical as well as spiritual life of her preborn baby. I explain that through the support of our wonderful benefactors, there is this safe haven where she and her baby can stay for up to one year after birth.

DeNicola says:

The grounds are just wonderful. Most of these young moms come from very chaotic lives and often a non-spiritual background, and it's just such a lovely, peaceful place to show her Several Sources is there to support her and her child and to help make her life better. It's a powerful statement for them.

But staying at one of the maternity homes isn't the end of the love and support for the moms and her children. Several Sources keeps in touch with her until her child is 18 years old. The moms and their children are contacted regularly to see what they might need help or direction with. Quite a few have returned to help out in one way or another at one of the homes. Children are remembered with birthday cards.

Most of the women coming into Several Sources have "a lack of knowledge of God, but once they get into the shelter program there's the concept of grace — that they are loved, and that God loves their baby, and that he is accessible to them. And that's a good thing, a good thing," she said.

DiFiore's pro-life work was featured in the movie, "Gimme Shelter." The main character is a composite of two young women who have been assisted by SS. A pregnant teenager flees life with her drug-addicted mother and ends up living on the street before being welcomed into her first real home at SS. "I thought this movie was an excellent depiction of what these women go through in an unplanned pregnancy," she said. "They need a support group, love, confidence, and a direction so they can become good mothers." Writer-director-producer Ronald Krauss, who spent more than a year visiting DiFiore's shelters, "captured it magnificently," she added. The shelter in Airmount was the location of the movie filming. The Archdiocese of Newark permitted the use of Our Lady of Sorrows in South Orange as the location of the church scene in the movie. This was the first time in 20 years that filming was allowed in the archdiocese and came about through the strong relationship between SS and the archdiocese. The movie has played in over 50 countries, including China, and in a private screening at the United Nations Headquarters.

Fundraising is a constant effort. With no professional fundraisers, SS relies on contributions from talks at parishes, an annual golf outing, Knights of Columbus councils, word of mouth, an annual dinner/auction, and the baby bottle drive. An annual charity raffle is held to fund upkeep of the homes, utility bills, staff, food, diapers, and everything else. One big boost came when Bill O'Reilly of Fox News mentioned on air last year that, "Several Sources is one of the best charities in the world to put your money." He also has SS listed as one of his "favorite charities" on his personal website. "We feature our baby saving work and leave the rest up to God who through our prayers and faith has never let us down," says Kathy.

"It's a deeply sacred, religious holy ground," she recalled. "When you walk there, you feel not just inspired, but you feel the presence of God. It's not like any place on earth. So many babies have been saved there."