

Pregnant teens find saving grace in Oregon

By Allison Hurtado



Cindy Sorum was working at an all-girl's school in downtown Portland, Oregon, when a teen came to her for help. She was pregnant, and her parents had kicked her out. She had nowhere to go. Cindy brought her to a maternity house that took in pregnant teens. Somehow Cindy wound up on their mailing list and began receiving newsletters. It was an advertisement in that newsletter that got her thinking.

"The ad said they needed house parents. I saw it and thought, well that will never work for us," Cindy said. "Several days went by and I started praying about it and had my daughter in Texas pray too. I finally brought it up to my husband, but he thought they wouldn't allow our dog to live there."

The more Cindy and her husband Skip talked and prayed, the clearer it became they needed to apply. They did, and the day of the interview, when Cindy arrived the gates to the home were closed. Wondering if this was a sign about the job, Cindy called them.

"I found out the gates were closed because the executive director had her dog at work with her," Cindy said. "God showed us right away it was perfectly fine."

The Sorums lived and worked at the maternity house for four years. Unfortunately the home lost the property, and moved out of Hillsboro. Cindy and Skip stayed in Hillsboro,

thinking that chapter of their lives was over. Joel Mason, pastor of [West Valley Community Church](#), thought God might have a different plan for Cindy and Skip.



Over the course of their four years at the maternity home, the Sorums brought the pregnant teens to Sunday services at WVCC. Although Cindy wasn't sure how they would be received at first, a deep relationship developed between the girls and the congregation. Pastor Mason recognized the Sorum's dedication to using the gifts God had given them. What better way than opening their own home?

"As we started these conversations, God began working on them," Joel said. "At our church we are always looking to encourage our people to get behind what God was calling them to do. And it came together."

To figure out the legal process, the Sorums sought counsel from an attorney, who had adopted a child from one of the girls at their previous maternity home. He agreed to do the legal work pro bono. Together, they kicked off the process to launch [Saving Grace Maternity Home](#) in November 2014.

Thanks to media coverage, a local couple saw the Sorums need for a home and graciously offered theirs. They wanted to sell, and felt their home was perfect. Cindy and Skip took a tour and agreed. For the Sorums there is an apartment above the garage, and enough space to house four girls with a spare emergency bed for a fifth. It's also located in the school zone Cindy wanted; the high school has a daycare for teen moms, with a private bus that will pick up mothers and babies in the morning.

“The home even has central air. We are really excited about that,” Cindy said laughing. “Central air is a rare thing in Oregon. With pregnant teenage girls, you really need it.”

The girls who will live in the home are selected by Cindy and a counselor. They must apply and be interviewed. Once the girls move in, they will be required to complete chores, work or attend school 20 hours a week and go to church on Sundays. The girls will also participate in life -skill classes such as budgeting, personal hygiene and how to grocery shop.

Many of the girls Cindy has worked with were kicked out by their parents. Either they refused to believe their daughter is pregnant, or they could not provide for them.

“Some parents tell their daughter, ‘I’ve already got three kids and I’m on Welfare and I can’t take care of you and your baby. You need to find somewhere to live,’” Cindy said. “The parents will come in with their daughter and sign all the paperwork and just walk away. It’s tough.”



But even tougher for Cindy is when they leave. A lot of the girls call Skip and Cindy their parents and name them as grandparents for their children. Some of the girls from Saint Child still attend WVCC services. Others have gone off to college. For Joel, these success stories are what makes the work to get a home running worth it.

“Last year there were 1600 abortions in Washington County,” he said. “A lot of these girls just have nowhere to go. We have a strong pro-life standpoint as a church, but we can’t just talk. We have to be the one who draws people together.”

And they have. Since February 2015, WVCC has helped host golf tournaments, dessert get-togethers and other fundraising efforts. They have raised over \$60,000 of the \$150,000 the Sorums need to purchase the home. The couple who owns it are graciously waiting for them to raise the cash. They will not sell until the home is fully funded.

“Just this last Saturday night we participated in a concert fundraiser. Only 40 people attended,” Cindy said. “But we raised \$6,000. It’s all about who God wants there. I’ve had a lot of support, and pastor Joel has been amazing at organizing things.”

Above all, Cindy’s hope for the girls is finding Christ. She believes Saving Grace Maternity Home will not only be the place for them to learn how to raise a baby, or help decide if adoption is right, but a place to find their true home.

“I have to be really tough. I do grow close to them. Skip and I both do,” Cindy said.

“When they leave, they are part of your heart. God gives us these girls for a season of their life, and we have to do everything we can to plant the seed of Jesus Christ and bring them into relationship with him. Then you have to let them go.”