

# Babies Go To Congress

By Rita Leone-Reyes

In October I was contacted by Heartbeat International and asked to attend an event they were hosting in Washington DC, called Babies Go to Congress. It was to take place the same day as the March for Life, the largest pro-life march in the country, memorialized on the anniversary of Roe v Wade, January 22nd. We would be visiting Congressman with some of our clients and their babies. Its goal was to let our Congressmen know that pregnancy centers are good for the United States and to show them the real live results of our work.

I was privileged to take with me our first client RaeAnne Chiselko and her son, Antonio (our first baby). RaeAnne became employed by Choices of the Heart last July. Her testimony and long term relationship with Choices of the Heart made her presence all the more powerful. Heartbeat asked RaeAnne to come with her written story in hand to leave with every Congressman we visited, along with a written history about Choices.

We broke into teams the morning of the March; each team with a designated Congressional office to visit. My team included, Peggy Hartshorn, President of Heartbeat International. We had scheduled meetings with Congressman Trent Franks of Arizona and Congressman Tim Ryan of Ohio. Unfortunately, our representatives from NJ would not confirm their appointments with us. We were welcomed warmly, especially by Congressman Franks who was very open to sharing his personal story and very strong pro-life position. We were able to communicate many things about our work that were unknown to our representatives. For example, our ability to network with local physicians, our commitment to the woman after she has the baby and our goal to empower her for life through mentoring and education. The added bonus.....we do it all without Federal funding. Being able to dialogue about this work wasn't hard. The work speaks for itself. Getting the right people to listen is the challenge.

Heartbeat International did an amazing job with organizing the entire trip. I believe they accomplished their initial goal; however they may not realize something else more Significant happened and it was personal. My passion was reignited. Sometimes the passion for the work gets lost in the everyday battles we face but crossing the streets of Washington DC, I was reminded of the verse, "how precious are the feet of them who bring good news." We were bringing great news to our Capital. Pregnancy centers are good. Pregnancy centers are committed. Pregnancy centers save lives. Pregnancy centers are here to stay. I was blessed to be able to tell it and even more blessed to live it.