

Starting a Family at the Seminary

Mrs. Lauren Braaten

Consider yourself warned. Seminary folklore has it that during the second year of studies, you either purchase a car or have a child. While I haven't tested this hypothesis scientifically, a quick scan of the campus will show that the parking lot is full of cars . . . with car seats.

Our second year of seminary was quite uneventful; there were no new cars or babies. It was during our final year of seminary that I became pregnant, and we looked forward to the arrival of our first child at Christmastime. A few weeks before I was due to give birth, I lost my job. We were devastated. I was the main breadwinner, and without my job we wondered how we would be able to pay our bills and provide for our little one.

Thankfully, many of our fears about providing for our child were allayed through the Food and Clothing Co-op. I know firsthand what a blessing the seminary community and its resources are for families. The Food and the Clothing Co-op, open to all students and their families, is truly irreplaceable. Whether you're considering having children or if you already have little ones, the seminary is a wonderful place for families.

For your youngster, the Food Co-op carries formula, baby lotion, diapers of all sizes, every stage of baby food, and all for either one or two points. Actually, the baby food costs no points! (Points are earned by volunteering two hours a month at the Co-op.) With plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables as well as meat, bread, milk, eggs, and shelves full of great food, the nursing mom will find herself well situated to nourish herself and her child.

Also, the Clothing Co-op carries just about everything you could need for your baby. Donations come in daily, so what you are looking for today may be donated tomorrow. The baby room is always stocked with clothing and other accessories for newborns and toddlers. In fact, my son is quite the stylish little man thanks to the generous donations of others. There are bouncy seats, baby monitors, cribs, high chairs, strollers, car seats, and diaper bags, depending on the amount of donations.

There is also a toy room full of stuffed animals, games, books, and plenty of fun kid toys. The Clothing Co-op maintains a wish list, so if your little one has outgrown his crib, and you're in need of a toddler bed, simply ask to have this item put on the wish list, and should a toddler bed become available, you'll get a call.

I know of seminary wives who have gathered on a regular basis for play dates with their children and a chance to socialize. Many moms bring their children to chapel and join their husbands for worship each day. Some teenagers of seminarians lend their babysitting skills to care for the children in the seminary community. (Yes, we all should get out for a date once in a while!)

The city of Fort Wayne is also a great place to raise little future pastors' kids. Fort Wayne has three major hospitals with offices all throughout the city. Regardless of what part of town you live in, there is a doctor and a hospital minutes away. Ask any seminary wife who's had a child in Fort Wayne, and she would be happy to suggest a doctor or hospital so you wouldn't have to pick one randomly from the Yellow Pages.

The community of Fort Wayne offers great rates for children at such things as the zoo, museums, theaters, and restaurants as well as free events, including great outdoor activities in the summer. The Seminary Wives Association publishes a monthly newsletter highlighting many of these inexpensive or free opportunities. You get the latest scoop on these deals delivered right to your e-mail inbox!

Seminary life is full of changes and new adventures, and for some that includes starting a family or adding another little saint to the clan. With all the support and assistance this community has to offer, rest assured you will be well cared for, no matter what curveballs life throws your way. So, check the oil, and get that timing belt changed so that you won't need a new car anytime soon. And did I mention the rumor that something in the drinking water on campus leads to babies too?

Mrs. Lauren Braaten has served at Concordia Theological Seminary and LCMS World Relief and Human Care as a deaconess. She is married to Rev. Jason Braaten.