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Suite 102  
St. Louis, Missouri 63144

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## *What difference can your gift make?*

- **\$5,000 keeps our doors open.** We operate four full-time offices with locations in Brentwood, Hazelwood, Midtown and South County including Saturdays at Brentwood.
- **\$2,000 provides professional counseling** for women facing an unintended pregnancy. Nearly 3,000 women meet with a professional counselor each year, with an average of 5 visits per woman.
- **\$1,500 provides two months of rent** for an expectant mom who is choosing life for her child, despite struggling to make ends meet.
- **\$500 provides outreach** to individuals, high schools, universities and community agencies, through speaking engagements and social media, in order to increase awareness of Birthright's services.
- **\$250 provides 5 layettes.** Each Birthright mother receives a baby starter pack filled with newborn necessities. It is a gift to celebrate her baby's birth and her courage in choosing life.

*A gift of any amount is greatly appreciated. Birthright Counseling, St. Louis is funded completely by the generosity of individuals, businesses and private foundations. 100% of donations are used towards the mission of Birthright Counseling, St. Louis. Birthright maintains a standard of excellence for nonprofit organizations.*

**Dear Birthright Friends,**

**For 46 years Birthright Counseling, St. Louis has not wavered in our mission of empowering mothers to choose life. Whether a woman has an unintended pregnancy, an imperfect life or may be carrying a less-than perfect baby, Birthright is here to help her see her strength, find her confidence and embrace hope and life.**

**Thank you for standing with Birthright, our mothers and our babies. Thank you for believing in the right of every woman to choose life for her baby and every baby's right to be born. Thank you for your generosity that enables us to put our beliefs into action. Thank you for sharing in our vision that every woman, who is considering abortion, will find Birthright and realize her worth and incredible capacity to love her baby.**

**In 2017, we have celebrated the births of 542 new babies. You have made this possible. You are part of something beautiful and hopeful. You are part of 46 years of Birthright's model of a safe, loving and confidential place for a woman to talk one on one, with a professional counselor about her pregnancy. In 46 years, no woman has ever been shamed, coerced, preached to or deceived at Birthright. Whether she is a 30 year old with an opioid addiction, a 27 year old in an abusive relationship or a 20 year old college student afraid to tell her parents, all women and their babies are celebrated. We celebrate mothers who courageously come from backgrounds of poverty, violence, depression, loneliness, shame and fear. We celebrate women listening to their hearts and standing up in a 'pro-choice culture' and choosing life.**

**I hope you will enjoy our stories of 'A Very Special Christmas'. May you have a very Merry Christmas and be blessed with health and happiness in 2018.**

**With much Gratitude and Love,**

**Maureen Zink, LCSW  
Executive Director  
Birthright Counseling, St. Louis**

**Brentwood • Midtown • Hazelwood • South County**

## Natalie

Natalie came to Birthright distraught about her pregnancy. She had a two year old daughter with autism who needed extensive care and attention. Both Natalie and her husband worked minimum wage jobs and were living paycheck to paycheck. She needed someone to help her sort out her feelings. Ongoing meetings with her Birthright counselor helped her manage her anxiety. At 20 weeks gestation, an ultrasound showed her baby had spina bifida and hydrocephalus. Several physicians encouraged Natalie to terminate her pregnancy. She struggled with thoughts of how an abortion might protect her baby from a painful life. After talking with her counselor again, she made the decision to have her baby. Natalie continued coming in for supportive counseling to adjust to the special care her baby required. She also received financial assistance for respite care and medical expenses through Birthright's Melissa's Smile Fund. Her baby girl, Maria is nine months old and a source of joy to her family, particularly to her older sister.

## Paula

Paula was a single mother of two children. She was devastated by her positive pregnancy test. She had been trying to turn her life around. Paula had met someone through online dating and he sexually assaulted her. She had taken the 'morning after pill' but it wasn't effective. She felt ashamed and was afraid to tell anyone. She knew her friends and family would expect her to have an abortion. Paula thought maybe abortion could be justified because she was raped. She spent several months in contact with her Birthright counselor, seeking reassurance and support, but continued to second-guess having her baby. Finally, she decided to follow her heart. Paula's pregnancy became high-risk and she was put on bed rest until delivery. Birthright helped Paula with her expenses until temporary disability came through. Her baby girl, Ava was born this fall. Paula continues to see her counselor as she is struggling with post-partum depression.

## Valarie

When Valarie came to Birthright, she was living with her baby's father who was physically and verbally abusive. She began to come in weekly to meet with her counselor. With her counselor's help, Valarie took charge of her living situation and told her abusive boyfriend he had to move out. Birthright helped her with her rent until she could secure more income. Valarie was in urgent need of dental care. A dentist, near the Birthright office agreed to care for Valarie without cost. She was so grateful for being treated with such kindness. She currently attends Birthright's weekly classes and has registered to get her GED. Valarie has made great strides in bettering her life and environment for herself and her baby girl, who is due in two weeks.

## Trish

Trish came to Birthright intoxicated. She had known for several weeks about her pregnancy. Trish told her counselor her very painful story, filled with traumatic events, which culminated with her brother being killed. He was her protector and support in their extremely unsafe neighborhood. After his death, Trish turned to relationships with men who took advantage of her. She felt she should abort because she couldn't provide her baby with a safe, secure and nurturing environment. With her counselor's assistance, Trish prepared a resume and found a job. Birthright payed delinquent utility bills to ensure that her electric and water could be connected at her new apartment. Her baby boy is due early next year. She continues to meet with her counselor and attend group counseling to deal with her anxiety and depression.

## Tara

Tara and her boyfriend were not planning to have a baby. They were both 20 years old and worked several part-time jobs. They decided to keep their baby. At 25 weeks of gestation, Tara gave birth to an 11 ounce baby boy, Conner. He remained in the NICU for five months. Tara never left his side. Birthright's Field Service Program volunteers visited Tara every other week at the hospital. They brought her pampering items, listened to her and were heartened by her intense love and dedication to her struggling baby. Through the Melissa's Smile Fund, a sophisticated baby monitor and a special tube-feeding formula have been purchased for Conner. Tara is unable to work due to the constant care her baby requires. Through Birthright's Scholarship Fund, she receives tuition assistance for online courses. Tara wants to pursue a career in health care. The Field Service volunteers continue to visit Tara and Conner at home. They love bringing larger diapers for Conner as they watch him grow.

Note: Names and specific story details have been altered to protect our clients' privacy.

## A Very Special Christmas

"God always knew He was going to make you. For hundreds of years He waited and waited for just the right moment. And then one day He said with excitement, 'It's now! You are here!' And God loved you into this big crazy world."

*The Sisters of Life*