



# Birthline Bulletin

Everything Life Affirming

Spring 2024

Serving families in need from conception to kindergarten.

## *Celebrating 45 Years* *of life-affirming impact in San Diego*



*Because of **YOU!***

[www.birthlineofsd.org](http://www.birthlineofsd.org)

## Looking at Past & Future



Can you believe it? Birthline is celebrating a remarkable 45 years of serving families in San Diego County, and it's all thanks to incredible folks like you who have been with us every step of the way.

It began with one woman's dream — Catherine Ewers believed that no mother should feel alone or unable to raise her family, regardless of her life circumstances. We are so far away from the garage full of diapers that Catherine Ewers started with, but we still fulfill her dream of walking alongside women and their families in a time of need.

I want to take a moment to express our deepest gratitude for your unwavering support over the years. Your generosity has impacted not just one, but over two generations of San Diegans, providing essential material goods like diapers, formula, and clothes, as well as invaluable peer support to those in need.

Above all, overwhelmed families became aware that they were not alone in their parenthood journey. They had Birthline's community to support them along the way.

As we look to the future, we are filled with excitement and anticipation for all that's to come. With your continued support, we plan to establish a new permanent location, providing a welcoming and accessible space for our families to receive the help they need. Additionally, we're exploring opportunities to expand our services so that we can meet the evolving needs of our community in meaningful ways.

Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for being a part of this incredible journey with us.

With love and blessings,  
**Andrea Estrada**  
Executive Director

## Flood Victim Receives Help and Hope

San Diego's wet winter has taken a toll on many throughout our county. This year, Birthline has seen several families affected by the flooding. Michelle (pseudonym) was one of our most needy cases. She asked that her real name and photo not be published, but she was willing to share her story.



Michelle came in on a Friday in February when our office is normally closed for appointments. She was seen as an emergency. Her petite frame was shaking and her voice was tentative. In a broken combination of Spanish and Haitian Creole she explained that her beautiful baby girl was born on Valentine's Day and that just a few days later, she lost virtually all of her belongings in the rainstorm. The apartment where she was living was entirely flooded and her landlord said she could not stay. As if that weren't enough, we learned that Michelle is a single mother with no partner and no current income.

Fortunately, our resourceful client managers jumped into action to take care of this young woman and her baby. We made sure she had a safe place to stay and provided her with all the material help we could gather, which included: an emergency car seat, a pack-n-play bed, clothing for the baby, several packs of diapers, and personal hygiene supplies. We were also able to give her a Walmart gift card so she could take care of additional basic needs.

By the time she left, Michelle looked like some of the weight had been lifted off her shoulders. She has a tough journey ahead but will be coming to Birthline for regular visits and support.

We thank God for our generous community of caring supporters that allows us to quite literally be a "shelter in the storm" for so many like Michelle.

## Birthline's Evolution

### THEN

- All client services and office operations were 100% volunteer-run.
- Client records written by hand and kept in files as there were no computers!
- Office open limited days and hours.
- Donations accepted included car seats, cribs, and other furniture.
- Food (cans and non-perishable items) were distributed.

### NOW

- We have three full-time employees (Executive Director and two client managers).
- Each office has a laptop to keep client records.
- Office open Mon. to Thu. 9am - 2pm for appointments.
- Used car seats and cribs cannot be accepted due to liability issues.
- We connect clients to County services tailored to their needs.



# CELEBRATING OUR JOURNEY

## History of Birthline - The Beginning

Birthline was founded in 1979 by Catherine Ewers as a non-profit organization in San Diego dedicated to helping mothers with unplanned pregnancies to make "life" an option. The local organization was originally a chapter of Birthright International with headquarters in Toronto, Canada. Birthright, founded in 1969, was created to give women the resources needed to carry their babies to term, and either parent or opt for adoption upon the birth of their child.

The first San Diego office was set up in a garage behind St. Jude's Shrine on Boston Avenue. The office was a bare bones affair with a desk, a telephone, a file cabinet, and a space on the floor for storage. Eventually we rented a house on Wightman Street near Highway 15. Rent was cheap because the area was slated for development as a transit center and, indeed, the house no longer exists. In addition to the desk and file cabinet, there were now a kitchen and a bathroom. The office suffered several break-ins but the only thing worth stealing seemed to be the telephone.

In 1989 we opened a second office in Chula Vista. About this time the local chapter was beginning to notice several differences in laws and conditions between our US situation and Birthright in Canada. Birthright guidelines wanted each office to be independent and self-supporting, while San Diego felt that the Chula Vista area would not have the resources to support itself fully. The decision was made to break off from Birthright and change the name to Birthline, while not making any changes in the underlying philosophy. Several other Birthright chapters across the country had already made the same decision. (To be continued in the next edition...)

## Birthright of San Diego County

## Milestones

- 1979** Birthline is founded as a support service for women with unplanned pregnancies who wished to embrace life and their babies.
- 1984** Birthline is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization.
- 1986** The first office opens.
- 1989** A second office is opened in Chula Vista.
- 1991** Name changed to Birthline.
- 2019** First employees are hired: an Executive Director, and two former clients to work in the Clairemont office.
- 2020** Global pandemic leads to a loss of volunteers & closure of the Chula Vista branch. Demand for Birthline services increases.
- 2021** Birthline hires a Program Director and two full-time client managers.
- 2023** Our current Executive Director is hired and our Program Director retires.

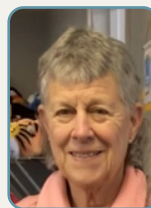
## Volunteer ★ SUPERSTARS ★ Provide Essential Hands-On Support

Volunteers have been the lifeblood of Birthline's mission since our inception. Here is what just a few of our long serving volunteers have to say about what inspires them to help.



**John - (6 years)** *Helps with building maintenance & repair, moving supplies.*

"I wanted to help an organization like Birthline that was committed to life. The dedicated Birthline staff have made it easy for me to stay here and hopefully, help them to serve the clients."



**Barby - (8 years)** *Former client manager. Sorts and organizes in-kind donations for our clothing boutique.*

"Birthline is such a good cause. The women who come in are so appreciative of everything we do. I plan to keep volunteering for as long as I can."

**Tracey - (12 years)** *Assembles our "Baby Shower" bags for mothers of newborns.*

"I love babies and want to help them any way I can. I try to make each baby shower bag special by picking a theme, whether it's baseball, or dinosaur, or rainbows and flowers."



**Shannon - (7 years)** *Helps anywhere it's needed: from answering phones, to collecting donations, to writing thank you notes.*

"I have loved every minute I've spent at Birthline, even throughout COVID. It's so important to help vulnerable women and children, and they are so grateful."



**We can't thank you enough for the time, talent and passion you share with us!**



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Thank You to Sackcloth & Ashes

Sackcloth & Ashes is a socially conscious business dedicated to community empowerment. Their objective is to highlight and partner with organizations like ours that help their local communities, particularly in the area of homelessness. Birthline is grateful for the generosity of Sackcloth & Ashes in supplying gorgeous artisanal blankets which we are able to use for both of our winter campaigns. These blankets are crafted responsibly from recycled materials sourced from Italy and finished in the USA. To learn more, visit [www.sackclothandashes.com](http://www.sackclothandashes.com)



## Give Warmth this Lent



*We often give up something for Lent. Here's an opportunity to give someone warmth and comfort, instead.*

Each \$100 contribution will provide a vulnerable mother in need with an attractive & durable winter blanket PLUS two hours of peer-to-peer counseling.



Scan here or visit our website and look for the "Give Warmth This Lent" button:

[www.birthlineofsd.org](http://www.birthlineofsd.org)

## Save the Date: Love Another Mother

Our Mother's Day event returns on May 10. Help wanted: succulent clippings, assorted planting pots, and planning committee members! Contact: [Paulette.Bohrer@birthlineofsd.org](mailto:Paulette.Bohrer@birthlineofsd.org)

## Current Wish List

- ✓ Diapers (All sizes, but especially Size 4/5)
- ✓ Pack-N-Play with Bassinet
- ✓ Co-Sleepers
- ✓ Newborn receiving blankets
- ✓ Newborn baby bottles with slow-flow nipples (age 0-3 months)
- ✓ Diaper rash cream

## Join our Board of Directors

Do you have executive skills and the desire to make a difference in your community? Consider joining our talented Board and help steward Birthline to greater success and life-affirming impact!

### Current Board Members

Mary Gillcrist Bones - Board Chair / Development  
Maureen Sterk - Treasurer / Parish Outreach  
Mary Ann Fentress - Legacy Advisor  
Deacon Dominic Guzzardo - Spiritual Advisor  
Rachel Freeman - HR & Strategic Planning  
Greg Evans - Public Relations  
Martin Bacich - Facilities  
Elizabeth Furnari - Legal Advisor / Parish Outreach

### Areas we currently need filled:

Financial Advisor  
Real Estate Advisor  
Insurance Advisor  
Website Development/Technology Advisor

For more information or to submit your resume, please contact Mary:  
[Mary.Bones@birthlineofsd.org](mailto:Mary.Bones@birthlineofsd.org)

## EVENTS

Have a few hours to spare? Want to have fun and meet like-minded mission-driven people? Birthline has several big events coming up and could use your help!

Contact Paulette for more information:  
[Paulette.Bohrer@birthlineofsd.org](mailto:Paulette.Bohrer@birthlineofsd.org)