

Gabriel Network leader says program changes lives

Anthony M. DiIulio got a glimpse of a side of the pro-life movement he had never known.

He had gone to pro-life marches and joined others in prayer outside abortion clinics.

But he hadn't met many of the people who help women in crisis pregnancies until 2003 when his wife, Ann, became a house director for the Gabriel Network, a faith-based nonprofit that provides women an alternative to abortion.

At the house in Silver Spring, one of the network's four transitional homes in Maryland, volunteers offered pregnant women material assistance such as maternity clothes or diapers and baby items - and a lot of emotional support.

"There's a point about six or nine months into it where it struck me that there's no instruction, no curriculum for doing this," Mr. DiIulio said. "It's just straight-up loving people.

"You know I had never seen pro-lifers like that. I said, 'You know, this is changing lives right in front of me. This is changing life.' It's something I really bought into."

As his wife ran the house as an employee of the Gabriel Network, Mr. DiIulio, 29, marveled at the miracles - and, after lots of prayer, found a new calling.

A graduate of Catholic University with a master's degree in sacred music, he had been working at his parish as assistant music director for Our Lady of Mercy in Potomac.

He became assistant director of the Gabriel Network in fall 2006 and executive director in June 2007.

Mr. DiIulio, the father of three children, said he hopes to expand the network's transitional housing and broaden the base of volunteers, now numbering about 200.

Pregnant women often come to the network desperate.

“When they find out there’s support available, they make the choice to bring the baby into this world,” Mr. DiIulio said.

And the network hopes to spread its message: “By actually being present in clients’ lives,” Mr. DiIulio, “we are witnesses to the culture at large that women do not have to have abortions.”