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East End Fire Department Safe Haven Baby Box dedication marks 25th in Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK – The public is invited to attend the dedication and blessing of the 25th Safe Haven Baby Box in Arkansas at 1 p.m., Wednesday, July 24, at the East End Fire Department, 21900 Baxley Lane, Little Rock.

There are 249 Safe Haven Baby Box locations across the U.S., said Monica Kelsey, who founded Safe Haven Baby Boxes in 2015 on a mission to end infant abandonment.

“The Safe Haven Baby Box in Little Rock would not have been possible without the local advocates who worked tirelessly to bring this resource to their community,” a press release states. “The East End Fire Department would like to thank the East End Baptist Church, East Union Missionary Baptist, and Grace Church for the funding of the box, as well as Disaster Masters and 1-800-Boardup for the installation of the box, and Lira Handyman Services for the concrete work.”

Participants in the dedication include Kelsey; Chief Darrel Feagan of the East End Fire Department; Rep. Julie Mayberry; Paul Roberts, pastor of East Union Missionary Baptist Church, and Oliver Thomas, pastor of East End Baptist Church.

The organization provides a confidential National Hotline, 1-866-99BABY1. Seventeen states have a Baby Box presence within their state. Kelsey said, “We have seen time and time again that preparation can save and change lives. We never know when or where we will be needed, so it is crucial to have options for mothers in crisis. I am grateful for local advocates who take our mission to their community.”

Since 2017, 50 infants have been safely and legally surrendered in a Baby Box. The National Safe Haven Crisis line has assisted with 150 handoff surrenders. Each year the numbers increase with more baby boxes available across the country. Surrendered infants are adopted by families who have registered as foster to adopt. The local department of family services coordinates the adoption process.

Arkansas Right to Life has promoted the Safe Haven Law through a billboard campaign that began in Harrison in June 2019. Since then, billboards have been placed in more than 30 Arkansas counties.

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Rose Mimms, executive director of Arkansas Right to Life, stressed the importance of the billboard campaign and mothers knowing about the Safe Haven Law. The Safe Haven Baby Box hotline number is listed on all billboards.

“The Safe Haven Law can help a mother to safely surrender her child to an official location, hospital, law enforcement or manned fire department in Arkansas or anonymously in a Safe Haven Baby Box,” Mimms said.

The Safe Haven Law, enacted in Arkansas in 2001, is designed to protect babies from being hurt or killed by abandonment by parents who are unwilling or unable to provide parenting. Under the law, a parent may give up an infant anonymously at a hospital emergency room or law enforcement agency, but in 2019 the law was amended to include manned fire stations as a surrender location. The amended law sponsored by Arkansas Sen. Cecile Bledsoe and Rep. Rebecca Petty also approved the installation of newborn safety devices at surrender locations.

For more information about Safe Haven Baby Boxes email Kelsey at monicakelsey@safehavenbabyboxes.com.

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Arkansas Right to Life is the state affiliate of the National Right to Life Committee, the oldest and largest pro-life organization. For more information visit artl.org.