

Agency marks 100 years of helping young parents

Rosalie Manor continues to serve unwed teens

By Amy Guckeen
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MILWAUKEE – As a teen parent, Peter Burgos had no one to help him. Today, Burgos works to ensure that no Milwaukee teen faces the same fate.

“I was a teen parent myself,” Burgos, a family care coordinator for Rosalie Manor, said. “I really want to make a difference in young parents’ lives, help them and direct them and lead them through the process. I didn’t get a lot of help being a young father, so I want to make sure that all the young people get the help they need.”

Rosalie Manor, 4803 W. Burleigh St., has spent the past 100 years ensuring young parents get the help they need. Founded by the Misericordia Sisters in 1908, and sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Rosalie Manor began its mission as a refuge for unwed pregnant women. Today, it reaches out to the community through four programs: Families United to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Supporting Teen Families, Today’s Dads and Wisconsin Alliance for Healthy Marriage.

“We’re prevention based; we’re not intervention based,” said Dawn Groshek, director of development. “We work with all our families before abuse takes place.... We work really hard to make sure that our families don’t fall through the cracks.”

All voluntary programs, Rosalie Manor provides families with job readiness classes, employment services, financial management and healthy relationship classes, so if the teen parents are no longer together they can still communicate to raise their child. In-home case management and parenting services, which include health care and childbirth education, are offered to teen mothers, fathers and their parents. On



According to Shaun Howard, 22, Rosalie Manor has helped him become a better father to his 5-year-old son, DeMario. (Submitted photo courtesy Rosalie Manor)

average, Rosalie Manor may serve anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 families a year. The center also gives youth presentations on topics such as abstinence and self-esteem.

Abortion wasn’t even a consideration for Candace Jones, 20, and Shaun Howard, 22, when they each found out they would be parents. After getting over the initial shock and excitement of becoming parents, they turned to Rosalie Manor for assistance in raising their children.

“It’s always exciting at first,” Howard said of becoming a parent. “For those who enjoy being a parent, it’s more of a life changing experience. A lot of the time it changes who they are, gives them an opportunity to get themselves together.”

For Jones, Rosalie Manor not only gave her lessons in parenting, but helped her 1-year-old daughter through health issues, including hospital visits and insurance woes.

“I don’t know who wouldn’t want to be in the program,” said Jones, who is expecting another child this month.

“It is so much fun to work with teen parents because they have such an open mind and sometimes, can be their adolescent, stubborn selves, but they learn,” said Allison Sergio, director of family services. “You see the growth that happens throughout the program. They form a relationship with whoever their worker is here. They want to impress their worker, and they don’t want to drop out or do bad things. It’s just a population where you can see the best growth. We don’t want to see teen pregnancy, but it happens.”

Howard notes the growth he’s seen in himself since his son was born five years ago.

“He’s here now so I’ve got to step up to the plate and be there for him,” said Howard, who has another child on the way in May. “It’s helped me establish myself in so far as being a father to my son, in being a provider and helping me be a better person. Times are gonna get rough, especially when you’re young. Sometimes you get your hopes up,

dreams might get broken. But you’ve gotta remember everything you’re doing is for your child.”

Navigating teens through the

ups and downs of life as a parent is one of the most rewarding aspects to his career as family case coordinator, Burgos said.

“You run into a lot of roadblocks with clients and when you get the ups, it makes you feel really good, like you’re really doing something to help these young people with their personal lives,” Burgos said. “It feels really good to see them being successful in their lives. That’s what we try to promote within them – that they can do a lot of things

For more information
on Rosalie Manor visit
<www.rosaliemanor.org>.