

Birthwriter Birthright® of Albuquerque

Summer 2025

"It is the right of every pregnant woman to give birth

... and the right of every child to

Louise's Prayer

Dear Lord, protect all of us in our work and in adherence to the Charter, I ask that all the problems that upset us, may be resolved according to Your will, that we may learn to love generously and to forgive readily when needed. And I ask, that I, personally, may always be ready to listen, to understand and to guide wisely, according to your will. I ask for unity and peace, so that whenever the Birthright name is used, others will see clearly that truly the essence of Birthright is love.

Amen

Friends Along the Way

It was time to start over for me and my family. Moving was hard, but I had to do it. At the time I already had two children and was pregnant and due for a baby girl soon. I was not ready - and the mom side of me started to panic. We had no family here. "We" were all we had.

Thankfully, a church opened their doors to us. They made us comfortable and put us at ease. They were sure community resources would be available to us. When I got my first resources list from them there were a lot of names of unfamiliar programs and what they could do for a family. I was skeptical of the help that might be offered. Birthright was on the list, but I kept searching. It kept popping up on the lists so I decided to see what it was all about. I was able to get a ride the next day. When I stepped through the door it felt very warm - very happy - and the first thing that was said was "would you like a snack or a water?" Heaven knows I was hungry - with a baby in my tummy. They were so thoughtful. Everyone was welcoming - with happy smiles. I was brought into a private room by one of the Birthright ladies. I'm sure she could tell I was a little bit tense and she said - "What's going on? How can we help today?" I felt it was a safe space - that I could be open with her - and so I was. I felt so much at ease talking with someone who didn't judge me - who listened to all the things that were going on in my life - and was determined to make things better for me. That day I left with a large bag filled with baby stuff and a list of resources, and I got a big hug from the Mentor, who gave me hope.

I came back several times after I had my baby girl and they loved her and wanted to make sure she had everything she needed! During these visits I saw the way they treated others. All the moms were treated the same - as friends. Everyone was so helpful to the moms and their babies. Everyone left happy and smiling, with intentions of coming back. I wanted to give back to Birthright for all they had done for me and my family on our journey in this new place. I started volunteering, helping as a Spanish speaker to better understand the needs of the mothers and sharing with them what I had learned about the local resources.

Beautifying Birthright and Honoring Emma Gomez

Emma Quintana Gomez, the founder and first Director of Birthright of Albuquerque, passed away peacefully at the end of December 2024. At the time, many of the members of her large family had just a vague understanding of the organization she founded in Albuquerque in 1972. However, they were well aware that the matriarch of their family was a woman of strong convictions, so it came as no surprise when they learned that she was the inspiration for a long line of volunteers and an organization that has served mothers and babies in difficult situations for over 50 years. Earlier this year, her family asked us how they could best support Birthright of Albuquerque. We suggested that they could help to beautify the entrance courtyard to our office, making it look more like a home, and to transform the courtyard into a memorial to their mother and her vision. Cindy Gomez, the wife of Jim Gomez, arranged for Jim and his brother Larry (who live at some distance) to spend part of a weekend visiting their family in Albuquerque to do some painting and gardening at Birthright. Joined by their cousin, Ray Quintana, who lives in Albuquerque, they spent a long day painting the courtyard walls a bright yellow (similar to the color of our logo) and planted a rosemary bush in a large pot. They also installed a bench with a floral cushion and pillows and mounted a plaque honoring Emma on the wall by the front door. Our office now looks more like a home to the mothers who turn to us, a home with friends ready to listen to their stories and help them think through their challenges and make life-giving decisions for them and their babies.



Inspired By Birthright of Ghana



Note: This mom displays her new sewing machine sponsored by Courageous Living.

Since it is an international organization, Birthright chapters benefit from the experience and inspiration provided by chapters across the United States and in other countries. We have been particularly inspired by Birthright of Ghana, which was founded in 2004 by Doris Asante and Bertha Adom, in the capital city of Accra. From very humble beginnings, with a small rented space and a shared public restroom, they have greatly expanded what they do to support pregnant women and babies. They are the only Birthright in this country of 35 million. Besides attentively listening and providing necessities to the women, they also encourage and help them to support themselves and become self-reliant. Their Courageous Living program, started in 2017, provides small loans to pregnant or nursing mothers, enabling them to learn a trade, purchase necessary equipment, and acquire inventory to start a business. They also encourage the women to continue their education. Our interactions with Birthright of Ghana inspired us to broaden what we do to support the mothers who come to us. We now offer GED tutoring, include books in the Baby Shower Gift Bags, and help the mothers to sign their babies and other young children up for the Libros for Kids program. Birthright of Ghana has inspired us to offer these education opportunities to the women and their children since, regardless of where they live, in Albuquerque or Accra, education is crucial in enabling these women to be the best mothers they can be.

Honoring Mothers with “Forever” Flowers

For many years Birthright of Albuquerque helped to honor mothers on Mother’s Day by providing carnations to various groups to give to mothers. However, we thought that the message of ‘mother’s eternal love’ was being lost by flowers that soon wilted. We wanted to provide mothers with ‘forever flowers’ to cherish, possibly for years to come. With this in mind, we embarked on a four phase project to explore how to best express gratitude for all types of mothers and how to individualize these expressions of love. A committee was formed of four young volunteers with various skills.

The goal of the first phase was to identify options for gifts that could be given to mothers instead of carnations. We considered origami flowers and jewelry, but didn’t feel that either of these gifts, without a written message, would convey a specific love of mothers and appreciation for their individual, unique sacrifices. We finally settled on creating several carnation-themed card designs. Phase two was for the graphic designer on the team to create designs for the insides and outsides of the cards, while another volunteer investigated how to get youth involved in distributing the cards to the mothers in the groups/ organizations they are associated with. We considered how fun it would be to also create various gifts for the mothers, however, we didn’t have the time to completely explore the options this year. A goal for next year is to get more youth involved from these different groups and help them to create additional gifts for their mothers! In phase three we finalized three card designs and worked to identify all the churches and organizations that would be interested in receiving the cards to give to their mothers. We reached out to over 40 groups, which requested over 5,000 cards in English and Spanish! The message to use in the cards took time to perfect, to express appreciation for the many things that mothers (of all types) do for their families. We finally decided on the message shown below. Finally, in phase four of the project, the cards were printed and they were picked up or distributed to the churches and other organizations, about a week before Mother’s Day. We received a number of thank you’s for the Mother’s Day cards and we plan to do this again next year, perhaps with more involvement by youth groups and offering them to additional groups.



Thank you for the light and love you bring to the world. Your influence as a mother is deeply appreciated and truly irreplaceable. Wishing you a Happy Mother's Day!



Finding My Passion and Supporting a Community

Sydney McElroy, Operations Manager

I am honored to be hired to the first paid position, a part-time Operations Manager, at Birthright of Albuquerque. When I began volunteering at Birthright, I had just left a job that I did not feel excitement or passion for. I was looking for something inspiring to do that allowed me to connect with the Albuquerque community and support women and families in their needs. Thankfully, like many others, I found Birthright! I started as a volunteer, like everyone else here. When the Director saw my passion for supporting mothers and their growing families, she asked the Board of Directors to consider hiring me as an Operations Manager. This would help her by managing the daily operation of the office and working on special projects.

As Operations Manager, my job is a whirlwind! Each day brings its own unique challenges and successes. We purposely don't make appointments with the mothers so that they see our office more like a "home", with friends they can "stop by to visit". As a result, we may have a few women waiting for us when we first open up – or a bunch may come in right before we plan to close. We may also have donors and collaborators stopping by at random times. There is always something new and exciting to do!

A vital part of this position is scheduling the volunteers, ensuring there are enough, with the right mix of skills, signed up for each day we're open. A key component to this is coordinating volunteers who are trained to Mentor clients – including at least one Spanish speaker, if at all possible, each day. Additionally, I work to make sure we have volunteers able to sort clothes and supplies on the days after we expect to receive donations. Another daily task is to check on and respond to email and voicemail messages. On many days I work as a Greeter at the front desk, welcoming clients and visitors and notifying volunteer staff, or the Director, as they are needed. If I'm needed as a Mentor, perhaps when we have multiple simultaneous clients, I request another volunteer to work as a Greeter. While I'm at the front desk, or if someone else is working as a Greeter, I simultaneously communicate with donors and organizations which we collaborate with, or may potentially collaborate with in the future. Communicating with our donors and resource collaborators, updating their contact information and the services they provide, enables me to stay intimately connected with the local community and the needs of the women we serve. I ensure we have current information on relevant resources so that we can quickly guide our clients in finding assistance for housing, food pantries, domestic/sexual violence, education, or daycare. As part of our recent initiative to provide board books to babies, I help our clients register with the Libros for Kids program, providing a book a month to children until they are five years old.

One of my favorite parts of this job are the special projects – such as leading the Mother's Day card project and organizing/editing this very newsletter. These projects draw on the communications and graphic design courses I have taken through my years of education. The most wonderful part of this job is that everyone at Birthright, whether a volunteer, or paid position, has a valuable role to play in addressing the needs of mothers and their babies. The varied backgrounds, experiences, and ages we each bring are often pivotal in meeting the unique needs of individual mothers and their babies. As long as you come here with an open mind and heart, there is a place for you here! Like our ad in the Daily Lobo at the University of New Mexico says – "All you need...is Love!"

These are just a few of the reasons I love Birthright and everything it stands for. I am so thankful every day to have this beautiful space to come to, these wonderful clients, and the most amazing team of volunteers supporting each other - every day!



My Internship Experience — An Oasis



Kalena Kang, Intern

The first time I saw Birthright, as part of a school group visit, it took my breath away to see such a welcoming, beautiful space for mothers and babies. I became even more excited as I learned about the vision and mission of this international organization. I was delighted to find out that there were many things that I could do as a youth volunteer! God had finally provided a place where my desire to serve in the prolife movement met with the great need to protect human life here in New Mexico. Shortly

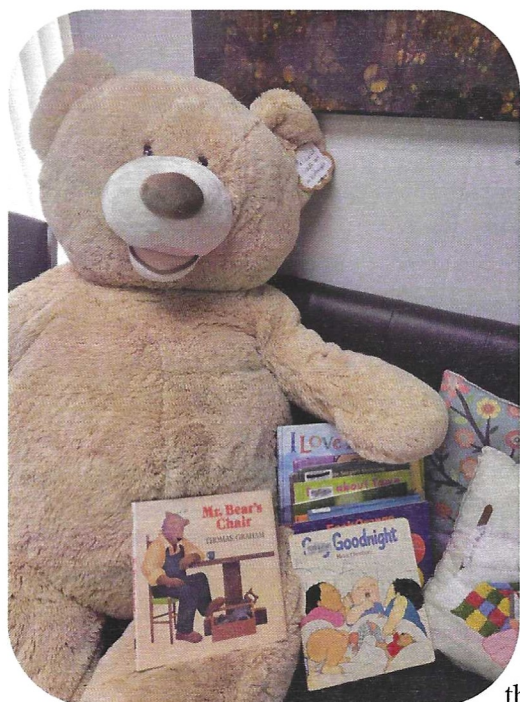
after this visit, I began volunteering periodically, as it fit with my school activities. I helped organize the Clothing Room, helped transform the Mentoring rooms to look more like baby nurseries, created coordinated baby outfits, and helped decorate the office to look more like a home and to be a truly safe place for women to find haven and support. I had occasional, brief interactions with the Birthright clients, welcoming them, serving them refreshments, and gathering resources for them, but I did not Mentor them. I was very grateful for this opportunity to help support mothers in choosing life for themselves and their babies, and to do that in ways that were well suited to my abilities and interests. With the new freedom of being able to drive myself, I was able to volunteer on an almost weekly basis. I did this for a few months. In April of 2025 I was offered the opportunity of becoming Birthright's first ever youth intern. My work included heading multiple projects as well as continuing regular volunteer duties. The first and biggest of my projects was the Mother's Day card outreach. Birthright had a long-standing annual tradition of gifting churches all over Albuquerque with carnations to distribute to mothers in their parishes, celebrating Mother's Day. In accordance with our Director's vision to simplify and expand this outreach, we decided to replace the live carnations, which quickly fade and die, with "forever flowers" in the form of carnation-themed Mother's Day cards that we would give to mothers. My job was to coordinate with churches throughout the Albuquerque area, describing the cards and determining how many they would like to receive (in English and/or Spanish). By Mother's Day, we had distributed over 5,000 cards, to 36 churches as well as six other organizations Birthright works with. I was honored to help affirm and celebrate mothers through this

project. My second project was our Youth Open House. This project consisted of organizing and running an event to increase knowledge about Birthright's mission and volunteer opportunities especially among the younger generation. High school age teens and young adults who attended received a tour, participated in a fun project, and enjoyed a complimentary lunch. It is our hope that a new generation of young volunteers will rise up and carry the torch so that Birthright can continue to shine its light in Albuquerque. As I conclude my internship, I am filled with gratitude. I learned so much from both the dedicated Birthright volunteers and from the women and children I interacted with, who often were in very challenging situations. I will keep these diverse human interactions and broadening experiences in mind as I begin my college journey this Fall, studying nursing. I learned so much about communication, leadership, and generosity. Most impactfully, I discovered that the essence of Birthright is unconditional love. I witnessed it in the work we do, in every volunteer staff member, and in the faces of the women and children we serve. Birthright works to protect and enhance the dignity of the human person, fighting to rebuild a culture of life. Birthright is an oasis of compassion, light, and love. I have been so blessed to be Birthright of Albuquerque's first youth intern and I pray the next intern may be just as blessed as I was by this opportunity.



If you or someone you know is interested in applying for an internship at Birthright, please contact our Director, Cheryl Hallada, at birthrightabq@gmail.com.

Books for Babies



This spring we began an exciting new initiative at Birthright of Albuquerque: Books for Babies! We are giving board books in English and Spanish to our clients and their babies with each baby shower bag we provide them, including the newborn, 0-3 month, 3-6 month, and 6-9 month bags. Imagine mothers cuddling up with their babies to read books such as, The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle or Buenas Noches, Luna by Margaret Wise Brown. The staff and clients are very enthusiastic about this book initiative. Moreover, Dave Orner, Chairperson of Read to Me! Albuquerque, is partnering with us to provide us with generous book donations, including bilingual books. In addition, the staff members at Birthright of Albuquerque are helping clients sign up for free books for their children through Libros for Kids, Inc.

The Books for Babies initiative is positive for many reasons. Mothers who read aloud to their little ones in the womb enhance the bonding between them. This bonding through reading can continue after the birth of the baby for many happy years and enhance the child's socio-emotional development. Moreover, reading to babies and children advances their language skills and general cognitive development. Mothers can read to

their children in their native language to prepare them for future academic achievement. The love of learning begins in the home, and we at Birthright of Albuquerque hope to jump start it through the Books for Babies Initiative.

Community Resource Highlight



When mothers come to Birthright for help, they often need more than just material assistance, like diapers and clothes, though they may not realize it at first. By focusing on listening to them, we help them think through their situation and discover their other needs, which may include physical or mental health assistance, disability services, education for them or their children, domestic violence assistance, or job/career services. In order to help them address these needs, as well as basic needs for food and shelter, we maintain an extensive list of local resources to connect our clients with. We work with many incredible organizations and provide current information about their services to the mothers who come to us, helping them to take full advantage of what is available to them. In some cases we coach the mothers on calling the resources from our office.

We want to give a huge thank you and highlight one resource that we have worked with consistently for many years now, Youth Development, Inc. (YDI)! They have over forty programs dedicated to serving the people of the Albuquerque community! Their programs are in three major categories: (1) Education, employment, and training; (2) Early childhood education and family development; and (3) Prevention, intervention, and behavioral health! They primarily serve those who have Medicaid or Medicare. It is valuable that they have a bilingual staff. We often refer our clients to YDI - and they refer theirs to us. We may be able to provide material resources that YDI does not have on hand. Since YDI makes home visits, they sometimes bring supplies to mothers who are clients of both YDI and Birthright. Since a primary YDI office is located near Birthright, we routinely visit each other's offices and we have established close working relationships. Their staff is highly responsive and respectful of their clients. We have seen up close the care and support they provide and have heard from many of our clients how wonderful YDI has been for them and their families. YDI is a valuable resource for mothers, but also for the local community as a whole - uplifting, caring for, and encouraging families. YDI is there for it all. We are so thankful to be able to collaborate with their staff, who work hard every day to bring a little light and love to the Albuquerque community.

Showered with Gifts

A key aspect of Birthright is that we are completely dependent on donations – both monetary and material. We rely on the community as much as the moms rely on us for support! The generosity of our donors enables us to be generous. Providentially, it often seems that when we are in short supply of something we receive an unexpected donation! We need many different supplies to support the women and babies who come through our door, including maternity and baby clothing, hygiene products, diapers, and formula. We are especially blessed each year by the abundance of gifts given to us in “Baby Showers” and “Baby Bottle” campaigns sponsored by local churches and Knights of Columbus councils. One particularly memorable event was the Baby Shower Brunch sponsored by the Archbishop Lamy Knights of Columbus council at Queen of Heaven Catholic Church. The new Grand Knight of this council cooked an overabundant breakfast for those attending. Another very memorable and productive event was the Baby Shower sponsored by the Women’s Guild at Our Lady of the Annunciation Catholic Church. Several of our staff modeled dresses made by mothers in the “Courageous Living” program at Birthright of Ghana (see the article in this newsletter about this inspiring Birthright chapter). One of these volunteers, who had previously been one of our clients, told the Guild members of the unbelievable challenges that she had overcome.



Note: Birthright staff gathered for Annunciation Baby Shower.



In addition to being richly blessed by these baby showers and many individual donors, our chapter has also been blessed by the generosity of various professional organizations. The Dermatology and Skin Cancer Center of NM has provided us with skin care products for babies and mothers and dentists Dr. Anthony and Dr. Ella Algermissen continue to be very generous with dental hygiene products.

If you would like to make donations to Birthright of Albuquerque, see our Wish List, or use the donate button, at our webpage, birthright.org/albuquerque.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Albuquerque, NM
Permit No. 1893

B **Birthright**
of Albuquerque
3228 Candelaria Rd. NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87107-1907

Pregnant?
WE CAN HELP.
 (505) 262-2235



Contact Information

Address 3228 Candelaria Rd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87107-1907
Phone (505) 262-2235
Email birthrightabq@gmail.com
Website <https://birthright.org/albuquerque>

Office Hours

Monday 10:00am - 1:00pm
Tuesday 10:00am - 1:00pm
Wednesday 10:00am - 1:00pm
Thursday 10:00am - 1:00pm
Friday Closed



Services

Information About:

- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Adoption
- Prenatal Care
- Community Programs
- Parenting Skills
- Child Care

Referrals For:

- Medical Support
- Housing/Food Services
- Professional Counseling

Free Resources:

- Pregnancy Tests
- Maternity and Baby Items
- 24/7 Online Chat