

Pass It On®...

Fix it Yourself.

How one couple moved hundreds of miles from home to run a center for pregnant teenage girls.

Drew and Cindy are unassuming and polite, and they go about their business without judgment. Drew was a contractor in the Midwest and made a good living. He's barrel-chested and has the thick forearms and fingers of a man who has worked with his hands for decades.

When his children were grown and raising families of their own in various places around the country, Drew started thinking about a change of life. He and Cindy had been good at raising kids, setting them on a productive path. So the couple started thinking about how to spend the next chapter. As most often happens, a friend of a friend of a friend had an idea. This friend mentioned teenage mothers, most of them runaways, and how they needed support, a place to live, a fresh start.

The idea became a plan. Within a year, Drew and Cindy had moved a few hundred miles away and were living in a cheap hotel while Drew built a home for pregnant teenage girls who had been kicked out of their own homes or had run away. With the help of friends and guidance from the proper state authorities, Drew built a long dormitory, a couple of classrooms and a community kitchen large enough to have informal discussions around an immense kitchen table.

One of the first girls to move in was Erin. When Erin was 14, her mother left home and never came back. Erin lived with friends for a year before getting pregnant in her sophomore year of high school. With no place to go, she found Drew and Cindy. There was no judgment about her situation, no shaming, only help.

Soon, other girls moved in. They all had similar stories: drug addicts for parents, abuse, neglect. At Drew and Cindy's, they found family. They shared chores, took classes to earn high school degrees and certifications, and had regular visits from social workers, volunteer teachers, nurses and a doctor. Disagreements were talked out, feelings shared. They began to see life from the other side of the reality they had lived. Drew and Cindy lived in an upstairs apartment, and there were lots of late-night

chats and tears. Growing into responsibility can be painful.

At age 15, Erin gave birth and made the difficult decision to find adoptive parents for her little boy. She agonized, met young couples unable to have their own children and tried hard to see the future. And then she found the perfect fit. A couple in their early forties was looking for a little brother for their first adopted son. Erin, her son, and the would-be parents sat around the big kitchen table. Cindy sat beside Erin, and Drew held the baby. It had been a long vetting process, and the day had finally arrived. The couple smiled and then made the most amazing suggestion: "We'd like to adopt your baby ... and we'd like to adopt you, too." There were lots of tears, and lots of paperwork to do, but Erin had finally found the family she had so longed for. Thanks to Drew and Cindy, who had seen a problem and taken the initiative to fix it themselves.

Initiative...PassItOn.com

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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