

A home for young single moms named after Mother Teresa opens on Stanislaus Street



David and Cheryl Calire stand in the garden at the Mother Teresa House — the former St. Adalbert's rectory — in Buffalo on Aug. 24. (Mark Mulville/Buffalo News)

Personal experience inspired Cheryl Calire to move from a suburban home to a former rectory on Stanislaus Street to oversee a house for young single mothers.

“My youngest son had an unplanned pregnancy with his girlfriend,” Calire said, just hours before the 4 p.m. Mass Thursday in St. Adalbert's Church that helped dedicate the new Mother Teresa Home.

“Her parents were encouraging her to terminate the pregnancy. I found that many times people make rash decisions because they panic,” Calire said. “I was moved that my son wanted to step up to the plate. It escalated my involvement.”

The rectory at St. Adalbert's had served for more than a decade as a home to parish priests. Renovating the former rectory involved a community of volunteers. Young Neighbors in Action helped to paint over graffiti on surrounding property. A group of Boy Scouts led by an Eagle Scout installed a vegetable garden.

Next month, its new residents will share common living spaces and household chores. They will attend classes on child development, budgeting and parenting. The Response to Love Center, a food pantry and soup kitchen next door, will teach the young women employment skills.

Calire and her husband David Calire will welcome their first “houseguest” Sept. 15, 11 days after the canonization of Mother Teresa in Rome for whom the home is named. Four more young pregnant women will soon follow. The Calires signed on for a five-year commitment to launch the program.

Each house guest earns “points” through cooking, cleaning, washing dishes. Then they’ll be able to use these points to buy household items to help stock their new homes when they’re ready to leave the Mother Teresa Home.

“We are the first diocese that has a home like this under its umbrella,” said Cheryl Calire, who works as director of the diocesan Office of Pro-Life Activities. “Most of the women we encounter are first-time moms.”

She began her ministry in 2010 at St. Vincent De Paul Society on Main Street. There, she worked in a room next to the thrift shop. Within a year and a half, she said she linked 200 new mothers with parenting classes, diapers, car seats – the kinds of things they needed to get started as parents.

She named her workroom after St. Gianna Beretta Mollag, an Italian pediatrician who became the patron saint of the pro-life movement in 2004. In 1962, the saint died seven days after giving birth to her fourth child. Today, her daughter Gianna Emanuele is a doctor of geriatrics.

Sister Mary Johnice Rzadkiewicz, who operates Response to Love, is looking forward to working with her new neighbors.

“The women will be able to take advantage of our food pantry, dining room services, seminars on weatherization, counseling, health care workshops and cooking demonstrations conducted by Food Bank of WNY.

“At our Baby Ministry, they can come in and get clothes, diapers and wipes,” said Rzadkiewicz. “They’ll be getting a new lease on life. We’ll be helping them open a new pathway.”