

Kathy Bogie and Ciara Lillie launch post-incarceration program for women in Texas

Magdalene House Kerrville—a sister organization of the program in Nashville, Tennessee—serves survivors of sex trafficking, prostitution, and addiction.

by [Laura Shaver](#) in the [March 14, 2018](#) issue



Ciara Lillie, site manager, and Kathy Bogie, executive director, on the front porch at Magdalene House Kerrville in Texas. Photo by Laura Shaver, Episcopal Diocese of West Texas.

Kathy Bogie was pondering how she could best serve God in her retirement when she heard Becca Stevens speak to the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas.

Stevens told the story of [founding the Magdalene program in Nashville, Tennessee](#), which serves women who have survived sex trafficking, prostitution, and addiction and employs them through a social enterprise project, [Thistle Farms](#).

“That’s it,” Bogie said. As a nurse practitioner, she had noticed women coming in for a quick medical exam and to be tested for sexually transmitted infections.

“They were homeless women who had been employed as housekeepers for a low-end motel at the time,” she said. “The motel manager gave them a place to live and expected them to prostitute. If they didn’t follow his demands, according to the women, he would hurt them.”

Bogie gathered a board of directors to form Magdalene House Kerrville, in Texas as a sister organization of the Nashville program. It recently welcomed its first resident. In the years since Bogie heard Stevens speak, she went back to school to earn a doctorate in nursing practice and to look at what was needed to build a sustainable program.

“To really transform women’s lives, this had to be research based and what the community said would work,” Bogie said.

In her doctoral research, she studied women in Kerr County, Texas, who had survived human trafficking, prostitution, addiction, and abuse. She found that 100 percent of the women had experienced trauma by age six.

“They never developed in a trusting, healthy way,” she said. “Some couldn’t even remember their trauma because it was so severe.”

Magdalene House Kerrville will serve women in a similar situation, offering a two-year post-incarceration aftercare program. Its Healthy and Whole Model of Care attends to the residents’ medical needs after acceptance into the program, followed by health education and trauma-specific care. An evidence-based psychological and educational program, it also includes healing through the arts, peer support, and education and employment training.

“I remember hearing Becca Stevens say it takes some women three to four months just to get settled in the Magdalene home,” Bogie said. “I just couldn’t fathom that because there was so much work to get started. But we have found it’s so true. They are absolutely physically exhausted from all they have been through.”

Carolyn, Magdalene House Kerrville’s first resident, is still in phase one of her care. She is attending 12-step meetings, working to quit smoking, and resting.

The Magdalene Pathway begins with Welcome to the Circle, which lasts three to six months. Every morning, Carolyn sits with Bogie and Ciara Lillie, site manager, at the kitchen table; they pray and reflect together, read scripture from *The Life Recovery Bible*, and work through the book *Shadows of the Neanderthal*, directed at changing mental models.

The program at Magdalene House Kerrville continues with three further stages during the two years: Blossoming Wisdom (six–12 months), Flourishing Independence (12–18 months), the Unbroken Circle (18–24 months), and Sisterhood for Life.

While in the two-year program a resident is not allowed to have visitors until the she has completed the second stage. This is to protect the resident and to learn who the resident’s “safe” people are, such as Carolyn’s mother, with whom she has a brief phone call every evening.

Bogie has developed partnerships in Kerrville, including one with the Christian Women’s Job Corps, which provides employment training and job security. The organization has also partnered with health clinics and thrift stores. Numerous church groups supply donations and in-kind gifts.

As site manager, Lillie lives on the Magdalene House property full-time in a mobile home that was purchased with a grant from Sisterhood for Good, a community foundation in Kerrville.

“I wanted to be somewhere where people loved me for loving,” she said.

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