

## **Nonprofit Chamber of Service Nonprofit of the Month**

*This series has been established with the intent of increasing awareness of the many causes and efforts taken on by our nonprofit brethren. If your nonprofit has a particular event taking place during the course of a week, an anniversary for example, please make this known and we will do all possible to accommodate a spotlight that coincides. On behalf of our membership, we wish to say “thank you” for taking a few moments from your busy schedule to learn a bit more about our community of nonprofits.*

This week we will be highlighting AgapéCare Cradle, Inc (ACCI). Since the spring of 2003 Shannon Barnes, Executive Director, and her Board of Directors have been working to form a special nonprofit mortuary devoted exclusively to serving parents who have suffered the loss of a baby. In April, 2004 AgapéCare Cradle became a 501 (C) 3 organization.

AgapéCare Cradle is a model program meaning there is no other service quite like it. ACCI utilizes a licensed nonprofit funeral center to deliver specialized care to families having recently suffered the loss of a baby. There are about 100 reported stillbirths & infant deaths in Sedgwick County each year. Barnes estimates there are an additional 50-100 late miscarriages each year who would utilize ACCI's services, but do not qualify as a stillbirth due to the baby's weight, so are not recognized or reported. ACCI believes mothers and fathers seldom fully recover from the death of their baby without a tangible validation of their significant loss. ACCI assists families by treating the funeral or memorial service as a therapeutic intervention conducted to support emotional healing and spiritual recovery

AgapéCare Cradle thanks Rivercrest Free Methodist Church for their partnership in providing ACCI with a physical location. In late 2005, 37 corporate and individual sponsors came together to remodel a vacant building owned by Rivercrest into a funeral center. Just 15 days after being licensed ACCI received a call directly from a bereaved mother shortly after she delivered her baby in her hospital room. More calls have followed, coming from families who have just suffered the loss of a baby. AgapéCare Cradle has provided two funeral services to date and has procured the funding to provide approximately twenty more during 2007.

Shannon Barnes, Executive Director, has worked in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit as a registered nurse since 1984. Shannon has also served on various committees within several Kansas medical centers where she has worked. In 1998 Shannon graduated from Kansas City Kansas School of Mortuary Arts with an associate's degree in Mortuary Science. She has arranged and conducted services for both adult and infant losses. She holds current RN, Kansas Funeral Director, and Embalmer licenses.

Although AgapéCare Cradle has come a long way since its inception in 2003, there is still much work ahead. Barnes says the biggest need at this point is recruiting community advocates and investment to help parents beginning at a point of urgent need. Volunteers needed include office, bookkeeping, and hospitality staff, photographers, and drivers. Churches are invited to partner in specific ways that bring meaning and context to parent loss experience. If you or someone you know is interested in donating or volunteering with AgapéCare Cradle contact Shannon Barnes at (316) 263-HOPE (4673) or visit their website, [www.agapecarecradle.org](http://www.agapecarecradle.org).