

June 2016
Guadalupe Workers
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We are a 501(c)3 non-profit organization
Message from Edmund Miller:

I have decided that for this letter I would like to provide a rather matter-of-fact account of some of the ways in which Guadalupe Workers helps its mothers, or spends its money.

Some mothers whom we meet at the abortion clinic receive FIA cash assistance, which usually gives them between four and five hundred a month on which to live. When we meet a mother in this circumstance, we will usually provide a two hundred dollar monthly supplement, paid directly to the landlord, for an initial period of three to six months. After that initial period, we reconsider the mother's circumstances, and whether or not she is now able to take on full responsibility for rent.

The most frequent request made to Guadalupe Workers is for help with housing. Again, some mothers have no more than four to five hundred a month. Working moms might bring in eight hundred to a thousand. Moving into an apartment in Detroit will cost, with security deposit, around 1,400. This is cash the mothers simply do not have. We find, then, that often they are "living around"—meaning that they will spend a week or two with one relative or friend, another week somewhere else, and so on, usually with two or three children in tow. If they run out of places to stay, we might receive an emergency call—as we did yesterday, when we met a mother and her two children at a motel in Dearborn and paid 300 to have her settled at least for one week.

Occasionally a mother comes into a wad of cash, sometimes through a tax return, sometimes from inheritance. She might use this in order to purchase what I call the Detroit special: a five or six thousand dollar house. Then again, she might come into possession of such a house through a rent-to-own arrangement. Regardless, as a family moves into one of these houses, normally the mother and children end up inhabiting a house that has no furnace, no hot water heater, no appliances, and outdated electrical service. For the next few months, they have to live in a discreet manner, hoping that no one will report them to Child Protective Services. Much of our income, then, is spent in purchasing major appliances, or in hiring someone to install major appliances.

Other mothers have already expired the 4 year eligibility for FIA assistance. They, frequently, have no income at all. A mother with whom we have been working this past year was in that situation; we paid her entire rent for 6 months and provided GED tutoring, with the hope and expectation that she would, in that time period, find a job and pass the final test for her GED diploma. We are right at the end of that 6 month period, so are waiting to see what happens!

DTE bills are often in arrears with our mothers. These bills can range anywhere from two hundred to two thousand dollars. The bills are high because, invariably, the houses are old, in poor repair, and the mothers know nothing about insulating drafty windows. At the same time—and we don't know why—

most Detroit residents (at least the ones we have met) habitually keep their thermostats during the winter at about 76 degrees.

Unpaid tickets are yet another problem. Most frequently these tickets have to do with driving without insurance. Very few people in Detroit, actually, have insurance. They can't afford it. This is what happens: since a policy in Detroit would cost several thousand dollars, and, since a car can't be registered without insurance, unprincipled companies sell two week insurance policies for around \$300. These policies last just long enough for the car to be registered—at which point the policy expires. A few months later the driver gets pulled over for a burnt-out taillight or some such matter. The officer asks for proof of insurance, finds that it is expired, writes another ticket. The driver cannot pay these tickets, or other tickets that start to pile up.... It all concludes with a suspended license, but since for so many the car is badly needed, they continue to drive...more tickets, higher fines.... Usually we advise the mother to go to court and throw herself on the mercy of the judge, who sometimes will set up a payment plan.

We always tell our mothers not to get into survival mode—to think ahead, to plan ahead. Consequently, we look for opportunities to help them with training or certification programs. Also, when we find someone who actually has an unfettered driver's license, we like to be able to provide a decent car, something that will take them to class or to work.

What we do, then, is way beyond providing diapers and wipes (though we do that too). Our expenditures are consistently heavy; but that is because when we meet a mother at the abortion clinic, we tell her that we will help with whatever she needs. That is a promise that saves lives. It is also a promise that we have never broken. Accordingly, I ask that, in the busy-ness of summer and with the expenses of vacations, you will not forget us. We are still there, still in the city, still doing what we have been doing the past 13 years.