



NATIVITY HOUSE

17141 W 143RD, LOCKPORT IL, 60431 ▪ VENUS@NATIVITYHOUSE.ORG

Grant Proposal

Mission

Nativity House is a Catholic community that supports mothers and families through hospitality and fosters sustainability in motherhood and citizenship in response to Catholic social teaching. Rooted in the spirit of the Catholic Worker Farm, Nativity House works to cultivate a healing environment focused on the dignity of each person, the dignity of work, and stewardship of the earth.

Opportunity

Our background research and recent conversations with suburban social service experts and counselors has shown that there is a definite need for organizations to address the lack of adequate support for young mothers in desperate situations. In particular, there is a lack of hospitality services available to pregnant, first-time mothers, despite the community's strong interest in providing assistance.

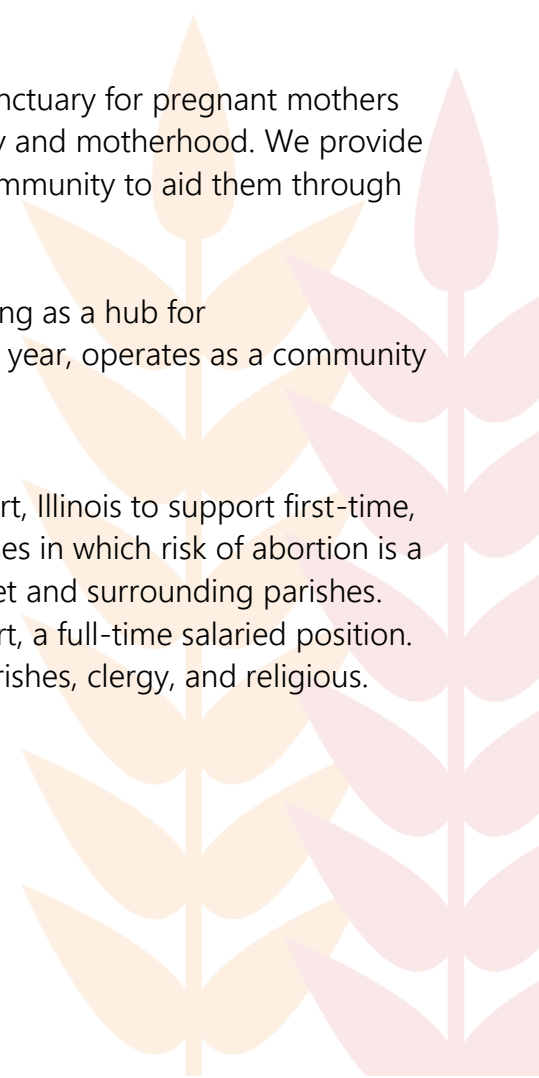
Motherhood is accompanied by both joys and difficulties; however, unexpected pregnancies often pose additional uncertainties. In the face of adversities such as poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, parenting becomes secondary – survival is first and foremost.

In an effort to address those uncertainties, Nativity House serves as a sanctuary for pregnant mothers where they can freely explore the blessings and challenges of pregnancy and motherhood. We provide first time mothers struggling with unexpected pregnancy a nurturing community to aid them through this transition and offer a dignity-rich alternative to abortion.

Nativity House further connects to the greater community through serving as a hub for sustainable agricultural productivity. The farm, currently entering its fifth year, operates as a community supported agriculture (CSA) project.

Founders

Nativity House was founded by Venus and Dr. Justin Wozniak of Lockport, Illinois to support first-time, pregnant mothers in Will County. Particular consideration is given to cases in which risk of abortion is a factor. The Wozniaks have multiple connections with the Diocese of Joliet and surrounding parishes. Venus Wozniak is the director of faith formation at St. Dennis of Lockport, a full-time salaried position. Both Venus and Justin have strong connections with multiple nearby parishes, clergy, and religious.





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Organization

Nativity House has been operating as a non-profit with 501(c)3 status since August 2011. A board of directors, with a size of eight, contains expertise in banking and corporate philanthropy, political science, campus ministry, and social work. The board is served by an Advisory Committee which contains a broad range of educators, business experts, a doula, and handymen. This committee provides general advice to the board.

The house is served by an Intake Committee, which consists of a professor of social ministry, a Sister of St. Joseph, and a counseling psychologist. The committee selects the most appropriate guest mothers from the list of applicants and advises on house procedures. The board and committee memberships do not overlap.

In April 2015, Nativity House welcomed our first guest mother. During the elapsed time, we built up our donor base, printed *The Visitation* quarterly, and purchased and prepared the home that is currently Nativity House. Nativity House is a small institution with space for two guest mothers and two full-time interns. Venus and Justin Wozniak, the founders, live on site with their daughter, Gracie.

The Nativity House property consists of the main house and a carriage house above the garage. The property sits on five acres of largely-wooded land, and has ample gardening and walking space. The guest mothers each have their own room upstairs in the main house and share a bathroom. Venus, Justin, and Gracie live in the renovated basement and two interns share a room and bathroom on the main level. The carriage house may be used to house two additional, part-time volunteers. Upon moving to Nativity House, guest mothers meet weekly to make and assess goals. These goals include education (junior college and/or G.E.D.), birthing and parenting education, counseling and personal wellness.

Project Description

The main needs of the organization include funding for housing expenses, internship stipends, |expenses toward helping guest mothers reach their needs and goals, outreach (such as Round Tables, Mass, volunteer groups etc.), and staff and community formation.

The project will be evaluated by two goals: mother success stories and outreach.

Mother success stories include:

1. Increasing parenting preparedness
2. Improving mother employability by completing education programs and participating in job recruitment
3. Healthy childbirth and successful transition to life away from Nativity House



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Outreach goals include:

1. Maintaining and growing community connections through the CSA and short-term volunteers
2. Supporting Nativity House interns and transitioning them after their volunteer terms
3. Improving connections with other Catholic organizations

Funding Sources

Nativity House makes itself known to the community in multiple ways, including a quarterly Newspaper of circulation size 1,000, an on-site community supported agriculture program (CSA) containing 10 member families, roundtables, and talks at parishes. We have a strong Facebook presence, supported by a static website and Google+ account. Nativity House has also hosted service groups from multiple parishes, the diocese, and nearby Catholic universities. These activities have led to several small donations.

Organizations we partner with: Expectant Mothers at Risk of Homelessness Task Force, Will County Pregnancy Resource Center, Woman's Choice Services, Lewis University, Diocese of Joliet, Cars of Hope Waterleaf, CareNet

Summation

The funding we receive afford us the opportunities to better serve women and children in our care as well as the local community. We strive to maintain a welcoming and nurturing environment that embraces the values of Catholic social teaching.

"All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements, and talents" – Pope Francis

