

Saint Louis Crisis Nursery

Every Child is a Story Yet to be Told

Althoff Catholic seniors Heather Gosebrink, Gabby David and Mary Schallert served alongside alumna, Molly (McGinnis) Brown '96



In the dimly lit, quiet living room, two young sisters laid curled up on a rug with teddy bears and blankets while watching their favorite cartoons. In the adjacent room a newborn napped peacefully swaddled in her crib while another was lovingly rocked to sleep. The wall in the babies' room was adorned with purple butterflies and the words "Every child is a story yet to be told."

Upstairs the older children worked together on a Martin Luther King Jr. themed art project while discussing their dreams with one another. "I am going to be a doctor," said one little girl. Another replied "I am going to be a model on the cover of a magazine." All the while the house was filled with the aromas of the delicious dinner that was to come later that evening.

The sights, sounds and smells of the Saint Louis Crisis Nursery's Centene Center are much like those of any family home in our community. The difference being the familiar roles of comforter, cook and housekeeper are performed by dedicated staff and volunteers. "When we walk in the room after nap time the kids reach up, wanting to be held. They are very loving," said Mary Schallert, one of three Althoff Catholic seniors doing their Senior Service Project at the Crisis Nursery. Heather Gosebrink and Gabby David join Mary in helping to fill the important role of "mom" or "big sister" because at this moment in time, the moms and dads of the 14 kids staying at the Nursery cannot.

The Saint Louis Crisis Nursery is committed to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. They provide emergency intervention, respite care and support for families in crisis. "Parents call us because they feel as though they are in a crisis situation and they have no other support," said Molly (McGinnis) Brown, Director of Therapeutic Services and 1996 Althoff Catholic graduate. Crisis Nursery has 5 residential locations serving up to 47 children from birth to age 12 on any given day. The average stay at the nursery is 2 to 3 days. In addition to the residential locations, the nursery also operates 7 family outreach centers. Molly began her work with Crisis Nursery 16 years ago as an intern.

She fell in love with the mission of saving babies lives, keeping kids safe and building strong families and considers herself blessed to work for the organization.

A Family Connection

"My family has been involved with the Crisis Nursery for several years. My grandparents do weekly shopping for them and my Aunt Karen (Evans) has served several roles on the board of directors over the years. Seeing my family devote so much of their time to serving others has been a great example. My senior service project is also a great reminder of the ongoing importance of volunteerism," said Heather Gosebrink.

A New Perspective

"We all face challenges in our lives," said Mary Schallert, "Our problems are so small in comparison to those faced by the kids at the Nursery. We have family members and friends to rely on when times get tough. People who come to the nursery don't have that safety net." Heather Gosebrink agreed. "Families who come to Crisis Nursery are very courageous to be able to admit they need this type of help and to ask for it."

Gabby David has also learned a lot from her experience. "We are sheltered from so much at Althoff. The Senior Service Project has been a huge learning experience. I have learned that a lot of families come here because they are dealing with homelessness. Normally when you hear the word 'homeless' you don't think of families, you think of the adults you see on the street."

"Having students from Althoff Catholic, my alma mater, at the Crisis Nursery has been a true blessing," said Molly (McGinnis) Brown. "The one-on-one love and care that they have shown to all of our little ones will leave a lasting impression, and the work that they have done to help take care of our 'home' has been a huge help to our staff. I hope that they have had a wonderful experience, a chance to have their perspective challenged, and the opportunity to see the importance of service to others."