



**Safe Haven**  
Baby Boxes

## **MISSOURI'S 1ST BABY BOX SURRENDER IN MEHLVILLE**

**MEHLVILLE, MISSOURI (FEBRUARY 9, 2024)**- Missouri's 1st and only Baby Box location was blessed in August of 2023 with the hope of being prepared should a mother in crisis seek to anonymously surrender her infant. Those plans came to fruition last week with a baby surrendered in the Mehlville Fire Protection District House 2 Baby Box. A press conference will be held on site on Monday at 2pm at 5434 Telegraph Road, St. Louis, MO 63129. More information will be provided at the press conference. Mehlville's surrender is the 4th of the year for 2024. There are now 200 Safe Haven Baby Box locations across the country.

"MFPD is committed to making a difference in the lives of those we serve and safeguarding the most vulnerable members of our community," said Brian Hendricks, Fire Chief of Mehlville Fire Protection District. "The surrender of a baby to us is an example of how we make that difference, and this act protects not only the life of the infant, but also that of the birth mother who entrusted us with the care of their child."

Safe Haven Baby Boxes was formed by Monica Kelsey in 2016 as she learned in adulthood that she was abandoned as an infant. Today, the organization fights tirelessly to protect women in crisis and their infants in a mission to end infant abandonment. A key aspect of this mission is the Safe Haven Baby Box which allows for the legal safe surrender of a baby with complete anonymity. Currently, Indiana, Ohio, Arkansas, Kentucky, Alabama, Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Iowa, Missouri, West Virginia, and Mississippi have a Baby Box presence within their state. States that have amended their safe haven laws to include the Baby Box program include Texas, Wisconsin, and Kansas. Thirteen more states have legislation currently filed.

The organization aids women in crisis with their National Hotline, 1-866-99BABY1. The hotline provides free, confidential counseling with expertise in each state's Safe Haven Law. Education is a key component of Safe Haven Baby Boxes' mission. Kelsey shared, "We have this location that months ago invested in this program that has already seen it pay dividends. The key is that we are prepared for this situation, not reactionary. We are proud of this selfless mother and grateful for her trusting us to help her and her infant."

If a woman chooses to surrender her infant via the Baby Box, the door locks when the mother closes the box. Alarms alert the location that a baby has been surrendered and personnel will retrieve the infant within five minutes. The infant will immediately be transported to the hospital for medical evaluation and the baby will be with their adoptive family soon. Families seeking to adopt a Safe Haven baby should reach out to their local Department of Family Services to register for foster care with intention to adopt.

**For more information please contact Monica at [monicakelsey@safehavenbabyboxes.com](mailto:monicakelsey@safehavenbabyboxes.com)**

**or Fire Chief Brian Hendricks [bhendricks@mehlvillevillefire.com](mailto:bhendricks@mehlvillevillefire.com)**