



# **Fontebella Maternity Home Expands Services As A Licensed Child Welfare Institute To Care For Pregnant Youth**

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O'FALLON, IL. - Caritas Family Solutions' Fontebella Maternity Home in O'Fallon, Illinois recently expanded its services and is now the only maternity home in Southern Illinois that is a licensed child welfare institute. With this license, Fontebella is now able to provide services to Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) youth who are pregnant.

Caritas CEO Gary Huelsmann said over the years, his agency has always sought to meet the needs they see in the community. He said it became clear to them that there was a great need to provide housing for youth who are pregnant or have children.

For over a decade, Fontebella Maternity Home has provided a caring place for women who are pregnant and experiencing homelessness. Through their services, Fontebella aims to empower women dealing with substance abuse, addiction or violence to make positive changes to their lives. It also provides women with a safe place to live, food, counseling, a variety of parenting classes, assistance with finding employment, resources for their child, and education about immunizations and doctor appointments.

“Fontebella Maternity Home not only provides a home for these women but an opportunity for these young ladies to change their life,” said Director of Nursing and Fontebella Maternity Home Lisa Winter. “We help each woman by creating an individualized plan with goals to help them find jobs and give their baby the love and care they need. We want to empower these women and give them an opportunity to become the best mother they can be. We can’t change the world we live in, but we can change one life.”

Fontebella is currently providing resources to two expecting mothers that are a part of the Department of Children and Foster Care Services (DCFS) and are taking referrals for more women. Women who stay at Fontebella are typically referred by pregnancy clinics, crisis pregnancy centers, probation officers and substance abuse facilities.

Winter said there is always a need for volunteers to help support their mission. To learn how to help Fontebella Maternity Home go to [caritasfamilysolutions.org/fontebella-maternity-home/](http://caritasfamilysolutions.org/fontebella-maternity-home/)

“Fontebella has interviewed several youths whom we could not take into our program because we did not have a license to serve women under the age of 18,” said Huelsmann. “It was heartbreaking to turn them away. A decision was made to invest in the process of becoming licensed for pregnant and parenting youth so that we would be able to serve this need in the community.”

*Founded in 1947, Caritas Family Solutions is a nonprofit social service agency whose mission is to strengthen the social and emotional well-being of individuals and families in order to create healthy relationships, loving homes, and strong communities. Services include adoption, pregnancy care for women who are homeless, foster care, counseling, residential treatment for children healing from abuse and/or neglect, independent living for adults with developmental disabilities (CILA), and assisted living and employment assistance for low-income seniors. Caritas serves more than 6,000 individuals annually across Southern Illinois from offices located in Belleville, Carterville, Mount Vernon,*

*Olney, Glen Carbon, Alton and Effingham as well as satellite locations in Highland and Sparta. For additional information, visit [www.caritasfamilysolutions.org](http://www.caritasfamilysolutions.org).*