

# A Day in the Life of FPRC...

## During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Written by Lori Berg, Executive Director



As I drove to work earlier in the day, I was thinking that I'd like to send an update, since our latest newsletter. Just what was going on in general; changes we have made as to the way we are conducting business; and a word or two about the spike in clients we are experiencing. As I do each day when I arrive at the center, I have no idea as to how many voicemails there may be to recover messages from; or how soon the phone may start ringing as I place my personal items in my office; or what task from the day before needs my attention.

On this particular day I was almost immediately drawn to the front lobby door to the sound of loud knocking. In these days of COVID-19, we have a legal document posted on a locked door, along with a general notice listing our medical and non-medical services. Our clients are warmly greeted by the welcome signs, while at the same time, our legal docs assure each client that they are in the right place. Their needs will be addressed; appointments will be rendered; medical advice dispersed, and most importantly, each client will be seen and heard.

The locked lobby door is a new development as of March 27. That way, there is appropriate distancing happening between FPRC staff and the clients. Paperwork is given the clients to fill out, after which it is collected by staff. If a client is at our center for supplies, we fill her order and slip it out to her. We are, of course, still giving away all furniture and the like in the same manner. Whatever the client is in need of and we have it...off it goes! Typically, we hand out a bag of diapers, food or formula, clothing, baby wash, wipes, socks, blankets, hats for the season, books and maybe a gift or two for mama. Bags are a welcomed sight by our clients who come once per month.

As this day started, I greeted a client at our door and took her paperwork to fill her bag of supplies. This mom was exhausted and seemed relieved to sit for a few moments as I gathered her items. She works at a fast food restaurant in El Monte and expressed how grateful she was to still have a job! Her eyes widened as she saw I had pressed into her bag a couple of "extras"...more diapers than usual and an additional baby wash. She wanted to give me a hug then quickly learned she shouldn't. We chuckled and gave each other a "virtual hug". I watched as she descended the steps. She was so worn down, yet lifted as she carried a bag of HOPE out of the building.

I breathed a heavy sigh as I re-bolted the door, leaning on it for a few moments to thank God that He led her here. I prayed, too, for the women who were yet to call or come in for their assistance. Susie, who has been conducting some of her services via Telehealth, was due in within the hour to administer several ultrasounds. For now, I would go about whatever business I had started.

Just then, another knock.

This time, there stood a soon-to-be-mother, a first-time visitor to FPRC. As I stood at the door frame beginning the brief dissertation on how we are conducting 'business' in these days, she advised me that the Red Cross had told her about us. I recalled a call from the Red Cross as the city was shutting down at the beginning of the pandemic. The Red Cross worker examined me as to what exactly were our services. This new client began to explain that she was staying temporarily in a domestic violence shelter pretty far away from our location. You see, during this pandemic, FPRC is the only medical pregnancy center open from Pomona to Burbank! This young

woman had just driven almost an hour or more just to find us! She explained that she had nothing, only the clothes which she was wearing. Nothing for a baby girl due in six weeks. I felt for her and didn't want her to stay in the hall any longer. She was so vulnerable, so I invited her to come in. We sat and talked, each wearing our face masks. Then I sprang up and began to bring bins of maternity clothing for her to pick from. More clothes yet on hangers. I asked if she needed the hangers. The simplest thing...a clothes hanger brought joy to her face! She said she had her own room at the shelter, which included a closet. Now she even had the hangers onto which she could treat her new articles of clothing well. From there, she received a layette in a baby bathtub, chock full of brand new baby items this young mom will take to the hospital. A bathtub to bathe her daughter, bags of 0-3 months clothing, several pouches of newborn diapers, all the wipes, shampoos, washes, and lotions to complement, a pack-n-play set which can double nicely as a travel bed, changing table, blankets, an infant sleeping chair, baby pouches inside which mom can carry the baby, a brand new diaper bag, prenatal vitamins, and more.....

I helped her carry her items to the car. She marveled at the difference in her spirit. She told me she had driven to us feeling about the lowest she ever had, due to the trauma she had just escaped. But now, she felt her circumstances had flipped. She felt that HOPE had been restored to her situation. Again...virtual hugs at the side of her car. I watched and waved her off. I thanked God that He had sent her to FPRC. Thank God we are here.

Susie, our nurse, had arrived in time to see me pack the layette into the new client's back seat. Susie was arriving to conduct two ultrasounds she had scheduled earlier in the week. Both of her clients were women who had reached out to us in the midst of COVID, grateful to learn that we offered free and confidential services!

I filled Susie in on the details of the former client and expressed my gratitude that we were here for her. In the case of domestic violence, that God would allow us to be a shining light for the young mother who now felt much more prepared for her new baby, wherein the mom could experience some joy in the course of her troubles. Thank God!

Susie's two ultrasounds revealed two babies, both in the second trimester of their developments. The new ultrasound machine helped these two women "see" the miracles dwelling inside! The first ultrasound model revealed that her partner was undergoing chemo for cancer which had spread. Their decision to keep this baby was life-giving in their otherwise unpredictable days.

Susie administered the ultrasound to her second mother and called me into the room. The young mother was clean and sober now but told us her story of how she was formerly bound up in depression and addiction. She had only recently left her partner and would we help guide her to her next steps? Susie and I helped her leave a message for a doctor to whom we refer clients so that she could begin to care for her unborn child. After that call was made, we began to gather info to share with her about housing and programs. With tears in her eyes, this mother left with armloads of maternity clothing, prenatal vitamins, food, cash for gas, and a Bible. We three prayed and the new client left.

Susie and I sat quietly in our lobby, long after what would have been normal closing hours. We knew we had experienced God, His care for his children, and the children about to be.

We had everything we needed to be able to provide HOPE into all the stories of each of the clients who came to us for HOPE and help. We inextricably saw God's mighty hands at work! He upheld us while we upheld fellow sojourners.

What's next for each of these women? Susie will make follow-up phone calls. We keep in touch. We will remember them in our prayers. Each gal knows we are here. We're not going anywhere. All the supplies, the virtual hugs, the prayers, the words, the caring...all of that meant to each of these women that they matter. We see them. God sees them. Even in the midst of darkness.

The Father of Light allows us, all of us, YOU and FPRC together, to be lights. Let's shine forth brightly...now and always. Thank YOU!