

FALL 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,

“What do you fear, lady?” he asked.

“A cage,” she said. “To stay behind bars, until use and old age accept them, and all chance of doing great deeds is gone beyond recall or desire.”

– J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*

I have always loved the character of Eowyn, Shieldmaiden of Rohan, from the beloved books of J.R.R. Tolkien. Here's how she is introduced in “The Two Towers” Book II of the Lord of the Rings story: “Very fair was her face, and her long hair was like a river of gold. Slender and tall she was in her white robe girt with silver; but strong she seemed and stern as steel, a daughter of kings.”

“Fair of face... strong... a daughter of kings”. That to me is a beautiful and enviable description of a woman -- one I would certainly welcome. Tolkien deliberately portrays Eowyn this way in the book and is very intentional about his depiction of her.

In today's age of “masculine women” characters – and even men masquerading as women – we seldom meet

(Continued inside)



Heather M Vasquez
Executive Director



25th Anniversary Gala 2023

The Next Step Pregnancy Services Gala was a HUGE Success!!! Such fun was had. Scrumptious desserts were shared. Powerful words were spoken, and money was donated to help Next Step continue to serve! Enjoy these highlights of the event.



We love this chance to get together and support LIFE



Heather greets one of our "supporters"



A volunteer promotes the dessert auction



Our dedicated volunteers make our Gala possible



Guests enjoyed bidding on auction items



We offered thanks to God for blessing the work of Next Step and giving us such loyal and generous supporters



Thanks to our very talented musicians



Nicole and Jake Forman created these delicious appetizers



Marta & Eudis Matos sell tickets for the Cash Case



Scarlett displays a chocolate peanut butter cake during the dessert auction



Desserts donated by talented friends of Next Step were won and enjoyed by the highest bidder.

(Continued from cover)

women of Eowyn's character. She is seldom mentioned in Tolkien's masterwork, but she's heroic for the words she speaks when she confronts the evil, faceless Witch King and vanquishes his terrible steed, "I am no man". Much as I admit to this being a fist-pump in the air moment – I mean she dispatched the evil King! – I've always believed Tolkien had a very different take on his creation of her. Not as a woman caged and wanting to be off fighting with the men, but rather, because of the failure of the men surrounding her, she had to reluctantly take up arms herself. As she puts it, "When the men fail, women are heavily affected!"

"Éowyn is a rejection of the idea that women should be strong masculine figures who compete with men in male domains. It's also a lesson in the despair inflicted upon women when men are abject in their duties!" (Why Eowyn is the most misunderstood character in the Lord of the Rings, a thread, Middle Earth Theological Seminary.)

Such as, when a man abandons a woman carrying his child and leaves her to raise the child alone. The woman, then becomes a reluctant shieldmaiden in protection of her child.

I'm speaking more from the viewpoint as a single mother. I know that as a single parent, particularly a

single mother, the fear of a life lost or "misplaced" is very prevalent. It can be like a cage--arguably one of her own making, but a cage, nonetheless. And the fear of becoming stuck and doing nothing else is strong and laced with despair. You won't see it. Single parents, well all parents really, try very hard to mask that type of panic. But it's there. And the ultimate terror lies in exactly what Eowyn states – that the desire and drive for anything more seeps away. I see this aura of weariness a lot working at Next Step. I recognize it. The tiredness our clients feel. Which, I might add, never overrides their effort to "take up their shields" and provide for their children.

Next Step strives to, at least for a time, put to rest those fears as much as we can in the brief moments, we have with them. Cradling a cranky baby so mom can pick out clothes without having to hold a struggling child, letting mom stay as long as she needs while baby naps, just to sit and be quiet for a time in our comfy seats, Next Step is a safe place.

I can understand how these women spend so much of their time and heart as "mom" (aka shieldmaiden) that they almost forget they, like Eowyn and myself, are Daughters of the King.

- Heather Vasquez

Interested in volunteering at Next Step? We're in desperate need of volunteers!

It's as easy as volunteering once per week for 2-3 hours. We are open Mon-Fri 10 am—5:30 pm. See nssupport.org/support to find an application. It's a truly boots on the ground way to serve and defend life in this most important of movements.



Board Member Highlight!

Hi! We are Josh and Kim Cummins, new first-time parents, and board members at Next Step. In March 2022 we joined the board to support the women and children in our community. We believe that in the time and culture in which we live, there is a deliberate effort to exploit the uncertainty and fear that can accompany the news of learning one is expecting a baby. That is why we want to be part of an organization like Next Step, providing support, reassurance and stability for mothers, babies and families with respect and dignity in a kind and welcoming environment.



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Accreditation

The Next Step Pregnancy Services clinic is now fully accredited! We're so proud of the whole team for all the stellar work on this huge undertaking. We are now fully recognized as a medical clinic in the state of Washington and will continue to uphold the same medical excellence and standards our clients have come to know and expect!



Parking Lot News

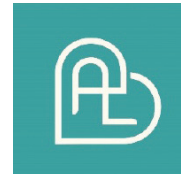
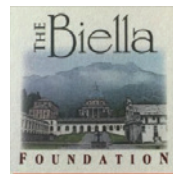
At long last (9 months!) the parking lot is complete. It was not without its "hiccups" but it's done. And we are so thankful for all the patience!!! Next up - pulling weeds and planting!!

**Thank you again to our
awesome 2023 Gala Sponsors!!**

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