

Woman's Vision

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County owned by one of McGill's benefactors. McGill chose the rural location for its solitude and distance from the distractions of the city, which she believes outweigh the disadvantages of distance from stores and conveniences as well as health care facilities.

The design of Faith Haven reflects her experience and research. Despite their condition, some of the pregnant young women McGill has dealt with know little of pre- or post-natal care or what to expect. In response, childbirth and parenting classes will be offered at Faith Haven, although facilities will not be included for delivering babies except in emergencies.

Since McGill has also observed that pregnant teenagers usually break their ties with formal schooling, Faith Haven will provide tutoring and encouragement to continue their educations. Through both spiritual and career-oriented counseling, the girls will be pushed to set long- and short-term goals for their lives. A network of referrals McGill has established will connect them with the services they need to realize their dreams once they leave.

Describing the proposed atmosphere as "family-type living," McGill explained that residents of the house will do their own housework — cooking, cleaning, and gardening. She plans to teach them to can and freeze what they grow, and to include some basic social skills in the agenda to help give the girls confidence in dealing with people.

Her planned staff includes a doctor, psychologist, social worker, registered nurse, two teachers and house parents in addition to her own live-in presence. She hopes to find four or five sets of house parents able to live at Faith Haven for alternating periods of time.

One of the most pressing short-term



Jeff Goulding / Courier-Journal

decisions the girls will need to make is whether to keep their babies or allow them to be adopted, something that McGill hopes to resolve in most cases by the time the child is born. Although she strongly believes in adoption as the best course for most teenage mothers, she's fully aware of the emotional trauma entailed.

Two babies, aged one and two, came into her life with a foster child, who gave birth to the younger while living with McGill. During the time the family stayed with her, both babies made a home in her heart as well. So when they moved to a relative's home, McGill can only describe her grief at the loss by saying "I never want to go through that again."

The arrangement with the relative didn't work out and McGill has now become the

children's legal guardian. Meanwhile, experiencing the separation, which at the time seemed permanent, has given her insight and empathy for the choice her girls will face.

Although Faith Haven is the result of work and contributions from many people, the vision was McGill's and without her tireless effort "to share the idea with folk," its doors would not be opening this fall.

During the two years she spent actively promoting her concept, she remembered speaking to anyone who would listen — businessmen, ministers, counselors, teachers.

"I'd be waiting in their offices at 8 a.m. when they arrived and be out till late at night," she said, adding that "a lot of doors were slammed in my face." But as word

spread, a chain reaction began with each volunteer producing more volunteers and more donations.

She has consciously avoided public funding for Faith Haven to ensure that her non-denomination Christian philosophy will remain the home's guiding force.

Before Faith Haven can open this fall, McGill said, a variety of household items are needed to make the house ready for occupancy. They include: linens and towels, pots and pans, bedspreads and fittings for single beds (mattresses and springs), dressers, couches and other living room furniture, washing machines, a freezer and recreation room equipment. Baby clothing and articles are also needed, but only for newborns. To make arrangements for donations, or for more information, call McGill at (716)374-5659.

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