

# In Her Words

## Sidewalk Counseling Summer Intern shares her life-changing experience

What began as a way to make some extra money while on summer break from nursing school has turned into an experience that I will take with me throughout my life.

Having just moved home from Oklahoma, I heard from a friend at church about a summer internship with the Catholic Pro-Life Committee doing sidewalk counseling. I had no idea what sidewalk counseling was, but the thought of helping save babies really appealed to me. I met with Joanne Underwood, the director of the sidewalk counseling ministry, signed up for training, and within a week I was out on the sidewalk in front of Southwestern abortion facility in Dallas.

My first day I observed the other CPLC counselors and kept watch for people approaching the abortion facility. We try to talk with them, let them know we are here to help. After a couple days on the sidewalk, I talked to my first mom. I wasn't nervous; I just remembered what the other counselors told me: "just be loving and let the Holy Spirit guide you."

The mom I was talking to that day was so sad, straight-faced, and tearing up. I convinced her to let me take her to the nearby pregnancy resource center for a sonogram. As we walked, she told me more about herself. When we got to the resource center, I stayed with her until they took her to a room. It was so hard to let her go, but I know the people there specialize in helping moms like her. You have to trust God. I had a powerful feeling inside of me that her baby was going to be saved that day. I stayed a little while in the waiting room and prayed for her.

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By the time I got back to the sidewalk, another abortion-minded mom had agreed to have a sonogram at the pregnancy resource center, so I walked with her. As I was leaving, my first mom came out, and I couldn't believe the change in her.

She was a completely different person, overflowing with happiness. She couldn't contain her excitement as she took out the sonogram pictures of her baby to show me. I could tell that a heavy load had been lifted from her. She now knows that she and her baby are not alone.

Being on the sidewalk makes those big, wooden "Pregnant? Need Help?" signs outside of church become real. I wish more moms would share their stories. Many times, they are scared or are being pressured, and we try to offer them help and hope. Some people are appreciative of the help we offer, while others are mean and rude. Only God knows what they are feeling inside, but sometimes their anger and pain just pour out. It makes me so sad.

I used to consider daily Mass as kind of overkill, but now I go every morning before coming to the sidewalk. We (counselors and prayer partners) all pray together and support each other. It's like we're all interconnected; we're all part of the Body of Christ. We pick up where the other leaves off — when I stop praying so I can talk to a mom, another counselor picks up without pause to support me in prayer.

In a few weeks, I will leave this internship to continue pursuing a nursing career. But I will leave a changed person greatly impacted for a lifetime from this experience. 🙏



Sidewalk Counselor **Celina Boyle** and intern **Kasandra Martinez** share an umbrella during a rain shower while counseling outside Southwestern abortion facility.