

First College-Based Maternity Opens at Belmont Abbey College

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A collection of top pro-life leaders gathered today in North Carolina for the groundbreaking ceremony of what is being hailed as the first college-based maternity and after-care residential facility on a university campus.

Room At The Inn, a safe haven and source of hope for pregnant mothers and their children since 1994, broke ground today on the facility as pro-life advocates like Fr. Frank Pavone of Priests for Life, Serrin Foster of Feminists for Life of America, and David Bereit of 40 Days for Life looked on. The facility will be built on four acres of land donated by the Benedictine Monks of Belmont Abbey and located on the campus.



Construction is expected to begin in June on the 10,000-square-foot home that will provide single pregnant college women the option of continuing their education while having their babies in a caring and supportive environment before, during and after their pregnancy. That's important given that so many college-aged women wrongly believe they must have abortions and discontinue the pregnancy in order to complete their education and begin a career.

"Many young women in college facing unexpected pregnancies believe they have to give up everything to keep their babies – but they don't," said Room At The Inn Executive Director Jeannie Wray. "Room At The Inn can give these young women the opportunity to continue their educations, have their babies, make a positive impact on society and fulfill their hopes and dreams."

The new facility will have two residential wings – one for maternity and one for after-care – that will be home to 15 mothers, 15 infants and 8 toddlers for up to two years. Each mother will have a private bedroom and bathroom and share the kitchen, dining room and laundry room with other residents. Administrative and counseling offices and quarters for residential managers also will be on site.

Expectant mothers interested in Room At The Inn must go through several months of counseling before being accepted into the free program, which Wray describes as "fairly stringent" and filled with classes and counseling to prepare young mothers with the skills they need to be successful in life. Participants are required to be in school, adhere to a curfew, sign in and sign out, pass room inspections, submit goal sheets and take classes in life skills, parenting, cooking, meal planning, financial planning and Scripture study, among others. They don't have to be Catholic or Christian or students at Belmont Abbey College to be accepted.

In exchange, they receive free room and board and counseling, as well as everything they need for their babies from car seats and playpens to clothes and nursery furniture.

"Many of the young women we see are frightened and feel hopeless, abandoned and have no idea what they are going to do next – they're just looking for the light," said Wray. "Room At The Inn can offer them help, hope and possibilities so by the time they leave, they are more prepared, more mature and ready to take that next big step. They may even come to our outreach program for continuing assistance."

Room At The Inn began a capital campaign in 2008 to raise the \$3 million estimated to complete the new facility and sustain programs and services when it opens. Thanks to the generous donations of countless individuals and organizations, including the Knights of Columbus of North Carolina, \$2.2 million has been raised and fundraising continues.

Every contribution to the capital campaign will be recognized on a "giving wall" prominently located within the facility. In addition, naming opportunities have been identified and are available at varying contribution levels, including \$1 million to name the building, \$250,000 each to name the dining hall and foyer/reception area, \$75,000 each for the 15 living units, and \$50,000 each for two living areas and four manager offices. Several areas, including the chapel, family conference room and children's room already have been named.

See more about Room at the Inn at <http://www.rati.org>.