

‘Matrona’ provides for mothers in need

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© August 04, 2023 Last Updated: August 03, 2023 09:38 PM Local News



Kelly Hanson, lead volunteer for Matrona Family Resource Center at Cabot United Methodist Church, puts racks of baby clothes away at the center in Cabot United Methodist Church on Thursday, Aug. 3. Justin Guido/Butler Eagle

WINFIELD TWP — Kelly Hanson still remembers when she was a new mother and ran out diapers one morning. She still recalls the anxiety that set in when she realized she was down to her last diaper after her husband went to work.

“There was just such a panic in me,” Hanson said. “Even though I could just drive to the store really quick and come back and my husband would have been fine to stay with baby for another minute. It wasn’t an absolute emergency but it was a moment of panic.”



Hanson, the Children's Ministry director and lead volunteer for Matrona Family Resource Center at Cabot United Methodist Church, said she imagined being in a situation where she was unable to pay for diapers.

"What would it be like if I didn't have the money in the bank account to be able to pay for those diapers?" she asked "Would I be able to think about anything else? Would I be able to focus at work? Would I be able to be patient when my kids screamed for no apparent reason? Probably not. That's an all-consuming kind of problem."

Hanson, along with the Cabot United Methodist Church, created a resource center where families can come between 6 and 8 p.m. every Thursday to pick up a vast array of baby and children's supplies, including diapers, baby gear, formula and children's books, along with support group, parenting and childbirth classes.



Kelly Hanson puts racks of baby clothes away at the Matrona Family Resource Center in Cabot United Methodist Church on Thursday, Aug. 3. Justin Guido/Butler Eagle

“The idea is from the moment you find out you’re pregnant while your kid grows out of, about a size 6, we would have something for you here,” Hanson said.

Matrona, which is located inside church, has the feel of a gently used thrift shop, and it’s a place where there are no limitations on what patrons can take home with them.

“It’s most often the mothers that come in and they can shop and figure out what they need,” Hanson said. “They can try things on their kids if they need to. They can try things on for a week and see if they work and bring them back if they don’t. They can use it like a lending library.”

The idea of Matrona came in July last year, and as donations started to pour in, the resource center was able to open in late October.

“You never underestimate the urge for parents to get rid of their baby stuff,” Hanson said.

All donations are thoroughly checked and washed by one of the nearly 20 Matrona volunteers.

Lead pastor, the Rev. Jonathan Fehl, said it is important that the resource center is available for everyone in need. There is no call-ahead scheduling or restrictions to who can use the services of Matrona.

“We want to be a place that the community sees as being for them, as being able to help in times of need,” Fehl said.

The need for support has grown since October. On the first night, Matrona had one family show up, now the church can see as many as 15 families stop by in a week.

Hanson estimates that are around 45 families that are served over the course of year, supporting about 70 children.

In January, Matrona was awarded a grant to provide funds for formula and diapers.

“We have a lot of mothers that come to us that their babies were born prematurely, or they’re medically fragile, they’ve got a lot of allergies,” Hanson said. “And the formula that works for them is \$500 a month. I have a teenage boy with a hollow leg who doesn’t eat that much.”

They are actively looking for a new grant or source of funding to continue their supplies of formula and diapers.

And while Hanson and volunteers try to make the store feel as welcoming possible, Butler resident, Kathy Dittmer said it’s the people that give it a sense of warmth.

“(Hanson) is a very kind, very helpful and very welcoming,” Dittmer said.



Sandy Ekas folds baby clothes at the Matrona Family Resource Center in Cabot United Methodist Church on Thursday, Aug. 3. Justin Guido/Butler Eagle



Kelly Hanson puts clothes on a rack at Matrona Family Resource Center in Cabot United Methodist Church on Thursday, Aug. 3. Justin Guido/Butler Eagle



Liberty Hanson, 11, rolls a rack into the main room at the Matrona Family Resource Center in Cabot United Methodist Church on Thursday, Aug. 3.
Justin Guido/Butler Eagle



The Matrona Family Resource Center in Cabot United Methodist Church carries different formulas and food for babies. Justin Guido/Butler Eagle



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