

# CRADLE OF HOPE

CREATING HOPE, ONE WOMAN AND CHILD AT A TIME



**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

[www.cradleofhope.net](http://www.cradleofhope.net)

# LETTER *from* LEADERSHIP

Dear Valued Partner,

As we enter 2024, we have much to share with you! Most notably, after an exhaustive search, Cradle of Hope was grateful to welcome a new Executive Director. Alissa Messina joined our team in mid-January as part of a strategic expansion of the organization's capacity.

Rachel, who has made an incredible impact during her time leading the Cradle, chose to transition to Development Coordinator - a role that aligns with her passion. Rachel looks forward to engaging with additional churches, volunteers and donors as she shares Cradle's story and continues to deepen the organization's community of support.

As Alissa takes the helm, she will implement support systems to strengthen and care for Cradle staff members, so that we can continue to provide the same level of care to even more mothers in crisis. We are thankful for this additional capacity as we expand our transitional housing program with the opening of our third house.

The construction crew has been hard at work on our newest home throughout 2023, and the renovations are complete! We just passed our final occupancy inspection, and expect to open our doors next month to welcome more moms and their babies.

Opening our third home, adjacent to our existing campus, is a dream come true, made reality through the collective work of many. Our 2023 Annual Report is filled with examples of ways donors and volunteers stepped up and partnered with us, from furnishing rooms in the new house, to building garden beds, to designing teddy bears for each of the babies we serve.

We are deeply grateful to each of you for partnering with us and ensuring the Cradle continues to be a place of refuge, family and hope for those counting on us.

Onwards,

*Rachel K. Mullelly*

Rachel Mullelly  
Development Coordinator

*Alissa Messina*

Alissa Messina  
Executive Director



# OUR MISSION

The mission of Cradle of Hope is to minister to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of pregnant women, single mothers and children through transitional housing and support services.



## Impact by the Numbers

# OUR WORK



**26** mothers and children received transitional housing, healthy meals, case management, and life-skills development in 2023.



**330** case management sessions were facilitated for mothers residing at the Cradle.



**10** mothers completed further education or job training.



**22** former residents benefited from follow-up support in 2023, with needs ranging from car repair, children's clothing, and visits to provide encouragement.



**570** calls were answered by the Cradle Pregnancy Resource Center in 2023 - approximately 10% of which were from organizations seeking information to support their clients.



**394** clients received counseling and support services through the Cradle Pregnancy Resource Center.



**26** life-skills classes were attended, empowering residents with a deeper understanding of:

employment  
opportunities

nutrition

parenting

budgeting

postpartum  
living

self-care  
& stress  
management

What did our services accomplish?

# OUR IMPACT

# 100% of clients

- reversed the cycle of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness.
- reduced stress and experienced an increased sense of community.
- were able to provide themselves and their infants with healthy meals.
- had adequate clothing for all seasons.
- achieved self-confidence, hope, and emotional stability.

# 81 %

of Cradle of Hope's transitional housing graduates from the past 3 years are **employed** and living in **permanent housing**.



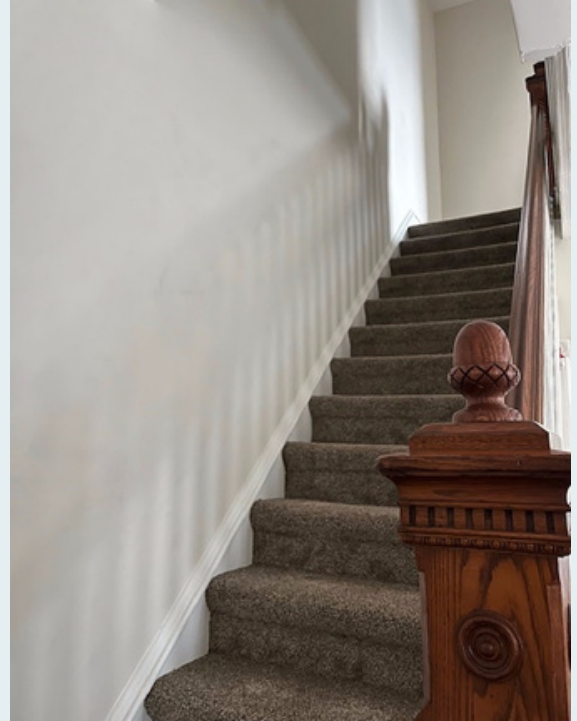
received transitional housing since Cradle of Hope's inception in 1997.



# WELCOME HOME

Our third house underwent a remarkable transformation over the past year, and we're thrilled to be able to welcome three more families in the weeks to come!





**MAKING OUR THIRD HOUSE A HOME WAS NO SMALL FEAT,  
AND WE ARE IMMENSELY GRATEFUL TO THE MANY VOLUNTEERS  
WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE! HERE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE  
CRADLE COMMUNITY IN ACTION**

### **FURNISHING THE NEW ROOMS**

Special thanks to the Abington Zetas (Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Gamma Alpha Beta, Zeta Chapter) for furnishing an entire bedroom in our new home! We are so excited to see the impact that this warm, welcoming environment has on our incoming residents.



### **OUTDOOR SPACES**

Eagle Scout Connor Pennington is renovating one of our back decks to ensure clients can enjoy sunshine and fresh air!

Eagle Scout Ezra Bustos and Troop 117 installed fencing along the backyard of the new house, ensuring our youngest residents have a safe place to play.

And Eagle Scout Liam Connor is building raised garden beds in each of our backyards! Gardening is a valuable therapeutic outlet that clients enjoy. Several clients have also appreciated the opportunity to cook with the resulting healthy, fresh vegetables.





## COMFORTS OF HOME

Members of the Lenape Valley Church Youth Group made "Build a Bear" teddybears for the Cradle's youngest residents." Each teddybear was specially designed for its child. The youth even made three extra teddybears for the new house, and they'll be waiting in each crib for the new moms and babies who will soon move in! What an amazing way to make our new clients feel welcome and cared for.



Introducing our new Executive Director

## GET TO KNOW ALISSA

Cradle is pleased to welcome Alissa Messina as our new Executive Director. Alissa comes to the Cradle with over 20 years of experience in school counseling, educational guidance, family support services, behavioral interventions, family crisis therapy and community collaborations.

### **Alissa, can you tell us what drew you to join the Cradle team?**

I know firsthand how hard it can feel to be a mom, and I have such humble admiration for moms who are doing it on their own. Parenting takes intentionality and having a ton of grace for our kids and ourselves. It is so important for parents to have non-judgmental support and encouragement. That is part of the reason I feel so drawn to the work of Cradle of Hope. A lot of who I am as a person, as well as my background in parent coaching, counseling and social services, aligns with this role and the Cradle's work.

I believe the Lord has taken all of my gifts, passions and skills, and placed me here to lovingly and empathetically walk alongside each member of our Cradle of Hope family. Relationships and community are both very important to me, and that is the core of the Cradle. I feel really connected with the mission and how the Cradle embodies loving and serving - treating each client with dignity, meeting their tangible needs, and showing them love.

It's already been so inspiring to witness all that's being provided through the Cradle. Relationships are being built, and moms are coming back - often with donations of clothes and items their children have outgrown.



**“My prayer is that this will always be a place where we are showing people what family and community really means, being a nonjudgmental place of safety for our community, and sharing the unconditional love that Jesus has modeled for us.”**

It's beautiful to see clients giving back and supporting one another. They view the Cradle as their home base, and they feel safe coming back and connecting.

I'm also inspired by the incredible vision and hearts of the Cradle's Board and staff, and I'm grateful to be working alongside a team so committed and passionate. They're truly serving as the hands and feet of Jesus.

### What are your overarching goals for the first 100 days?

My goal for the first 100 days is to get to know the people of the Cradle, the fabric and essence of what is embodied here. I also want to familiarize myself with everything that happens on a daily basis. I am enjoying jumping in and learning about the different programs, meeting the moms and babies who live here or come in for support. I've already seen a lot of people in action in my first weeks, attending life skills group meetings, and listening and trying to absorb what is most needed and important.

It's been wonderful to hear the hearts of those who work and serve the Cradle. I am planning on shadowing and meeting with each team member to really understand each individual role and hear their passions and hopes for the Cradle, moving forward. I want to similarly build relationships with the Board and understanding what their hopes and dreams are.

We have some big projects on our immediate horizon that I'll be prioritizing. We are busy preparing to open the newest house and welcome three new moms and babies into the family. We will also be hiring a new case manager.

I'll also be working to ensure sustainable funding for our programs, extending our incredible network of community partners and donors.

There is so much to learn, and I am grateful and humbled to join this team and lovingly serve together. This is a new adventure for me professionally, and I couldn't be more excited as I see how the Lord has woven us together.

### What type of impact do you hope to make, both for the Cradle and its clients?

Over the past 5 years, the organization has grown so much, so we want to be intentional as we think about our future. How do we continue what we're doing well and explore other ways we can continue to reach moms and babies and families? I want to collaboratively lead the Cradle forward into this next season.

My desire is to support those who work here and offer guidance to the programs and organization as a whole, deepening the partnerships and collaborations that are already in place and building additional relationships and funding sources.



Alissa and her family

I see myself as an addition to the team, joining them in what they're already doing and providing leadership as we identify areas we can strengthen and grow together. I hope to situate the Cradle to continue to achieve its longstanding mission with excellence, while also functioning in new and unique ways.

My prayer is that this will always be a place where we are showing people what family and community really means, being a nonjudgmental place of safety for our community, and sharing the unconditional love that Jesus has modeled for us. We will move forward with continued empathy, care and compassion for the people we serve.

#### **Tell us something that's unique about you!**

I grew up in Delaware with parents who worked in social services. My dad ran a large child abuse and domestic violence organization for many years, and my mom was a Christian LCSW who was in private practice long before it was en vogue. The impact that my parents had on me was huge, and I am grateful for the example that they set in putting others first, loving and serving, and persevering in challenging times.

I met my husband when I was 12! We were friends for many years before we began dating during college. We just celebrated 26 years of marriage in August. We also have two adult daughters. One is currently in college studying business, and the other is working and finishing up her Masters in Social Work. As a family we love the beach, long leisurely bike rides, cooking or going out for great food, music, and Philly sports spectating.

My favorite verse is Jeremiah 29:11-13, which has been a life verse for our family for many years. I love that it so aligns with the mission of Cradle of Hope.

**“FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU.” DECLARES THE LORD. “PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU. PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE. THEN YOU WILL CALL ON ME AND COME AND PRAY TO ME, AND I WILL LISTEN TO YOU. YOU WILL SEEK ME AND FIND ME WHEN YOU SEEK ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART.”**

**JEREMIAH 29:11-13**



**Alissa and a young Cradle resident**

## Year in Review

# HIGHLIGHTS

### PAY IT FORWARD

Through the generosity of a group of local donors, three Cradle residents have benefited from our new *Pay It Forward* program, which matches up to \$1,500 in client savings. These funds will be a critical source of support for residents who are moving into their own housing. Additionally, clients who receive the matching funds are invited to donate in the future to the “Pay It Forward” fund to benefit moms and babies living at the Cradle in the years to come.

The same generous group of donors that established the Pay It Forward program has also agreed to support the entire salary of our new Executive Director’s first year of service, as well as 50% of the salary for this role in years two and three!

### ARCADIA WORK STUDY STUDENTS

We have been incredibly grateful to the many Arcadia University students who have been supporting our work. The Cradle received 338 hours of volunteer work from Arcadia students this past year, including the women’s basketball team, field hockey team, and community based work study students.

### BIRTHDAY CAKES

Building community is a key part of what we do at the Cradle, and we are intentional about celebrating birthdays - for moms and babies alike - as a way to come together and foster that sense of community. Volunteer Sarah Drake has been making birthdays at the Cradle extra special with her delicious homemade cakes! For one mom, it was the first time she celebrated her birthday, and it meant so much.



## Client Testimonial

# OPHELIA'S STORY

Ophelia reached out to the Cradle of Hope after being referred by the Community Women's Center in Bristol. She and her two-week-old son, Todd, were experiencing homelessness, and had been put up in a hotel while applying to shelters in the area. Ophelia was accepted into the Cradle of Hope housing program, and moved in on August 16, 2022.

Ophelia was in the United States on a student visa. Due to becoming pregnant and experiencing domestic violence, she missed deadlines for her courses and requirements for her college housing. She was unable to work because she was not an American citizen and did not have a social security card. Ophelia's caseworker at the Cradle



Ophelia shares her story at the Cradle's fundraising event in May 2023

was able to connect her with an immigration attorney for guidance.

She also enrolled in a Phlebotomy certification program that could accept her passport as required identification documentation. Ophelia passed her State Phlebotomy certification and glowed with a sense of accomplishment. She happily added this to her resume during one of the evening life skills classes at the Cradle.

Ophelia began attending a local church and made many friends. She participated in playgroups and small group gatherings. She was also able to network with other church craft fairs and sell some of her textile clothing and body products.



Ophelia's son, Todd, blossomed at the Cradle

While at the Cradle, Ophelia grew in her confidence as a mother. When she moved into the Cradle of Hope, she had only one bottle for Todd. She would repeatedly wash and reuse it. As she talked with the staff and attended parenting classes, she was able to recognize that a different type of bottle helped eliminate some of the gas that Todd was experiencing. She was also able to access clothing and other baby items from the Cradle's donation pantry as Todd grew and transitioned to baby food.

After almost ten months at the Cradle, Ophelia graduated from the program and moved into on-campus housing at a Community College out of state. She had gotten her driver's permit before leaving, and the Cradle paid for her to take driving lessons.

Ophelia has been a full-time student ever since, and made the Dean's List last semester! She is also thriving as a single mother. She is very consistent in communicating with her "Cradle Family," and we love receiving updated photographs of her and Todd!



L: Ophelia sells some of her handmade products at local craft fairs

R: Todd cheers on the Philadelphia Eagles

# OUR VALUED SUPPORTERS

We are deeply grateful to the many foundations, churches, companies and individuals whose financial support makes our work possible.

## FOUNDATION FUNDERS

BLBB Charitable  
 Bill and Katie Weaver Charitable Trust  
 Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation  
 Charities Aid Foundation  
 Genuardi Family Foundation  
 The George W. Rentschler Foundation  
 Foundation for Health Equity

Jaymar Foundation  
 Johnson & Johnson  
 Real Alternatives  
 Union Benevolent Association  
 WSFS Community Fund  
 W.W. Smith Charitable Trust

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

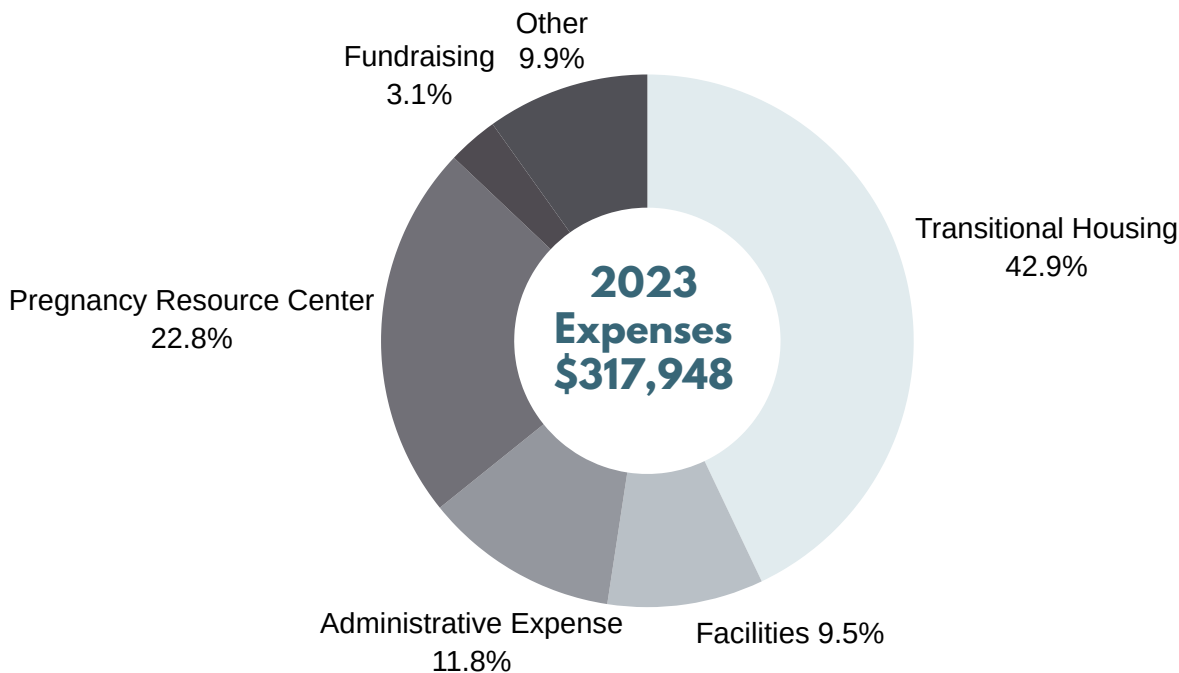
Chelten Baptist Church  
 Abington Baptist Church  
 Abington High School  
 Abington NICU nurses  
 Abington Presbyterian Church Trustees  
 Action Automotive  
 Allstate Insurance, Peter DeMaio  
 Arcadia University  
 Ardsley Bible Chapel  
 Blackbaud Giving Fund  
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 Bryner Chevrolet, David Peterson  
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 Charity RX, A Beacon of Hope  
 Chelten a Church of Hope  
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 First Presbyterian Church of Warminster  
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 The Joe and Andrea Hogan Fund

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Women  
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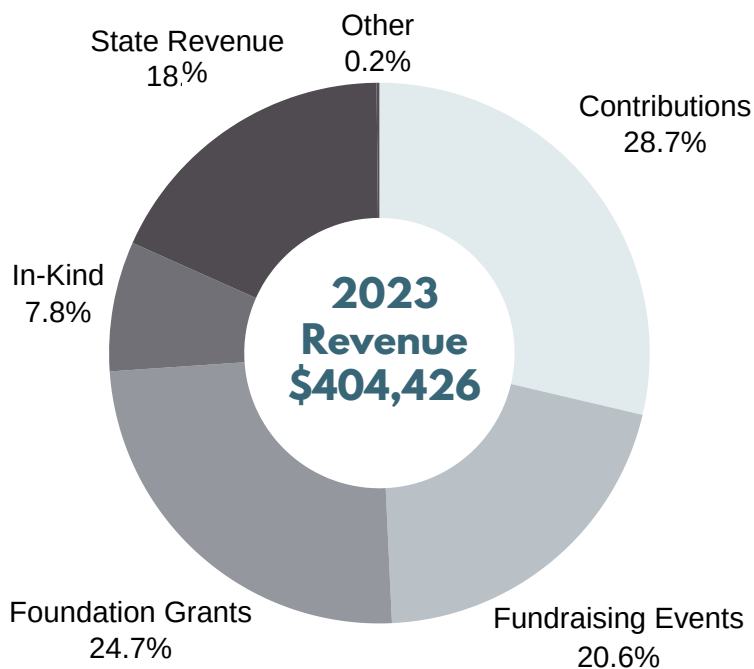


# FINANCIALS

Cradle of Hope is committed to the highest fiscal integrity and transparency as it carries out its life-changing mission. Below is a snapshot of the organization's 2023 revenue and expenses.



**We do not expect to receive state funding in 2024 due to shifts within Pennsylvania's budget. We will be calling on our generous community of supporters to help fill this \$70,000 gap.**



# WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO SUPPORT CRADLE OF HOPE'S MISSION AND MAKE A LIFE-CHANGING DIFFERENCE FOR THE FAMILIES WE SERVE.



## VOLUNTEER

- ▶ CONDUCT A LIFE-SKILLS CLASS ABOUT SOMETHING YOU'RE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN
- ▶ PROVIDE YARD WORK AND MAINTENANCE
- ▶ HOST A SELF-CARE OUTING FOR OUR CLIENTS. LIKE A SPA TREATMENT
- ▶ CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



[@cradleofhope1](https://www.instagram.com/cradleofhope1)



[facebook.com/Cradle-of-Hope-Greater-Philadelphia](https://www.facebook.com/Cradle-of-Hope-Greater-Philadelphia)

## GIVE FINANCIALLY

- ▶ MAKE A DONATION THROUGH OUR WEBSITE:  
[WWW.CRADLEOFHOPE.NET/DONATE](http://WWW.CRADLEOFHOPE.NET/DONATE)
- ▶ SUPPORT US ALL YEAR LONG BY BECOMING A MONTHLY DONOR!
- ▶ HOST A FUNDRAISER FOR US

SCAN ME




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**QUESTIONS?** Contact Development Coordinator Rachel Mullelly at 215-572-5937

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## PRESIDENT

Theresa Supka, MBA | Debate Coach, St. Hilary's School, Retired

## TREASURER

Heather LaRocca, MSW | Director, New Day to Stop Trafficking Program, The Salvation Army

## SECRETARY

Michelle Nejman, M.Ed. | Teacher and Counselor, Retired

Benjamin Drake | Teacher, Salesianum School

Ray Cwierniewicz | Director of Advancement, Philadelphia Classical School

Adarell Fisher, MS, MACL | Pastor, Geiger Memorial Brethren Church

Dawn Johnson | Financial Data Analyst Principle, Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania

Maureen Krueger, Esq. | Attorney, Retired

Nancy Weidner, CD, CLC, LCCE | Certified Doula and Lamaze Childbirth Educator

Maggie Zulauf | Volunteer, Cradle of Hope

# STAFF MEMBERS

Lisa Dawson | Resident Supervisor

Erin Livingston | Caseworker

Alissa Messina, MA | Executive Director

Rachel Mullelly | Development Coordinator

Elieza Ocasio | Resident Supervisor

Catherine Richman | Bookkeeper

Cheryl Sumitra, MSW | CPRC Case Manager



A Home for Single Mothers and Children

[www.cradleofhope.net](http://www.cradleofhope.net)  
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