

Birthright of Topeka, Inc.

Forty-five years after its founding the mission is the same: LOVE

Story by Julie A. Anderson

Photos by Marc P. Anderson

As Birthright of Topeka, Inc. celebrated its 45th anniversary on May 17, 2017, Lorraine Eggen, 71, said she sometimes finds it hard to believe she is only the second director in the chapter's history. Eggen took over in 1999 for

the chapter's first director, the late Frances Blindt, who served as the director from the

chapter's inception in 1972 to a few weeks before she suffered a stroke.

In her daily encounters with the women she serves, Eggen draws upon her own life experiences. She was 42 years old when she had her last child. One of her children is adopted, and one of her grandchildren was conceived out of wedlock.

"I felt I could relate to almost anybody that walked through the door," Eggen said, "I've always cared so much about babies."

Eggen first started volunteering for the or-

ganization nearly 25 years ago. But she is not the only longtime face around Birthright. At 61, Barb Conley can also be found at Birthright doing anything that needs to be done such as talking with a young woman, administering a pregnancy test, or sorting baby clothes. Volunteering at Birthright comes naturally to her. As a teenager and up until her mother's death, Conley, along with her brothers, volunteered alongside her mother and father, Frances and Abe Blindt.

"Mom didn't ask," Conley said of her volunteering. "We just kind of all went with whatever Mom and Dad were involved in."

As the only girl in a household of brothers, Conley and her mother were extremely close. When her mother learned firsthand



Barb Conley (front), Marietta Heinen (back left), and Lorraine Eggen (back right) take a moment out of their evening to pose in the office of Birthright of Topeka.



Marietta Heinen and Lorraine Eggen stand outside the agency's doors in downtown Topeka.

about an abortion, Conley remembers her mother being spurred into action.

“She was just very determined that she had to get involved and do something,” Conley said of her late mother. “She gave her heart and soul,” Conley said

Getting involved was also important to one of the organization’s first volunteers, Marietta Heinen. Heinen attended one of the first organizational meetings for Birthright held in the early 1970s at Topeka’s Most Pure Heart of Mary Church. After the meeting, she quickly became involved as she was “looking for a positive approach to the prolife situation.”

Forty-five years later Heinen remains an active volunteer and said she “absolutely loves babies.”

Reaching out in love and friendship to clients is something all three women say brings them great joy and satisfaction.

“We’re here for them,” Eggen said, adding, “If we save just one baby, it’s all worth it.”

Available Resources

Since May 17, 1972, Birthright of Topeka has offered free comprehensive care to any woman facing a problem pregnancy. That aid is provided for as long as it is needed. Below is a short list of the resources available at Birthright of Topeka.

Friendship

Birthright has no paid staff. It consists solely of volunteers.

Each volunteer provides “warmth, understanding, and acceptance in a confidential setting.” During 2016, volunteers answered nearly 350 telephone calls and provided more than 700 office visits.

Pregnancy tests

A woman who comes to Birthright may receive a free pregnancy test. In 2016, nearly 300 pregnancy tests were provided free of charge.

Transportation

Volunteers can and often provide transportation to doctors’ appointments and other appointments relative to the well-being of both the mother and the baby.

Layettes

Mothers can receive a layette for their newborn which includes clothes and linens. More than 100 layettes were provided to mothers and their newborns in 2016.

Contact information for
Birthright of Topeka, Inc.:

512 SW 7th St.

Topeka KS 66601-0414

785-234-0701

<http://birthright.org/en/landingpage/lp-topeka>

Donations Needed:

- diapers
- baby food and formula
- receiving blankets, quilts, and crib sheets
- new or gently used baby clothes
- bottles
- baby lotion, baby wash, baby powder
- bibs
- baby towels and wash-cloths
- new or gently used maternity clothes
- financial contributions