



I See You: Telling the ICU Mobile Story

BY ROBERT G. MORRISON



“I see you.” It’s not just a sweet game. It’s not just three simple words. It’s a profound lesson. Isn’t that the first, or at least one of the first games we play with our infants? Baby learns: There’s an “I.” There’s a “you.” And there’s a bond of love between us two.

Image Clear Ultrasound (ICU) is also a pun. It’s a wonderful pun: I see you.

Today, thanks to the wonders of modern technology, expectant mothers often form that indissoluble bond with their child even before he or she is born. In millions of homes, the first family picture on the fridge is often that ultrasound picture. Ultrasound technology has advanced to the point where mothers and, hopefully, fathers, can see their unborn child in real time.

Something within us is touched, and touched deeply, when we see an unborn child, our own flesh and blood sucking a thumb, yawning, scratching an itch, even holding hands up as if in prayer.

Well, that’s all illusory, we are told. The thoughtful, the pensive, the serious people persist in telling us night and day that it is not an unborn child. It’s a fetus. And it only becomes a person when it’s wanted, when it’s born.

We answer: “A person’s a person, no matter how small.” That’s what Dr. Seuss’s Horton the Elephant used to say. Millions of American children were schooled on Horton’s wisdom about persons, even small ones.

Small ones have been on Sylvia Slifko’s heart for many years and she decided to do something about it. In 1990 she began pro-life work and later served as executive director of Pregnancy Solutions & Services (PSS) in Akron, OH. This pregnancy care center was one of 150 centers singled out for a President’s Volunteer Service Award in 2008.

Sylvia and her friends in Akron decided to branch

out from the four walls of their pregnancy care center. They sought divine guidance. Sylvia describes it in her own words:

In October of 2003, after a time of prayer, the Lord put in my heart the idea of a mobile pregnancy vehicle to show pregnant abortion-minded women their babies. He even gave me the name: I See You (ICU).

Stepping out in faith, they retrofitted one, then a number of recreational vehicles (RVs) to serve as mobile ultrasound units. The ICU Mobile ministry travels into the heart of America’s inner cities, heading for mall parking lots, shopping plazas, universities, impoverished communities, and even across the street from abortion facilities. Wherever young women in need go, ICU Mobile will go. ICU Mobile is a way of extending those compassionate hands of pregnancy care centers. When a young woman is about to make a decision, she needs those helping hands.

Sylvia continues,

We felt it was important to have everyone understand what has made the mobile ministry—and ICU—so different. It’s such a new concept to so many people, yet when they hear who we are and what we want to accomplish, it really makes sense to them and speaks to them. I feel so blessed that God has allowed us to take His vision and watch it grow.

America has seen this kind of dedication before. Akron, Ohio served as a center for the Underground Railroad before the Civil War. Hundreds of slaves escaped here, conducted by the courageous Harriet Tubman and others, black and white, who knew that God did not want His children to sweat out their lives in unrequited toil.

Akron is also the place where Alcoholics Anonymous was founded. This organization has given hundreds of thousands of people—in this country and elsewhere—new hope for a life free from bondage.

Sylvia’s board chose Michael Homula Jr. to serve as the Executive Director of ICU Mobile. Michael

brought a wealth of business and management experience to his role with ICU Mobile. He pitched in to give a high level of professionalism and expertise to the operations of this non-profit organization.

Michael comments,

ICU Mobile... is the pioneer and leader of mobile pregnancy center ministry. We want to provide a convenient, comfortable environment where every woman experiencing an unplanned pregnancy can see her unborn child in order to make a fully informed, life-affirming decision. We are also committed to helping women see the love of Jesus Christ. The good news of the Gospel is shared with everyone who comes aboard an ICU Mobile.

Michael's story is dramatic, if not unique. His birth mother was raped at an office party she attended in 1969. Michael's life was the result of that crime against his mother. Happily, Michael's mother made an adoption plan for her child. Adopted by a loving family, Michael grew to know that the love of Christ is sufficient to mend broken hearts. The Bible says of the Savior, "a bruised reed He will not break . . ." (Matt. 12:20) Michael knows about bruised reeds.

ICU Mobile offers us a vision. It is a vision of life for our communities, for our country, for our wounded world. And we know that without such vision the people perish. Michael's goal, and Sylvia's, too, is to see ICU Mobile units wherever unborn children's lives are threatened. Wherever a young woman is being enticed into letting an abortionist end her baby's life, these dedicated professionals want to send an ICU Mobile unit. They offer her encouragement and love. They show her life. They shower her with the hope of Christ.

A typical day on the mobile unit begins with prayer. Sylvia describes one such day.

As I waited, I prayed that God would allow us to save a baby that day. Several hours later as we stood on the sidewalk in front of the [abortion facility] with our mobile on the street a few feet away, we let women know that we were there to give them "a second opinion" with our free ultrasound. One couple shouted that they already had three children and could not afford any more. Others just kept their eyes straight ahead as they marched forward in a kind of hypnotic state.

Then we noticed a young woman and an older woman leaving the [facility] and coming toward us. The

younger woman was crying and said she would like to have an ultrasound. We found that the young woman was pregnant and her mother was accompanying her for the scheduled abortion.

Within minutes they both saw the life of their child and grandchild on the screen. Tears continued to fall, but this time they were tears of joy. Yes, the young woman decided to keep her baby, and later when an ICU counselor presented the gospel, they both accepted Christ as their Savior.

Sylvia and Michael, their board of directors, volunteers, and supporters believe that ICU Mobile can change our culture. They know that when a woman sees her own baby on the screen she sees her pregnancy from a different point of view. In fact, when abortion-minded women see their unborn children via ultra-sound on board an ICU Mobile unit, 86.9% percent choose life. Last year alone, 553 babies were saved aboard nine ICU Mobiles. Additionally, 43% of those who hear the gospel make first time decisions for Christ. That averages out to two babies and two souls a day.

ICU Mobile is not a new *type* of pregnancy center. Nor is it an attempt to *replace* existing pregnancy care centers. ICU Mobile partners with pregnancy care centers, providing them with a proven and effective way to extend their ministries. ICU Mobile actually provides units to the local pregnancy care centers. The pregnancy centers, in turn, staff and operate the mobiles in an effort to bring abortion-minded women through their own doors. ICU Mobile currently has more than twenty affiliates and plans for twenty-four more units in the year ahead, including deploying mobiles to Ghana and India.

ICU Mobile doesn't promote civic engagement with office holders, doesn't engage in politics, and doesn't go into court. Instead, ICU Mobile is dedicated to providing loving, non-judgmental help to young women facing unwanted pregnancies.

Tom Glessner is the president of the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA). NIFLA provides legal help and training for pregnancy care centers nationwide.

Tom shares his thoughts on the ultrasound ministry:

ICU Mobile provides valuable medical services through their mobile ultrasound units. By provid-

ing ultrasound in this way many women vulnerable to abortion who would not have access to ultrasound imaging will now be able to see the reality of their unborn child. Because of this many lives will be saved.

ICU Mobile is headquartered, as we've noted, in Akron, but it has an ever expanding number of affiliates. One of these, in inner city Pittsburgh, provides this account near the abortion facility:

It was our first day for the ICU Mobile unit. We prayed and planned for months. The picture showed one hand, two hands...three hands? Four hands? Twins? Yes. She was pregnant with twins who were already at 13 weeks...Our very first day, our very first client. We saw God smile on us that day.

In yet another amazing incident, an ICU Mobile unit pulled up, as usual, in front of the county's only abortion facility. Natasha came in with her boyfriend, Nick. They had already made an appointment for an abortion. Natasha pressed for it. Nick didn't want it.

Because there were so many ahead of them inside the abortion facility, Nick and Natasha went outside to walk around prior to their "procedure."

Natasha agreed to have the free ultrasound. As she was having it done, Chantel and Evan knocked on the unit's door. They wanted a free ultrasound to see how far along Chantel was in her pregnancy. The abortion clinic charges more than \$100 for such pictures—and from them determines how much to charge for the abortion itself.

Chantel and Evan looked scared. They didn't really want an abortion but they felt so alone, so overwhelmed. What other choice was there?

The counselor was finishing up with Chantel and Evan just as Nick and Natasha came out from their time with the ultrasonographer. They were aglow with happiness. And their joy reinforced Chantel and Evan's feelings.

Both of these young couples had been inside that abortion facility. They walked through that valley of the shadow of death. And through ICU Mobile, by God's grace, they could now walk in light.

About the Author

ROBERT G. MORRISON is Senior Fellow for Policy Studies at Family Research Council. He is a former teacher of American history at the high school and college levels. He served in the U.S. Department of Education and as the Washington representative of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He researched Bill Bennett's two-volume history of the U.S., *America: The Last Best Hope*. In the course of writing this pamphlet, the author viewed an ultrasound picture from his daughter and son-in-law: twins!

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TONY PERKINS, PRESIDENT
801 G STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001
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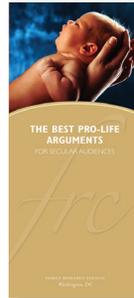
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