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From One Home to Many: The Enduring Mission of The Baby Fold

In 1902, Nancy and Alan Mason settled in the Bloomington-Normal area in search of a better place to raise their children. Wanting to give back to the community that supported her family's success, Nancy later chose to leave her home, through her will, to the active and retired deaconesses of the local Deacon Hospital. These deaconesses, church women devoted to service, had already become known for caring for the community during a devastating epidemic, a time when abandoned and orphaned children filled the streets along the East Coast.

That single act of generosity helped lay the foundation for what would become The Baby Fold, an organization built on compassion, adaptability, and an enduring commitment to children and families in need. From its earliest days, The Baby Fold responded to the most urgent needs of its time, offering shelter, care, and stability to vulnerable children when few other resources existed.

Today, that same spirit continues to guide the organization's mission. Sam Guilory, Vice President of DPR (Development and Public Relations), emphasized how the legacy of The Baby Fold has remained rooted in growth and change.

"The Baby Fold continually has been evolving to meet the emerging needs of the community," Guilory said. "Because if we didn't experience that evolution, we wouldn't be around today, and we wouldn't be around for another 125 years down the road."

As the community has changed, so has The Baby Fold. What began as a response to orphaned and abandoned children has expanded into a network of services that support mental health, family stability, and child welfare.

"Today, the Baby Fold is a state leader in trauma-informed services, in providing life-critical wraparound programs to

children and families. On average, today, we are serving around 1,200 kids and families every single year, and that spans across 22 counties here in Illinois" Guilory explains. Through each transformation, the organization has remained focused on its original purpose, providing hope, care, and opportunity for those who need it most.

Looking ahead, The Baby Fold's future plans focus on three priorities: people, places, and programs. The organization is investing in its staff through training and flexible career paths that help prevent burnout and retain experienced employees. It is also reevaluating its physical campuses while expanding in-home services to reduce barriers for families and better steward resources. Program development will continue to evolve through community needs assessments to ensure services align with changing demands.

As Guilory explains, "People, places, and programs, that's really the name of the game for our future."

More than a century later, Nancy Mason's legacy lives on not just in a building or a bequest, but in an organization that continues to adapt, serve, and strengthen the Bloomington-Normal community, one child and one family at a time.

To learn more about this incredible organization, visit their website: <https://www.thebabyfold.org/>

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