

EAS News

From Obstacles to Opportunity

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"Melissa credits the program for helping her find resources and confidence to strive for a better life"

Food, clothing, diapers, formula... That is what brings many women to the doors of EAS, but, with the help of God, mentors and community resources, what they end up receiving is hope for a better life for their families.

Melissa G is a shining example of what EAS can do for a struggling mother. Melissa entered the program in 2002 as a homeless, single mother of four who described her life as one of "just existing". Melissa knew the kind of life she wanted for her family, but she was overwhelmed by many obstacles. Raised by her grandmother after her father's murder and her mother's subsequent nervous breakdown, Melissa was unable to get a steady job after high school graduation and the arrival of her children. She leaned on family and church as much as possible, but she needed

more tools and guidance to truly make a change. Melissa said she was caught in a cycle of "bad choices" that resulted in repeated transitional and unsafe living conditions. She was overwhelmed by many obstacles, including poverty, homelessness, domestic abuse and depression.

Melissa reflected by saying, "People looked at me like I was a hopeless case." She recalls a time in church when she and her children sat down in a pew and the woman next to them frowned and scooted away.

Although Melissa can't even remember how she first heard about EAS, she credits the program for the opportunity to find the resources and confidence she needed to strive for a better life for her family. Melissa saw EAS as the first outlet she had as a mother to find solutions and make plans for an independent life.

Ten years have passed and Melissa is still an active part of the EAS program. Her goals have evolved from food and shelter to parenting and education. Melissa works part time at Springfield School District 186 as a teacher's assistant and is a student at Benedictine University, majoring in Communications. She is also a proud homeowner and enjoys volunteering at EAS to give new mothers in the program hope for the future.

In Melissa's words, "You have to have faith in God and visualize yourself being successful. You need to cut loose of the bad people in your life and want a better life for your children."

May God continue to bless Melissa and her family!



Melissa G with her children Marissa, 17, Frances, 15, Keyera, 13, and Hezekiah, 9



Jennifer Schultz Joins EAS as Executive Director

Jennifer Schultz joined the EAS staff as Executive Director, effective April 4, 2011. She comes to EAS with a background in business, marketing, nonprofit work, and a heart full of optimism and excitement for the future of EAS. "I am truly honored to be offered the position at the Elizabeth Ann Seton Program. I have always been impressed by the work of EAS and I hope to assist in strengthening and growing the organization," Jennifer commented.

Jennifer looks forward to helping EAS further the mission of nurturing pregnant and parenting women while also enhancing the organization by growing the number of EAS program sites, increasing community and business involvement in EAS, growing support from local church congregations and strengthening the EAS mentoring program. Jennifer

went on to say, "Each local program has its own 'personality', and I have very much enjoyed traveling to the different meetings to get to know our program coordinators and the women in our program."

As the mother of three daughters (Lauren-16, Megan-13, and Jillian-9), Jennifer believes strongly in the importance of empowering women to become the best they can be by giving them tools, training, and confidence to achieve their potential. "There are situations when women just need someone to believe in them and to remember God's unconditional love for all of us, no matter what our past may hold. The EAS Program allows us to reach out to women in need and carry this wonderful and powerful message."

Jennifer grew up in Girard, graduated from the University of Illinois in Urbana with a degree in communications, and the University of Illinois in Springfield with an MBA. She is a member of St. Agnes church in Springfield and enjoys spending time with her family and attending and being involved in her daughters' activities.

"Early in my career, I worked in the nonprofit sector and have now worked in the corporate world for many years. I have prayed that I would someday find a career that could combine my business background with a position that I feel passionate about and I believe God answered my prayers with my new position at EAS," Jennifer stated.

Welcome and best of luck to Jennifer in her new position!

"The EAS Program allows us to reach out to women in need"

Ways to Help EAS:

- Jeans Day at work: ask your employer to accept donations for EAS on this day
- Spare Change: have your group save spare change for a month & donate it
- Buy-One-Get-One: when your favorite store has a BOGO sale, save the free item for EAS
- Be a Regular Donor: show your support with a monthly, quarterly or yearly gift. It's easy and safe to donate online. Go to www.elizabethannsetonprogram.org and click on "DONATE ONLINE NOW"

Thanks a Million

The Elizabeth Ann Seton Program (EAS) Mission Statement is: "To embrace the sanctity and dignity of life by nurturing pregnant and parenting women". EAS partners with many different groups to achieve this mission. Multifaith church congregations, community organizations, local businesses, fraternal groups and many individuals from the central Illinois area work together to provide mentoring support, education and practical assistance to women and their children.

Hearty congratulations and

many thanks go to the myriad of individuals and groups who supported the annual Roses and Dreams fundraiser held March 5, 2011. Significant amounts were raised to continue the efforts of EAS. Read about Roses and Dreams 2011 on page 3 to learn more about this major fundraising event.

Not to be neglected are the many other groups and individuals who provide gifts to EAS. Regular donations, large and small, are the lifeblood of the program.

A big thank you goes out to Christ the King and Little

Flower Parishes for adopting the EAS Program in the 40 Days for Life Campaign. We were blessed by the many donations that came in as a result of their efforts!

The EAS Program is grateful for the many (nearly 150) handmade receiving blankets donated by Resurrection Parish in Illiopolis, Illinois. Their generosity and thoughtfulness will bless many children in the EAS family!

For a list of other donors, go to the EAS website: <http://www.elizabethannsetonprogram.org/Donors.html>

Roses and Dreams, 2011

The Elizabeth Ann Seton Program's seventh annual fundraiser, *Roses and Dreams*, was held at Christ the King Parish Center on March 5, 2011. The evening was an overwhelming success thanks to the contributions of many generous supporters. Our Honorary Chair for the event was Mr. Robert Ritz, C.E.O. and President of St. John's Hospital.

The evening began with wonderful piano music provided by Brendan Finnell and tasty morsels provided by 5flavors Catering. The silent auction contained many items, from cakes donated by our Chatham mothers to beautiful baskets filled with an assortment of goodies. The Wall of Wine, 50/50 raffle and iPad raffle were very popular. Bob Ritz,

who very generously donated the proceeds back to EAS, won the 50/50 raffle. Our winners of the iPad were Mike and Karen Beckmann.

Luke Lee Gaule professionally executed the live auction. The bidding was lively, and Mr. Gaule kept things moving along very smoothly. Popular items included among others, a handmade cabinet donated by our own Dawn Morris's husband, Rick Morris, and Superior Wood Finishing; a Champagne Brunch donated by Roslyn and Ralph Brookens, of Brookens Wood Floors; and a Barbeque Picnic for 50 donated by Lance and Raymond Poe.

St. John's Hospital, Christine Bodewes, and Kevin Coakley at the Dream Sponsor level generously sponsored the evening. Kerber, Eck and

Braeckel, LLP; Heartland Credit Union; and Giffin, Winning, Cohen and Bodewes, P.C. were Bouquet Sponsors. Our Sweetheart Sponsor was St. Agnes Catholic Church.

The success of the evening could not have been achieved without the support of many community businesses and the hard work and dedication of great supporters, including EAS Board President, Lisa Coakley who chaired the event, as well as contributors Helen and Todd Renfrow, Vince and Kay Toolen, the EAS Board of Directors, Program Coordinators, Dawn Morris and Karen Bedell and our new Executive Director, Jennifer Schultz. Thank you to all for your support and dedication to the Elizabeth Ann Seton Program.



Honorary Chair Bob Ritz with Helen Renfrow and Lisa Coakley

Volunteers are Special People

The Elizabeth Ann Seton Program could not survive without the help of dedicated volunteers. Here are some of the reasons why you should become an EAS Volunteer:

1. Volunteering connects you to others
2. Volunteering is good for your mind and body
3. Volunteering can advance your career

4. Volunteering brings fun and fulfillment to your life.

What is better than that? EAS is looking for volunteers at every level. You may be a mentor to one of our moms, or you might like to help with our monthly meetings. You may like organizing our supplies or helping out in the office. You may find it easy to teach others how to manage their money, bake a cake

or find a job. There are many, many other ways to volunteer. The best qualification for becoming an EAS volunteer is a willing spirit and a loving attitude.

Contact Jennifer Schultz at 217 757-6025 or easeton@sbcglobal.net

You will be glad you did!

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www.elizabethannsetonprogram.org

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Teresa de la Cruz,
Beardstown

Dawn Morris,
Litchfield and
Springfield

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EAS Activities

Beardstown: Dawn Morris, The EAS Litchfield and Springfield Coordinator, recently spoke to the EAS moms at their monthly meeting. Her presentation, "Ages and Stages" was nothing new, but this was her first experience speaking to a multi-cultural group. Morris commented that having two interpreters



translating the information into Spanish and French was a unique experience.

Chatham and Springfield: EAS participants from Springfield and Chatham helped make the recent Roses and Dreams fundraiser a success. The Chatham moms made delicious cakes, and the Springfield moms decorated note card sets that were auctioned off during the event. Karen Bedell and Dawn Morris, coordinators, led the moms in their projects, giving the women the opportunity to give back to the EAS Program.

Litchfield: Holidays are

perfect for family activities. The Litchfield EAS moms made Valentine candy in February and recently decorated Easter eggs at their monthly meetings. It gave the moms and their children the chance to participate in fun activities together.

**About Our Organization...**

The Elizabeth Ann Seton Program is a non-profit 501c3 organization which was incorporated in 1996 in Springfield, Illinois. Mentoring and educational programs serve women and children in the Springfield, Jacksonville, Chatham and

Beardstown communities.

The EAS Program is named for Elizabeth Ann Seton, a woman who moved from great wealth to extreme poverty.

Throughout her life, she witnessed to the idea that women deserve a good

education and a chance for fulfilled life. Her entire life was devoted to serving women and children.



Elizabeth Ann Seton
Program

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