

Newsletter Holiday 2020



Letter from the Executive Director

Good day! I hope that you and yours are well in this Christmas season. Like my family, yours may be learning the ins and outs of “zooming,” and connecting by phone, email, and texts. But however you are staying connected, I hope that you are able to share joy, laughter and love in this special time.

I am pleased to introduce myself to you and thank you for being part of the Mary’s Path circle of friends. The photo you see is of me with my medical service dog and best friend, Nemo, who goes with me everywhere, including to the office. To keep his mind, body and working skills sharp Nemo participates in numerous obedience sports. He holds several titles in varying sports but by far his two favorite are Agility and FastCATS. He is ranked at the 4th fastest Standard Poodle in the U.S., but he especially enjoys coming to Mary’s Path, where he has made a lot of new friends!



When I look back at who I was in the early days of my career I had two driving mantras; 1) There but by the grace of God go I, and 2) choosing to be a Mother does not mean you have taken a vow of poverty. Those humble beliefs have sustained me and make me determined to do all I can to help the Board, staff, and volunteers of Mary’s Path give the greatest care to the teen mothers and babies who are our residents.

Leadership, Compassion and Grace in the Time of COVID.

Starting a new position at the height of a worldwide pandemic has been the challenge of my lifetime. My entire life’s learnings and skills have been called upon to guide this organization,

that has been in existence since 1985, in a way that balances honoring its past with managing a future that plans for nearly 50% growth in the coming year to meet the needs of our region. I think a core answer is to call upon the commitment and passion I feel for Mary's Path and the well-being of our residents; a passion that is also felt by our staff and Board. As you may know, we are 1 of only 5 programs in California that serve this vulnerable population.

COVID-19 has meant many things to many people in these months. It has taught me to appreciate the resilience of the people we serve. Our moms and babies are survivors and they fight every day to choose life. A life that is surrounded by a family they have created, a life that is best for themselves and their child, a life that holds promise not despair. I never imagined the magnitude of the positive impact for the those I serve would sustain my soul and give me strength. I am fortunate to live the Mary's Path vision of saving lives two at a time every day.



Even with these positives we continue to be faced with the tough realities of 2020. Our major fundraiser – the Spring Gala – had to be cancelled for safety's sake. We were pleased to have generous donors step in to help replace the funds, but the campaign yielded only 45% of the total amount lost. This left us with a significant shortfall of over \$65,000. We also have seen an increase in cost of 30% due to COVID-19. Costs we could not have anticipated including an increased food budget due to a stay at home order, the loss of wonderful volunteers that did everything from daycare assistance to gardening, and overages of staffing costs to cover the 24 hour needs of residents. Additionally, the State mandated a shutdown of all donations of items for moms and babies as a safety measure. So we wrestle with the perfect storm of an unprecedented emergency that has led to big financial pressures as well.

From Adversity Comes the Greatest Gifts

Through it all, we carry on, sustained by the joy of our work, the satisfaction of helping the moms and babies in our care achieve their goals, and the unparalleled joy of watching babies experience their first Christmases. No matter how tired we are, that excitement makes us want to laugh out loud with happiness. Leadership transition is never easy, but at Mary's Path I have received a wonderful welcome and the gift of camaraderie. The staff has embraced me and welcomed me (and Nemo). They have shown me their own leadership skills and talents, and we have made great strides in a short amount of time. We have spent many long hours working on creative alternatives to mandated stay at home orders, quarantines due to COVID-19, and planning for unprecedented changes coming 2021. I am proud to say I am a part of the team at Mary's Path, and so grateful for the support of our friends and family for all you do to make our work possible! On behalf of the Mary's Path Board of Directors, staff, and residents, I wish you and yours the joy of this season, a Merry Christmas, and a New Year filled with health and happiness!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jill', is written on a white background.

Milestones

Here at Mary's Path, we measure milestones rigorously, like any good organization, but we also measure them in first smiles, first words and first steps. Here are some recent milestones of which we're very proud!

- On June 9th a little boy entered the world and met his mother for the first time.
- On August 16th an 8 month old boy learned how to feed himself finger foods for the first time. Discovering the taste and texture of food was so fun and exciting!
- On September 22 a little boy turned 2 and has since discovered the power of language as he learns new words every day.
- On September 30th A 10 month old girl took her first steps!
- On October 20th a 7 month old boy learned that he could clap his hands together to make noise!
- On October 30th a 3 month old girl learned how to roll over from her back to her stomach.
- On October 31 a one year old little girl dressed up as a doctor for Halloween and reminded us all that we can be anything we want to be!

Supporting the Work of Mary's Path

This is the time of year when we count our blessings and when we honor the birth of Jesus by giving gifts to those we love. We think about the people and events that have the most meaning to us and bring us joy. We think about how we can bring joy to them. Especially this year, when our world has been rocked by a pandemic that has kept so many physically distant from their loved ones. Despite the challenge that this emergency poses, Mary's Path's Board and staff are sustained by the impact we can make on the young women and children in our care. Did you know we are 1 of only 5 residences in California for this very vulnerable population?

Mary's Path is the solution for pregnant and parenting teens from the foster care system and their children. We provide a healthy and safe space for teen moms who have experienced trauma, been exposed to violence, and who still have the courage to take charge of life for themselves and their babies.



I am proud to announce that our 2020 Giving Tuesday campaign raised over \$10,000 - three times as much as last year - thanks to the generosity of so many of those who believe in our work. But we still have a way to go to reach the goal for this year.

2020 has been a challenging year for us, as for many nonprofits. Costs to serve our teen mothers and their babies have increased by 30% in this pandemic and we urgently need to raise funds to close the gap. We hope you will help us by making a donation at any time this holiday season, in honor of the blessings in your life and in support of the courageous and wonderful young mothers who are part of Mary's Path. Without your help, we could not help

the young mothers who trust us. You are our blessing and we send you our best wishes for health and happiness at this special time.

Words on Our Minds Now – Luke 2: 10-14

At this time of year, as we think about the joy of the Christmas story, we are especially reminded of some very important words from the Gospel. For many of us, these words are part of the core of the definition of our faith.



And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

A friend recently shared this thought about this season of blessings in this year of chaos and uncertainty. *"This is not the year you get everything you want. This is the year to appreciate everything you have."*

Here at Mary's Path we appreciate every day that we have a residence filled with teen moms and their precious babies who have come to us in search of a better life and a promising future. It is our honor and our joy to work every day to make the world safer, happier, and better for them. And to spread to our family of donors and volunteers the excitement and sense of accomplishment that comes from helping these wonderful teenagers.



Wish List

At Christmas time the wonderful volunteers of Mary's Path usually organize gift giving and wrapping for our residents and their babies. This year, due to pandemic restrictions, that isn't possible. This year, we are asking anyone who wishes to provide a Christmas present from our residents' wish lists below, to place the order with Amazon using the link provided, so the item can be delivered to us. This is yet another way we're having to adapt to life in 2020. With everything that has happened in the past nine months, it has been a long year for girls and babies at Mary's Path. And so, they are anxiously awaiting Christmas morning. We hope that you'll use this method if you are moved to help our teen moms and babies have a special Christmas.

[Shop Our Amazon Wishlist](#)