

SPRING 2024



NEWSLETTER

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

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Dear Friend of Next Step,

"I screamed at God for the starving child until I realized the starving child was God screaming at me." ~ Anonymous

I saw this quote the other day and it honestly felt like a sock to the gut. How often do I look away from poverty, starvation, violence, isolation? How often am I running around in my own little bubble of existence and not seeing the needs of those on the periphery of my day to day? It's so very simple to get caught up in our own busy and fast-moving world. The one where you have your warm home and bed but don't notice the person curled on the sidewalk. The one where you open your fridge and have your pick of yummy food and don't notice the kid with no lunch. The one where your child has her pick of sneakers, boots, and sandals and you don't notice the child whose mom has to settle for old and used and slightly too big for her child. The one where you and your partner divvy up the driving to and from kid activities and school and dishes in the dish-washer and dog walks and don't notice the young pregnant mom struggling to figure out how to do it on her own.

Each day at Next Step I see young families come in looking for clothes and shoes, diapers, and formula. I don't always know their story, but I recognize their need. And I'm so glad we almost always have what they need. Most days at Next Step young women come in seeking pregnancy confirmation and/or an ultrasound to verify a viable pregnancy, and most times they are alone. I see their minds racing with the knowledge they are indeed pregnant, and I see all the obstacles and uncertainties filling their thoughts. And again, I'm struck. They are crying out to be seen and heard and understood!

(Continued inside)



Heather M Vasquez
Executive Director



Check out this astounding video called See Baby Grow!

<https://erf.science/video/see-baby-grow/>

It contains actual endoscopic videos of human embryos from 3 weeks to 12 weeks gestational age (weeks from fertilization).

Education Resource Fund (ERF) is a secular non-profit organization dedicated to producing educational projects for the public. This includes showing the facts and science of prenatal development through an App that can be downloaded for free onto Apple or Android phones.

The ERF/Science website has an extraordinary series of pregnancy-related science documentaries which illustrate week-by-week prenatal development using cutting edge endoscopic imaging technologies and procedures which enable researchers to see and study embryos and fetuses alive in the uterus with never-before-seen clarity.

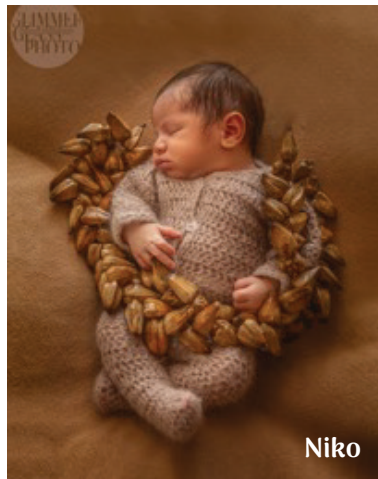


Speaking of baby pictures - Have you seen our precious newborn photos?

Stock photos? Nope ! These are some of Next Step's own babies - first introduced to their Moms & Dads through ultrasound by Nurse Barb, later welcomed into the world, and finally beautifully photographed by Suzy Petrucci of Glimmer Glass Photography. Suzy donates hundreds of dollars of classy photos and hours of time - for our Next Step families!! She does senior photos, weddings, showers, engagements, and events - including our annual Gala! The image to the right is of little Niko - born earlier this year. And below you can see Serena and Nathan.

Check out more Glimmer Glass photos at glimmerglassphoto.com

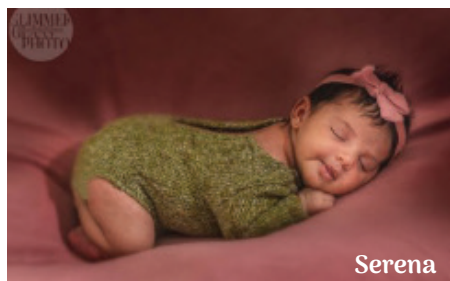
GILMIMER
GILMIMER GLASS PHOTO
GLASS
PHOTO



Niko



Nathan



Serena

Welcome Halyna!



In March, Next Step welcomed a new team member! Halyna Naumenko came to us through a mutual friend when we were asking around in the hopes of finding someone to work at our reception desk who could communicate with our Ukrainian and Russian-speaking clients who make up nearly 12% of our clients.

It's always a faith booster when God hears and answers our prayers!



Want to donate but not sure you can afford to?

I'm here to assure you that even as little as \$10 a month goes a very long way in keeping Next Step open and thriving! A donation of \$10/month (that's \$120 for the year) allows us to purchase 'Comfort Boxes' from the Institute of Reproductive Grief Care. These gift boxes minister to anyone impacted by pregnancy loss, shortly after birth.

Being able to offer comfort and open arms, as well as sending a mother home with some items to help honor her child and recognize the loss, is just one of the many ways your monetary donations, no matter how small, help Next Step to serve families.



Dear Friend of Next Step...

(Executive Director message continued from cover)

Abortion pills are rampant in Washington. Talk about an isolating experience. A staggering 60% of abortions in WA State are done via the medication Mifepristone. (NPR/washington-state-stockpiles-thousands-of-abortion-pills). Social media sites such as Snapchat and TikTok, the avenues most used by people aged 17-24, predominantly female, constantly proclaim that the chemical abortion is a safe and effective way to terminate a pregnancy. Not only that, but it's easy, quick, and comfortable, and causes less interruption in your day than your period! "A very simple and not super-uncomfortable experience", "Put on your sweatpants and just rest". (teenvogue.com/11-22-22) With endorsements like that, it's easy to see why a young woman who finds herself pregnant and alone may consider the pill. What other options does she have?

We need to work harder than ever here in Washington to ensure she knows about and finds those other options. We need to let her know that when she comes here, she will be listened to, encouraged, and welcomed... that her worries are not unimportant... that her fear is not unjustified. That this is a big deal. That it is a significant consequence, but one she can handle, because she is strong and capable and won't be alone.

~ Heather Vasquez

Reproductive Loss Grief Care

In late February I attended a presentation with several other PRCs hosted by 3W Women's Medical. They had invited representatives from the Institute of Reproductive Grief Care (<https://reproductivegrief.org/>) to teach a course from their Advanced Reproductive Grief Care Provider Course. The Institute provides education, research, and support after reproductive loss, without political or religious affiliation. One in four (!) U.S. pregnancies end in miscarriage – and this is just one kind of reproductive loss. This is a considerable number, and yet the pain of these losses goes largely ignored in our culture of instant gratification, constant highs, and the stigma of mental health issues. Meanwhile, 60% of bereaved parents experience depression, anxiety, and PTSD. I left feeling an immense desire to ensure we at Next Step are prepared and have the resources we need to be there for any woman or man who comes to us with this kind of suffering. Our Nurse Manager has also had courses on how to address this kind of trauma. Clients do not typically come to us asking for this kind of help, but during our time with them, this undealt-with grief often shows itself. Now Next Step can offer an initial consultation and a compassionate listening heart. We also have local resources which can provide ongoing care for both mother and father. Thank you for your support of this very important aspect of care.



How early does the heart start beating?

When do baby's eyelashes and fingernails form? What is a yolk sac? How does the baby get food? What is a placenta? When does life really begin? Why do some people think it's ok to abort? Why is it important to be pro-life? What can I do to help? Got a child or teen asking these questions? Well, we've got answers!

Nurse Manager Barb and I recently sat down with middle schoolers at a local church youth group and those were some of the very questions we answered. It is so imperative that we, as parents and Christians, ensure that our children know and believe that every life is precious, from conception to its natural end, and that you are never too young to be a defender of life. If your school, class, youth group, troop, etc. would like a tour of our beautiful clinic, or if you'd like us to come to your meeting or class to share about the beauty and resilience of life in utero and how we were all made in God's image, we'd love to! You can contact heather@nextstepnw.com or stop in!

Baby Bottle Campaign Thank You's!

Thank you to the following parishes for the outstanding show of monetary support of our ministry!

- **St. Brendan in Bothell**
- **St. Teresa of Calcutta in Woodinville**
- **Blessed Sacrament in Seattle**
- **Holy Rosary in Edmonds + Easter Baskets!**

Everyone exceeded their goal!

If you would like your church, organization, business, or school to hold a campaign please contact heather@nextstepnw.com





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GALA NEWS: Save the Date!

The Next Step Pregnancy Services Gala and Silent Auction will be held on Saturday September 14th, 2024.

Same time & place: 5:30pm | Holy Rosary in Edmonds
More details to come - we hope you can join us!

Next Step was on Sacred Heart Radio!

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/sacredheartradio/episodes/LTNW-163-Dan-talks-with-Next-Step-Pregnancy-e2g5sk6/a-ab0bek7>



Looking for a Classical Catholic High School in our neck of the woods?

This is a first for me as I typically keep this newsletter 100% Next Step! But in light of the struggle parents are having lately (myself included) in finding a strong moral high school for their kids I wanted to highlight

chestertonstmichael.org

a new school that had is wrapping up its inaugural year this year. Chesterton Academy of St. Michael*. Check them out!

**Note: this is not an Archdiocesan school*



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HIGH SCHOOL WITH A HIGHER PURPOSE

Volunteers Needed!

Are you a nurse or other medical professional looking for a way to serve? Next Step currently does upwards of 40 ultrasounds per month, and roughly 30 pregnancy tests per month. We need help! It's easier than you think - training provided - and it's a great way to utilize your medical experience in service. Even 1-2 days per week for a few hours would greatly help us. Contact Barb, RN - barbara@nextstepnw.com