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Pregnancy support now available at Acadia

Stephanie Brown | February 7, 2014



A new group has been ratified with the ASU and it is unlike one we have seen thus far on campus. Acadia Pregnancy Support is, according to their Facebook Page "Acadia Pregnancy Support":

"*a confidential and free resource available to any student (male or female) experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. This safe environment offers nonjudgmental peer support and accurate information on a woman's pregnancy options. We are committed to connecting students with resources that can help them continue their education and pregnancy.*" This group was created by Mandy Blanchard, a former Acadia Student herself who then went on to take her B.Ed. at Acadia and then her MA in Counselling Psychology. Blanchard works at Valley Care Pregnancy Centre in Kentville, a not-for-profit Christian organization. The centre wanted to make their services more accessible to Acadia students, so Blanchard became the Student Outreach Director in November of last year and started the group. After asking about the relevance of these groups at universities in Canada, Blanchard replied that she is not aware of any such programs at other universities but that she has contacts in the United States who do similar work, so it may be more prominent there. Acadia may be the first to start a support system that is very much needed, because the more well-informed students are about their possible options the more likely they will make a decision that suits them with the support they need. It is understandingly difficult to know the statistics of un-planned pregnancies on campus but where there are people who are sexually active there is a need for these services.

Blanchard explained that the goal of this resource is to "offer a safe, nonjudgmental place where students experiencing an unplanned pregnancy can come to talk out their options & get connected to positive, practical support." I also spoke to Candice Visser, a third year Acadia Kinesiology student who has become involved with the group and she stressed that this resource is fact based, not advocacy based, and provides unbiased resources. Visser explained that the group is not here to promote their opinions; they want to be a place where people can come get the resources they need and receive support with whatever decision they make with the pregnancy, whether it is going through with the pregnancy, adoption or abortion. When asked what Blanchard wants students to know about the group, Blanchard responded with "We are here for them. We are not here to lobby for rights. We are not here to activate controversy concerning pro-life or pro-choice opinions. We are here to give accurate information, not advice. Above all, we are here to show love and acceptance to women in need of support." Students can expect to get information about all options available to them and support

throughout whichever they option they choose and will not have to worry about being pushed in one direction or another.

Blanchard listed some of the many useful resources that APS provides to Acadia students such as: "Free pregnancy tests (offered on-site, right at Acadia), material support (practical items for baby and mother: clothing, diapers, formula, toys, food), health & medical support (referrals to local doctors & dietitians who have personally agreed to support Acadia students; programs and services for prenatal & newborn care; breastfeeding support; information on health insurance; free vitamins), housing support (information on housing programs specifically designed for students who become parents; referrals to specific landlords willing/able to rent to pregnant/parenting students), childcare options (info on government grants, list of local childcare facilities), financial help (through Acadia financial aid or government programs specific to student parents), personal support (referrals to professional counsellors, support groups, post-abortion counselling), and spiritual support (offering to connect students with resources to meet their spiritual needs)."

A very important thing to note about this group is that the student's information is kept completely confidential. Blanchard explained that all volunteers are required to sign confidentiality agreements and the client's information is only known by Blanchard herself and a volunteer, if the volunteer is present. The volunteers are not permitted to speak to each other about clients, or clients' information. There is training that volunteers have to undergo before they meet directly with student clients, and it is the same training that the staff at Valley Care Pregnancy Center complete. Blanchard explained that "this training teaches how to appropriately and sensitively engage individuals experiencing unplanned pregnancies." Visser explained that only members of the group who have been trained are permitted to interact with clients and potentially sit in with the client and Blanchard if the client agrees, and other members help with awareness and events. Visser plans on becoming trained so that she can be involved with clients.

There are many different ways in which you can seek the support of Blanchard and the group. There is a Facebook page entitled "Acadia Pregnancy Support," and anyone who would like more information, has a question, or wants support can email info@acadiapregnancysupport.com. Blanchard also provided her personal cell phone number (691-2660) and informed me that students can reach her there by calling or texting. The group does not have an office yet because they are so new, but that is in the works. There is a space on campus that students can privately meet with Blanchard. To make an appointment they can reach out with any of the contact information listed above. The group is open to any Acadia Students, so if anyone feels like getting involved, contact the group for more information. Blanchard noted that currently the group is focusing on raising awareness about their presence on campus so volunteers are putting up posters and planning events. The group meets once every two weeks and the times and dates are listed on the Facebook page so Blanchard urges anyone interested to "like" the Facebook page for updates. The Acadia Pregnancy Support is available now for students, so do not hesitate to reach out for help.