

SUMMER 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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## Reflections from the Medical Director

After 13 years of service, our founding Medical Director has decided to step down. His work and commitment to our mission on a volunteer basis for all these years has enabled us to offer live-saving ultrasound scans to hundreds and hundreds of women.

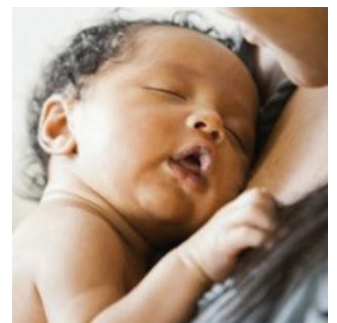
Heather asked me to write a few words for the newsletter as I am stepping down as Medical Director June 29th. I am thankful for all the patients who have entrusted their personal moments of vulnerability to our care and allowed us to serve them. It has been a great honor to serve with a team so dedicated to the well-being of mothers, fathers, and little ones. Now I find it is time for me to focus more on family life and work. It is a good time to step down because we have a wonderful new Doctor who is willing to take up the reins.

I did not intend to serve with Next Step for 13 years. My journey began with a meeting with Kathy Dizard, executive director, and Mary Mullins, nurse manager. At that time there was a desire to make the long-standing center Angelorum medical and begin to offer Ultrasounds. I was hesitant to consider the work due to its counter-cultural nature and my work and family responsibilities. My heart was moved toward the ministry by several events. One was this meeting where I was approached by two of the kindest, dearest, happiest people I have ever met (Kathy and Mary). Another was due to our prior loss of two pregnancies during the second trimester. From these losses I understood that the loss of a pregnancy is truly the loss of a child and is devastating. I didn't want a mother to have to go through that loss with an abortion and I wanted women experiencing losses to receive loving care.

*(Continued inside)*



**Heather M Vasquez**  
Executive Director



# Gala News! Celebrating 25 years of service!!

Our annual Gala planning is well underway! Remember to Save the Date! September 23rd! Invitations will be out in July with all the registration and event details! We'll have a wonderful dinner, our famous dessert auction, some one-of-a-kind silent auction items, and our keynote speaker, Emily Albrecht, from the Equal Rights Institute.

***Equal Rights Institute trains pro-life advocates to think clearly, reason honestly, and argue persuasively.***



**Emily Albrecht**  
Equal Rights Institute

## Monthly Donors are our bread and butter! (Or peanut butter as it were!)

Did you know that monthly donations, because of their consistency, are our most relied upon revenue? We can budget with confidence knowing we have those funds coming in. Being able to plan and be prepared for our clients' needs is essential, and with the unfailing commitment pledges you give each month, we are able to confidently serve. In 2022 and here into May 2023 commitment donors contributed almost \$46,000!

That's \$1800 a month, we can count on with assurance to purchase client supplies we are low on like a certain size of diaper, or to ensure that our monthly power bill is paid. Your commitment donations cover the service we use to fax ultrasound reports to outside OBs and to replenish medical supplies like the special cleaning wipes for our ultrasound machine - our most prized piece of equipment! You do that---you who give every month. \$10, \$20, \$25, \$50, \$75, \$100, \$200, and more! The phrase 'every little bit counts' could not be more true! It adds up and it is a huge morale booster to boot! For those who give - thank you! For those interested in becoming an "Angel" and pledging on a more consistent basis, contact us! We'd love to share all your dollars can do with the moms and babies and families we serve. (heather@nextstepnw.com)



## New Medical Director

The next chapter in our story continues as we welcome our new **Medical Director, Stephanie Stoke, M.D.** - our previously appointed STI Program Director. She has graciously accepted the position and Next Step keeps on keepin' on! There will be more to come on the awesome additions and experience Dr. Stoke brings with her to better serve our clients here in the north King and Snohomish counties.



**Stephanie Stoke**

## Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) and Abortion Pill Reversal (APR) News

Our new Medical Director Dr. Stephanie Stoke, and Barb Millett, our Nurse Manager, are diligently working to get these programs up and running! At this time all the consents and policies are ready, the lab equipment is purchased, and the training is complete. As of this printing we are live! Please keep us in your prayers as we endeavor to invite more young people into our clinic for this important testing. It's a wonderful chance to teach about abstinence, self-worth, healthy relationships and more.

# Dear Friend of Next Step...

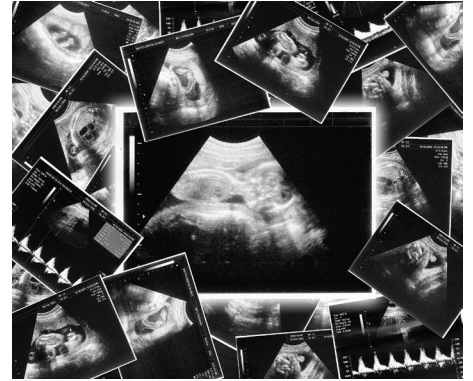
(continued from cover)

In my role reading ultrasounds I review the scan remotely and communicate with the nurse about the details, directly supporting her work. Over the years we have helped women in various circumstances. It is often difficult for mothers to get the medical care and resources they need. A Limited OB Ultrasound at Next Step offers a diagnosis of pregnancy and assistance in obtaining insurance/aid. Our social workers and nurses help parents with whatever needs they might have, from working with an interpreter to providing material goods. Our free scans reassure us that a pregnancy is viable, sometimes when no other provider is available. Our nurses walk through the heartbreak of pregnancy loss with patients, supporting them through this incredibly difficult time. Scans are provided to patients in difficult situations where support is needed to see the possibility of keeping the baby. We see women who are being pressured into abortion usually by parents or occasionally a partner or spouse. And we see women who are seeking an abortion on their own but are open to learning more.

In my role as medical director there have been special and difficult periods. One particularly moving period was when we hired Kim Berry RN as nurse manager when the center was struggling. We had a strong nurse manager, who had moved on. Kim with great courage learned what she needed to do and kept the work going by assisting volunteer sonographers who performed scans. Another was hiring Barb Millett RN. Imagine my surprise when I interviewed her and found she did art of the developing baby in the womb! Working with the nurses has been particularly moving when we have seen parents realize that they can and do want to keep their babies. At times when circumstances are dire, we've had patients call and let us know they have decided to keep their baby or come back to visit with their infant or infants (triplets once!), or text us pictures with their new little one. I also worked closely with Heather as she provided strong leadership during early COVID, keeping the center open with the unwavering support of Nancy, Marta and our nurses and volunteers. The organization was then faced with challenges from mandates, which we weathered, but not without distress. Then we had the sad and deeply concerning terrorist attack which included a future threat and an FBI investigation, and then protests on the premises and at the gala. Who would have thought that the work I described above would be met with such strong opposition?

It has been a privilege to work so closely with the miracle of human embryonic and fetal development. The process is so intricate, precise, and beautiful. One stage I find particularly inspiring is implantation. The egg has been fertilized and the new baby is just beginning to develop, unattached and working its way down the Fallopian tube toward the uterus, supplied by the resources within the egg itself. As these resources wane due to rapid growth the baby

implants into the wall of the mother's womb for nourishment. This event has been termed the first latch. It is the precursor to the second latch which will occur onto the mother's breast to feed.



There are many other beautiful moments which are worth meditating on including the moment of conception (the breath of life), and the way on an early ultrasound the living embryo sparkles with life, like a diamond mounted perfectly on an engagement ring (the yolk sac). There are moments where one almost sees the hand of God at work! I wish you all the very best with the continuation of the ministry. Next Step Pregnancy Services will always have a special place in my heart, and I will keep you all in my thoughts and prayers.

There are so many to thank: from the founders of Angelorum to all those who have helped the ministry over the years.

Thank you especially to our donors, you are why we are here! Without you we could do nothing, and we are forever thankful for your generosity. It is a great ministry that helps the least among us, as Father Michael O'Leary movingly testified to at our 2022 gala- thank you! A big thank you goes to the anonymous donor and his broker who respectively funded and purchased our building for us. That gift was a dream come true! A very special thank you to Heather, our executive director, for your tireless leadership and courage in the face of adversity, and to our prior director Kathy. Thank you to our current nurse manager Barb, nurse Kim, our volunteer nurses Elizabeth and Patty, our former nurses Mary, Lisa, Hannah, Beth, and past volunteer nurses. Thank you to the sonographers who have made our work possible: Rosa, Maureen, Barb, and Angie. Thank you to Nancy and Marta, you have done so much! Thank you to the new members on the board and those who have served over the years. A special thanks to Bill for serving as board president through COVID and Marilyn for her current leadership. Thanks to Denise, who has been part of the ministry for so long, and Kevin for unceasing technical support! And thank you to Deacon Craig, our spiritual director. Thank you to all those I am forgetting to thank, each volunteer, nurse and sonographer who helped us along the way, and everyone who has given to the ministry. Thanks most of all to Jesus who put this ministry in our hearts, who with the Holy Spirit continues support each one of us, and with God the Father is the source of all healing and life. -D.O





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**Spring and Summer Baby Bottle Campaigns  
and thank you! The following organizations  
blessed Next Step with wonderful monetary  
support and material goods.**

**Cross and Crown Church**

**St. Alphonsus Church**

**St. Mark Church**

**Calvary Chapel Edmonds**



**Are you going to the Northwest Pro-Life Conference on June 24th?**

Next Step will be one of the many pro-life ministries attending. The Northwest Pro-Life Conference will gather pro-lifers – organizations and individuals—from around this region all in the same place. We're the only ones who fully understand what it's like to be pro-life in this area. We face the same challenges, we're surrounded by the same culture, and we have a common goal. Roe V. Wade is over. It's time to work together to rid the northwest of the scourge of abortion. To register go here: <https://nwprolifeconference.org/> Like your joe and want to ensure your cash is being used for good?

