

Alpha Women's Center of Grand Rapids

The Merea Village

PROJECT: *room to change hearts*



*Extending a Listening Ear...Providing a Helping Hand...
Creating Hopeful Hearts.*

Never in our society has the need for Christian mentoring been more evident and the call to serve more urgent, than in the lives of young moms facing an unplanned pregnancy, poverty and homelessness.



“We fall in love
with their hearts,
good or bad.
Alpha is a safe place
for women.
The staff is committed
to be Jesus’ vessel.
All we do comes from what
Jesus would do if He were
here today.”

~ Alpha Mentor

Dear Friend of Alpha,

Since 1985, in support of our mission, Alpha Women’s Center has encouraged Biblical sexuality while showing compassion to families facing unplanned pregnancy. We continue to seek mercy for the unborn in the context and attitude of Christian love that calls us to care for our neighbor as if they were Christ himself. We emphasize the sanctity of human life as we remind our women that God chose the quiet means of a pregnancy as the method to bring humanity its Savior. It’s God’s design for every baby to be born, surrounded by the protection and love of its parents.

In 2009 Alpha’s volunteer mentors met regularly with almost 3,000 at-risk moms (987 of them for the first time) as we offered them a listening ear, a helping hand and a hopeful heart. We provided 617 pregnancy tests and several ultrasounds each month. We seek to bring these young moms and their children to a saving knowledge of Christ. We’re thankful that God continues to lead young women to Alpha. We anticipate their numbers to increase by up to 50% by the end of 2010, as we pray that God will expand our territory to incorporate another 1,500 women and up to 2,000 additional children. We want to fill the gap in daytime outreach to the most abortion vulnerable in our community, young single pregnant women and young moms with preschool age children who exist in poverty, some already homeless. Without additional space to meet the special needs of this new demographic, it is impossible to incorporate any new programs for these women and their children.

Never in our society has the need for Christian mentoring been more evident and the call to serve more urgent. We believe God is using Alpha’s volunteers to bring a revival in the hearts and lives of the women participating in Alpha programs as we see a growing number of our young moms coming to Christ.

Carolyn Koole, *Executive Director*

A Fundamental Calling For Our Times

Creating loving personal relationships and wholeness where there is brokenness is a fundamental calling and task of the Church of Jesus Christ. As a missional arm of the local church, Alpha is a conduit for mentoring, volunteer service and resource donations to women and children who may never enter the door of a church.

With more than 4,000 abortions performed in the United States each day, one third of our younger generation is missing. We believe there is a better way for the young women in Grand Rapids to face unplanned pregnancy.

despair...*joy*. confusion...*peace*. bruised...*healing*.

The top five reasons why women do not carry their babies to birth:

1. Having a baby would dramatically change their life.
2. It would interfere with job/employment/career.
3. They have other children or dependents.
4. They can't afford a baby now.
5. They are unmarried and are in an insecure relationship.

One of our women shared, "It's not the end of the world that you are pregnant. Alpha's constantly going to be there. They're like your mom." Alpha Women's Center is committed through Christian mentoring to change the hearts and lives of moms feeling inadequate to carry their babies to birth and to successfully parent them regardless of their circumstance.

Compared to 25 years ago, pregnant teens are far less likely to be married. It is estimated that as high as 80% of unwed teen mothers end up on welfare with some experiencing homelessness with small children. In 2010 Alpha has seen a 10% increase in women requesting services. Up to 95% of our women needed resources for their babies and families. A generous community allowed us to provide our women and children over 35,000 diapers and 2,500 cans of formula and literally thousands of baby items. We saw an increase in the Hispanic population visiting the center; however, the majority of women coming are almost equally Caucasian and African American. Smaller percentages are from other ethnic groups. All faiths are represented in the lives of our women. Most are residents of Kent County.





*A new home for
Alpha Women's Center
of Grand Rapids*

judged...grace. hidden poverty...resources. abandoned...accepted. unworthy...forgiveness.

“I came to Alpha because I knew I couldn’t feel the way I felt anymore. I needed someone to help me.”

For the 57% of teen moms who decide to parent their babies, there is a desperate unmet need for sustained, encouraging communities offering practical tips for motherhood, parenting, home making and teaching healthy lifestyles.

Women typically come to Alpha for a free pregnancy test, to receive an ultrasound or for resources for their babies or small children. It is what pregnancy care centers do well. However, what makes Alpha unique from other centers is that our primary focus from that point on is to build stable long-term relationships with women who are abortion-vulnerable. These women are matched with trained mentors who see them once a month. Also unique are the 20 tracks of educational programs (some bilingual) including but not limited to abstinence training, prenatal care, one-on-one GED

training, Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace, Bible studies and support groups, etc.

A mom visiting Alpha said, “I didn’t think I could go through with having another baby. At Alpha you feel like someone is going to hear you, that you have a friend who will not be judgmental.” There is a great need in our society for encouraging communities that provide practical tips for motherhood, parenting, home making, teaching healthy lifestyles and modeling a life committed to God. Mentoring creates a one-of-a-kind opportunity for collaboration, goal achievement, and problem solving.

*A Christian Community Center
for Women and Children*

Empowerment through Education, a Secure Environment & a Caring Church Community

Through mentoring Alpha offers a holistic approach in identifying the root causes of struggles facing the women

who enroll in our classes. In response to these struggles and the challenges expressed by sister agencies in Grand Rapids, Alpha hopes to extend our programs to women with babies and small children living in local shelters at night but on the streets during the day. These women must first want to mother their children and to create secure home environments. We believe this is best done through sustained, trusting relationships with other women who are trained, godly mentors. In addition, we want to introduce worship to Alpha's families at the community center (a familiar and non threatening place) as small groups from local churches meet on our site each week.

Making Room for Alpha's Children: Reach and Teach Program

Due to lack of space, Alpha currently has no children's program for the 4,000 to 6,000 children attending Alpha's programs with their mothers. We believe these moments are a lost opportunity with these children. Alpha's new "Reach and Teach" program, to be offered in the community center, will meet during the mothers' class time where Alpha's volunteers will mentor the children on social and life skills reinforced by Biblical principles. Mentoring children can help by:

- Improving children's attitudes towards their parents, peers and teachers;
- Encouraging them to stay motivated and focused on their education or other activities important for personal growth;
- Providing a positive way for young people to spend free time;
- Helping young people face daily challenges.

The typical Alpha mom is single, under 24 with multiple children living at or below poverty level. These special children have few male role models. Study after study shows that kids without a positive male role model are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior. With this in mind, Alpha seeks to establish a steady presence in these young lives allowing them to realize God as their Father who created them, loves them and will never leave them.

“Don't forget
to show *hospitality* to
strangers, for some
who have done this
have entertained
angels without
realizing it.”

~Hebrews 13:2 (NLT)



forgotten...found. excluded...cherished. insecure...safe.

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Illustration: Michael Hoskins

God's Blessing Around the Corner at 1725 South Division

The Merea Village will be a place of beauty and enrichment for the women and children of Alpha to call home; a place of mentoring (“Merea” is a Greek word for “mentor”).

Alpha has a God-size vision for a ministry village that houses our current pregnancy care center and that also includes a Christian community center for women and children. **The village's increased space and strategic location will allow us to empower more mothers and their children to become responsible, godly leaders in their homes and communities.**

Why move?

At our current location at 1055 East Fulton in Grand Rapids, Alpha sees approximately 250 women each month. The women, most often with babies and small children, meet for one hour monthly with their mentors in 5 tiny classrooms. We are overcrowded, often using other rooms in the center including staff offices. With increased numbers participating in our current pregnancy care programming we need up to 10,000 square feet. This doubles the classroom space and provides more room for inventory and a store where women spend the vouchers they earn in the classes at Alpha. If we include a new demographic walking through our doors—women and children in local shelters at night, desperately needing daytime

programs—we need an additional 7,000 square feet for a community center. Our current location has only 5,000 square feet including inventory that fills every nook and cranny available. To facilitate growth, Alpha needs a facility with approximately 17,000 square feet.

Why now?

With direction from Alpha's board we recently made an offer on a 16,250 square foot building at 1725 South Division, at a greatly reduced price. With the pending purchase of the building we will have:

- **A strategic location.** The building at 1725 South Division is convenient for urban women already visiting the center, for those living in local shelters, and for women who require bus transportation.
- **Expanded opportunity to serve.** Additional square footage will allow room for the growing number of women in traditional programming anticipated in 2010, as well as the new programs for women and children from sister organizations sheltering women and children at night.
- **Increased efficiency.** Our current facility is overcrowded for both our women and volunteers and needs a costly redesign. The open flow of the new building provides many opportunities to increase efficiency in operations for Alpha's traditional and new programs.
- **Reduced operational costs.** Alpha currently rents a facility with monthly building costs of \$5,000 a month. If we purchase 1725 South Division we could cut monthly operation costs by \$3,000 or \$36,000 a year. Even with a mortgage we would save at least \$1,200 each month or \$14,400 yearly.

What are the objectives?

- **To change hearts and lives** and impact future generations of up to 3,500 young families this year through our traditional pregnancy care;
- **To add intrinsic value** to the lives of 4,000 to 6,000 of Alpha's children and to capture time with them while offering a sense of home and creative programming during their mother's visits;
- **To educate and embrace** up to 1,200 lonely abortion-vulnerable women (some pregnant or with children) who are homeless in local shelters;
- (Future) **To create a comprehensive emergency pregnancy facility** for churches, hospitals and local agencies working with young pregnant women;
- **To offer worship** led by small group ministries from local churches, exposing Alpha's unchurched families to Christ and to the Word of God.
- **To encourage a passion** for the cause of Christ and for the lives of the unborn.
- **To build an army** of engaged volunteers committed as mentors or administrative support, offering their skills and talents to Alpha's ministry.



sadness...hope. overwhelmed...encouraged.

What are the costs?

Building Acquisition - 1725 S Division, Grand Rapids	\$200,000
Renovation Costs	\$150,000
Security/Fixtures/Furnishings	\$150,000
General Fund (15% of cost for 3 years)	\$100,000
Expanded Operations (3 years)	\$150,000
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Total Campaign Goal:	\$750,000

Our Next Step

Alpha Women's Center's board is initiating a 3-year \$750,000 fundraising campaign to purchase and renovate 1725 South Division and to expand our programs. We realize it is a God-size goal and that accomplishing this ambitious task will require significant community leadership and the dedication of local charitable funds for this purpose. We welcome visits anytime at our current facility and are happy to arrange a visit at the facility on South Division.

Would you be willing to take the next step with us?

**For more information please contact Carolyn Koole
at 616.742.0242 (work), 616.916.5157 (cell) or ckoole@alphaw.org (email).**



The Mercy of Action

Our mandate:

**“Love your neighbor
as yourself.”**

~ Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus was once asked, “Who is my neighbor?” He replied with a well-known story of the Good Samaritan: just 1 of 3 men took time to care for a robbery victim, seeing him as his neighbor. Jesus then says, “Go and do likewise.”

“Who is my neighbor?” Is it not those around us living in poverty, the homeless, single moms facing overwhelming decisions, and pregnant teens considering abortion?

Just as Jesus got to know the broken people around him and touched their lives, so he calls us to know and serve the down-trodden women and children of our city – our neighbors. **Alpha Women’s Center aims to be the presence of Christ among the most broken citizens of our city, knowing and serving them through the mercy of action.**

Lord,

Thank you for having given yourself
in intimate inexplicable hospitality.
You have been the Host to all creation.

Without dwelling, you have contained the whole world
and habited yourself in the winds,
The corners, and the depths, inviting us to be
At home with you.
Beneath the shadow of your
Wing you bid us hide, and in the depths of your
being you shelter and refuge us...

Through eternity you have been and will be
Utterly hospitable.

Help me,
Poor, faltering, unfeeling me,
To be like you,
With breath-beat and soul-heart
Poured out
Emptied
Opened.
Help me
To be given to Hospitality.

~Karen Mains (*Open Heart , Open Home*)



*Reaching out to our community
with Christian hospitality...*

God's Eyes. God's Hands. God's Heart.

Over one-fourth of the abortions in the U.S. are performed on women under 20 years of age (Association for Interdisciplinary Research in Values and Social Change). Alpha Women's Center sees this as a prescription for disaster for moms, their children and for our community. As society falls deeper into a loss of respect for life, Alpha Women's Center is committed through Christian mentoring to change the hearts and lives of moms feeling inadequate to carry their babies to birth.



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