

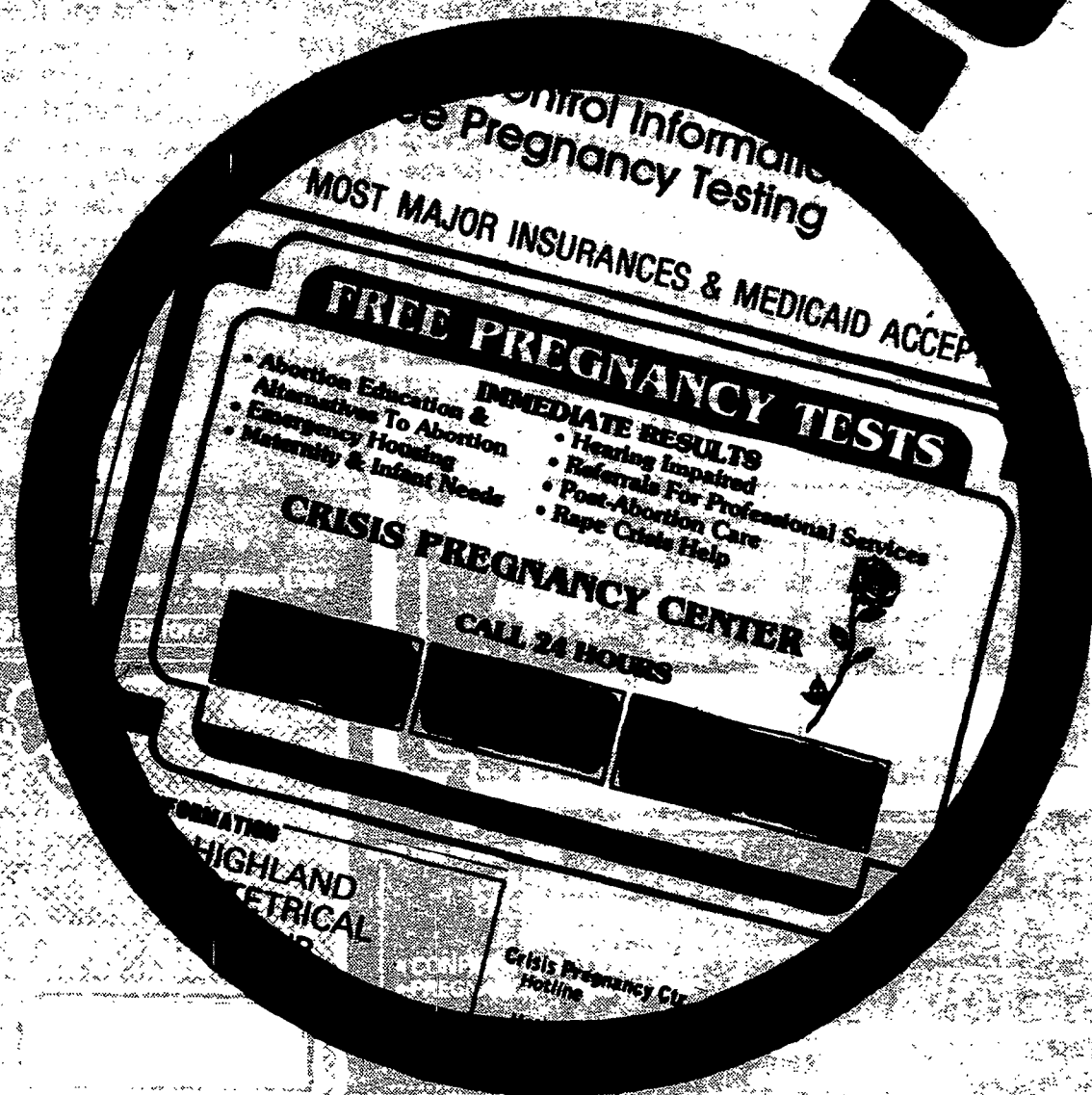


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## Centers assist women amid charges of fraud



By Lee Strong

**W**hen Karen Lovejoy thought she was pregnant, a friend suggested that she call the Problem Pregnancy Center, 3252 Lake Ave., Rochester.

She visited the center and received a free pregnancy test. The results were positive.

Lovejoy recalls that the center's staff provided help and support throughout her pregnancy, as well as additional assistance after her son, Jeremy, was born Aug. 14, 1991.

"They helped me move from one apartment to another, with food, a dresser, a lot of clothes," recalled Lovejoy, who attends Holy Cross Parish, 4492 Lake Ave., Rochester.

Unlike many of the women who turn to the Problem Pregnancy Center, Lovejoy is married. And, before she first contacted the center, she had already decided not to have an abortion.

Even so, Lovejoy and her husband saw her pregnancy as a crisis. Unable to find work after returning to Rochester from Albany to care for her ailing father, the couple was forced to go on public assistance.

"I was just scared about how much (the baby) would cost," Lovejoy said.

Material assistance from the Problem Pregnancy Center helped allay those fears, however. In addition, center volunteers still call regularly to make sure that the family is doing well. And Karen Lovejoy can contact the center whenever she is concerned or upset.

Her experiences with the Problem Pregnancy Center belie some of the common notions about such centers — and about the pro-life movement as well. Critics assert that the sole purpose of such centers is to talk women out of having abortions — and then leave them without help.

Furthermore, the centers have been targets of repeated allegations that they engage in questionable — even deceptive — advertising practices in their attempts to dissuade women from considering abortions.

The centers serve both married and unmarried clients. Some of their clients may not even be considering abortion. The crises such women face may stem from financial or emo-

tional concerns, rather than from the decision to carry the child to term.

As part of their efforts, the centers provide or refer clients to a variety of support services that offer alternatives to abortion. Clients receive help finding medical care, maternity and baby clothes, furniture, adoption agencies, housing, post-abortion counseling, individual and family counseling, support groups and even job training.

In addition, the centers' staff members — some who are former clients or had even had abortions themselves — often remain in contact with the women well beyond their children's births. Most of these staffs consist of unpaid volunteers, and the centers themselves operate on small budgets.

More than 2,000 such centers exist across the nation, according to figures from the Christian Action Council, based in Falls Church, Md.

About 425 of those centers are affiliated with CAC, including ones in Rochester, Palmyra, Ithaca and Elmira. Birthright, another

Continued on page 18