

# CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

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## Vista Maria to build human trafficking stabilization center on its Dearborn campus

SHERRI WELCH



Agency to break ground this spring

New center will include first-of-its kind emergency intake wing, 16-bed treatment housing

Facility will improve and expand services for young female victims



Vista Maria

The new Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Stabilization Treatment Center will provide residential treatment housing for up to 16 girls and a first-of-its-kind emergency intake wing.

Vista Maria plans to break ground this spring on a new human trafficking stabilization center to improve and expand services for young female victims.

Scheduled to open in early 2020, the new \$4.6 million stabilization center will be located on Vista Maria's 37-acre Dearborn campus with the Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Hall, Vista Maria's existing 16-bed treatment housing for female victims of human trafficking.

The new Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Stabilization Treatment Center will provide residential treatment housing for up to 16 girls, doubling Vista Maria's current capacity, and a first-of-its-kind emergency intake wing to provide services for up to three rescued adolescent girls.

The small-scale trauma response center will provide physical and mental health care to young victims, with best practices gleaned from child advocacy centers and input from staff, clinical practitioners, human trafficking survivors and law enforcement.

The nearly 14,000-square-foot center will also include 16 residential beds, expanding Vista Maria's ability to provide longer-term treatment for victims.

Founded in 1883, Vista Maria provides residential therapeutic programming, foster care, transitional living for youth who have aged out of foster care and/or are homeless, and community-based education programs.

Of the 130 at-risk girls it's housing on its campus, 20

Last year, the agency served a total of 60 human trafficking victims. As one of only a few agencies contracted by the state of Michigan to provide care for adolescent female victims of human trafficking, Vista Maria gets daily referrals and takes in victims from Washtenaw, Genesee, Calhoun, Kent and Ingham counties, Aufdemberge said.



Angela Aufdemberger

"Today I'm taking beds from children with other mental health needs, turning them away, in order to provide beds to young victims of human trafficking," she said.

Even then, the agency can only help so many victims because of capacity constraints, Aufdemberge said. Without a bed or family to return to, many girls who are rescued are taken to a shelter, "and that's not safe for them," she said.

Other girls are placed in more general treatment programs that may not address their unique needs, Aufdemberge said, noting Vista Maria has a waiting list for human trafficking victims seeking residential treatment on its campus.

Beyond increased capacity, the new center will improve the quality of care. Typically, after rescue, victims spend up to 48 hours going to law enforcement, medical and psychiatric treatment sites before they return to their families or are placed in residential treatment housing, Aufdemberge said.

"Law enforcement, medical providers and psychiatry will all come to this place where these girls are instead of them being dragged around the city," she said.

The new center will be named in recognition of a \$750,000 grant from the DeRoy Testamentary Foundation. The foundation's namesakes, Aaron and Helen DeRoy, were Pittsburgh natives who moved to Detroit and founded the Aaron DeRoy Motor Car Co. in 1923 to distribute Hudson and Essex brand automobiles for the Hudson Motor Co. and to operate retail dealerships.

Vista Maria, which is operating on a \$25.5 million budget for fiscal 2019, has raised \$2.4 million of its projected \$4.6 million cost. Other support for the project includes a \$500,000 forgivable loan from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis, \$500,000 grants from the Carls Foundation and McGregor Fund and additional support from the Abhi Shah Foundation in Novi, the Washington, D.C.-based Seed Foundation, NorthRidge Church, Vista Maria board members and others.

The new human trafficking stabilization center will fill a critical void by offering a safe, secure, centralized facility for victim care and restoration, said McGregor Fund President Kate Levin Markel.

"Building on the trauma-informed approach to care that Vista Maria has developed over many years, the center will provide services in a trauma-informed and person-centered manner, which we know to be the best approach to help victims restore their lives."

Inline Play

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