

SPRING 2023



NEWSLETTER

We have been dedicated to serving with compassion and dignity the immediate and long-term needs of those facing unplanned pregnancies for 25 years!

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Dear Friend of Next Step,

Welcome to Spring!

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2022, there were 10.9 million one-parent families with children under the age of 18. Data also showed that 80% of one-parent families were maintained by the mother. (<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/americas-families-and-living-arrangements.html>) This is a staggering and somber number. In fact, I am one of them.

But it's not why I bring this up. A while back I watched a film called "Creed", which came out in 2015 and starred Michael B. Jordan as Adonis Creed and Sylvester Stallone as Rocky Balboa, the "Italian Stallion".

In short, the film followed the early boxing career of young Adonis Johnson Creed, son of the late Apollo Creed, and Rocky's one time rival and friend. The film begins with us seeing an adolescent Creed in a physical altercation with another young man, both housed in juvenile detention. He is an angry and troubled young man being raised by a single mother.

(As a side note, Adonis Johnson Creed is the son of an affair between a married Apollo Creed and Adonis' mother who is only ever referred to as Ms. Johnson).

Creed, we are told, grows up fully aware of who his father was. And with that knowledge the natural feelings of rejection, abandonment, and a lack of self-worth dog his heels well into adulthood. These 'prevalent' feelings are what many, many children of single parent households experience.

The scene that stuck with me the most, features a pro boxing match that is the culmination of the film and Creed's

(Continued inside)



Heather M Vasquez
Executive Director



*"One step at a time.
One punch at a time.
One round at a time."
~ Rocky Balboa*

Help Next Step Pregnancy Services celebrate 25 years of service!



NEXT STEP'S
25th 
ANNIVERSARY

Gala

Our annual Gala will be held **Saturday September 23rd, 2023**, at Holy Rosary in Edmonds. We'll have a silent auction, our famous dessert auction, and a scrumptious dinner. Our keynote speaker this year is **Emily Albrecht** who serves as the Director of Education & Outreach at the Equal Rights Institute. Emily is the former Co-President of *Oles for Life* at St. Olaf College, where she worked to transform campus culture using ERI's apologetics to foster respectful and productive dialogues about abortion. At ERI, she is using her educational background to write, develop curriculum, and teach pro-life advocates how to change minds, save lives, and promote a culture of life in their communities.

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT:

TORI DYER



My name is Tori, and my husband and I have lived in the North Seattle area for about 5 years. It is incredibly sad to me how prevalent and encouraged abortion is, particularly in our area, and about a year ago I had been thinking and praying about what I could do to better help women in our community choose life when faced with an unplanned pregnancy. I had decided to look into volunteering at a pregnancy center, and just a few days later we drove past Next Step on our way home from church one Sunday! After getting connected and hearing about all that Next Step does to help families in our area in such a compassionate way, I knew I wanted to volunteer my time and do what I could to support their work. It has been a joy to volunteer here and a blessing to get to see the families that come in to receive some of the materials and services they need!



DO
YOU
MATCH?

You can **double or triple your impact with a matching gift!** Many employers sponsor matching gift programs and will match most charitable contributions made by their employees! Check with your employer to see how much more you can help Next Step's ministry!

Examples of companies from which Next Step already receives matching funds are:

Boeing, Microsoft, Stryker, Google, Gates Foundation, Expedia

MALE VOLUNTEERS

We've been asked this a few times, so I thought I'd share why we typically do not have men volunteer on the front lines at Next Step.

It is very common for a woman or a girl to come in who unfortunately has not had the kind of relationships with the men in her life (fathers or boyfriends perhaps) that they deserve. And therefore, seeing a man at the front desk when they come in may not always convey the safe and welcoming environment we strive for.

Much as we appreciate the men in our lives and how much they truly give to the cause for life and how essential they are to our wellbeing and happiness. There are many other ways for them to help!! Please shoot me a call if you are interested.

Dear Friend of Next Step...

(Executive Director message
continued from cover)

journey. *In that scene*, Creed is getting clobbered. One eye is completely swollen shut and blood is pouring down his face. He has already been out cold once, *but managed to stagger* to his feet before the ref could reach the 10 count and call it.

It's at this point while he's catching his breath in his corner sucking down liquid and getting his injuries temporarily 'scotch-taped' up, *that* his coach Rocky says he wants to 'throw the towel' which in boxing means to stop the fight and accept defeat. Typically, this is done by the coach from the sidelines when their boxer is struggling.

Well Adonis is having none of it. He says emphatically no way, he "has to finish" (the fight). "I've got to prove it." And Rocky wants to understand what? "Prove what?"

And Creed says, "That I'm not a mistake."

And that's the fundamental idea that really hits home. A lot of homes. The mistaken belief that unintended means unwanted. Unexpected means mistaken. It's a powerful line and one that is heartbreaking in its simplicity and constant presence in the minds and hearts of so many children from broken homes,

What we at *Next Step* want to perpetuate is the inherent belief that everyone, every single person, has a reason and purpose for being, "That every person's existence means something", and has a right to life.
~ Heather Vasquez

HAVE A GREEN THUMB?

Next Step is looking for help with **planting flowers and shrubs** to further make ours a welcoming and peaceful spot for all. If you have landscaping experience or simply love to plant flowers or if you are able to contribute by donating flowers, hardy shrubs, small trees, and more, please reach out.

Welcome! Dr. Stephanie Stoke!

Please welcome our newest team member – Dr. Stephanie Stoke!

She will be heading up our soon to be opened STD (sexually transmitted infections) program, as well as (fingers crossed) our APR (abortion pill reversal) program! Welcome Dr. Stoke!



Greetings from Spokane! I hail from Cleveland, OH and attended medical school in western Ohio. I finished medical school and graduate studies in Public Health and moved to Denver, CO for residency where I fell in love with large mountains. I began my first job in Billings, MT, then moved to Spokane to start an Occupational Medicine clinic for Providence. I currently work as a Medical Review Officer reviewing federal drug screens.

I have an interest in nutrition and exercise which led to becoming a Jazzercise instructor and certified in Lifestyle Medicine. Jason and I have been married 15 years and we have one cat, Mookie, who enjoys all types of cheese and playing fetch. We love the outdoor activities available in our area and enjoy taking out our kayaks. You can also find me singing in the church choir or attending theater performances, unless it's college football season when I'll be watching Ohio State football.

I am excited to be starting with Next Step and assisting with this wonderful life-affirming ministry! ~ Stephanie Stoke, MD

A New Program

Speaking of new programs – Next Step is just a month or so away from offering our latest medical services for the community. Free of charge. We have partnered with the Center for Disease Detection (CDD) in San Antonio, Texas to offer *testing for several sexually-transmitted diseases*.



In Snohomish County alone the rate of transmission has increased dramatically. People ages 15-24 who tested positive for Gonorrhea ballooned from 180 cases in 2016 to 254 cases in 2020. And in 2016 there were 1,411 positive cases of Chlamydia, in the 15-24-year-old age range. This rose to 1,501 cases in 2020. And the reality is that in 2023, the numbers look like they will be even higher! We hope by offering these tests we can plant some seeds.

Seeds of self-worth, respect for each other and ourselves, cleanliness of mind, body, and spirit, and seeing ourselves as He sees us. As beautiful sons and daughters of the King!

PRC Partner! *"This woman has choices, and I can't choose for her. At the end of the day, she's got a choice and it's going to be her choice. Whatever she decides - I'm going to love her tomorrow."*

~ Pam Crank, The Hope Center (TN)



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Thank you

Thank you to the following churches for hosting Baby Bottle Campaigns and providing much needed material goods for our families and programs!

- **St. Brendan Church Bothell** - January
- **Blessed Sacrament Church Seattle** - February
- New church partner for March/April - **Welcome Cross and Crown Church!**

ACCREDITATION NEWS!!

We are in the home stretch!
Next Step Pregnancy Services will be submitting their application for AAAHC Accreditation on April 5th!



The staff have all worked tirelessly to prepare for this huge undertaking - thank you for all your prayers!

Interested in estate giving?



You can provide gifts to help Next Step continue to serve. We've got two stellar contacts for you - William Kessler of Beresford Booth and Forrest Fielder of UBS Wealth Management.

Beresford Booth
billk@beresfordlaw.com
(425) 776-4100

UBS Wealth Management
forrest.fielder@ubs.com
(425) 451-2344

Projects abound at Next Step!



After careful prayer and planning **Next Step** has finally taken the steps to

repave the parking lot and ensure we're looking clean, professional, and welcoming inside and out! Hoping for completion by May!