

Lori's House Offers Love and Hope to Pregnant Women

A new Christian ministry offers a refuge for pregnant women in difficult situations. Lori's House—founded by Lori Bakker—offers hope and healing to women during their pregnancy and for up to three months after the baby's birth.

The process to get in is relatively straightforward. Any woman is eligible so long as she is obviously pregnant, at least 18, and at least 30 days clean of drugs and alcohol. Mothers who already have one child, four years or younger, are also welcome. Each woman receives a background check to ensure she poses no risk to herself or others in the house. After an application and an interview, the staff confers and decides whether she'll be a good fit. If they agree, the mother can move in as soon as is convenient for her. The whole process can be done in a day, if everything goes smoothly.

Once accepted, young mothers-to-be stay in a luxurious house on Jim Bakker's Morningside property, where they have the opportunity to learn, earn and spiritually grow. The house was finished last June, and the grand opening of Lori's House took place in October 2015. In that short time, a couple of young women have already gone through the program.

The ministry is spearheaded by Administrative Director Vicki Kriese, who shared the vision with *Charisma*.

"Pastor Lori had had in her past life five abortions, and as she found the Lord and He came into her life, she recognized that she wanted a place where women could come and have that alternative to abortion, that they would come here," Kriese said. "Instead of aborting their baby, they could come here, to a place of love, support and healing for these women. So they can come here and just have their children. Most of our

mothers here make the decision to keep their child or parent their child, but some do not, so we offer another agency that can come in—Love Basket—to help counsel those women who have chosen not to parent their children.”

Kriese says the ministry reaches women from all sorts of backgrounds and lifestyles, but they’re all on equal terms in the house.

“Some of these women come from very broken homes or homelessness, so they have a place to come and live,” Kriese said. “We take care of every need they have. We supply everything, so they have nothing here they need to pay for. All their food, all their clothing, all their toiletries, their education—it’s all provided for them. And of course, spiritual growth. We want them to know there is a God and there is a plan for their life. So we bring them in, love on them and show them the way to Christ, so that they would leave a healed woman, a woman that would have faith in the Lord and that would have success in whatever God has in store for her future.”

Mothers can stay at Lori’s House up to three months after giving birth. But all women are encouraged to arrive months before giving birth, in order to give them time for counseling, job training, education and other preparatory work. After the baby is born, the focus for mothers shifts to long-term planning and goal-setting.

Women staying at Lori’s House work shifts at Morningside in order to help them earn money and develop marketable skills. Because all expenses are paid at Lori’s House, women are encouraged to put 50 percent or more of their income from these jobs into a savings account.

Kriese says each woman’s job is decided based on her skillset.

“When they come in, we get an idea of what they’re fitted for—whether that be working in our general store, the office

environment, or the media school,” Kriese said. “... If we have moms who have basically no skills, we would try to put them in an area where they can learn skills. We want them to be in the area that best suits them.”

Women who enjoy their work at Morningside even have the opportunity to remain as employees after their time at Lori’s House comes to an end.

“If our moms feel led to live here on the property or at least in the area and work here at Morningside, we would make every effort to accommodate them,” Kriese said. She emphasized it’s about setting up these young mothers for long-term success, not just assistance during the pregnancy.

Regarding education, moms can get their GEDs with help from an onsite tutor or study at the local media school. Lori’s House also offers a program called “Earn While You Learn.” The program incentivizes learning through in-house currency, called “Blessing Bucks,” which can be used at an on-site boutique that sells clothing and toys for the baby.

Kriese encouraged anyone in a desperate situation to consider Lori’s House.

“[Anyone interested] can call with any interest they have,” Kriese said. “There’s no obligation. ... I will make every effort to answer any question that they may have, so that they can know, ‘Yeah, I think Lori’s House would be a good fit for me.’ Let’s begin the application together and let’s begin the process of getting her to Lori’s House.”

Lori’s House is funded by Jim and Lori Bakker, partners of their television show, and various fundraisers and donations. In addition, a couple stores in the area donate a portion of their earnings to Lori’s House. Anyone interested in learning more about Lori’s House or becoming a donor can visit lorishouse.org.