



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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LSSI Honors Rotary International with Amicus Certus Award

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), a statewide human services organization based in Des Plaines, honored Rotary International for its efforts in eradicating polio worldwide at its 24th Annual Amicus Certus (True Friend) Dinner Dance on November 5, at the Four Seasons Hotel, in Chicago. Dick Johnson, anchor of NBC 5 News Today, emceed the event, which was hosted by LSSI's Women's Network. Two hundred and sixty-eight guests attended the event.

Imparting an international flavor to the evening, Vice President of Rotary International, Serge Gouteyron, gave his acceptance speech in French, with an interpreter conveying the remarks in English. "I'm going to tell you a beautiful story," he said, "[about what can happen] when men and women of good will [unite]... Today more than 2 billion children have been immunized [against polio]."

"Rotary International is proud to receive this award," he added. "Thank you very deeply. We just need men and women to unite,... to create awareness and take action. What our world lacks the most is solidarity and love."

Commending Rotary's commitment to immunize every person in the world, the Rev. Dr. Frederick Aigner, LSSI president, said, "Your organization is indeed a true friend of humanity. Rotary's efforts in the fight against polio have truly affected the lives of individuals – and their communities – worldwide."

In 1985, Rotary launched the PolioPlus program to protect children around the globe from the cruel and fatal consequences of polio. The amount of funds raised by Rotary and its vast volunteer support provided the catalyst for the World Health Assembly's 1988 challenge to eradicate polio worldwide. Today, Rotary is the single largest private sector contributor to polio eradication, having raised more than \$600 million and contributing countless volunteer hours to

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help immunize more than 2 billion children in 122 countries. As a result of Rotary's efforts and those of its partner agencies – the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – and many governments, there has been a 99 percent reduction in the number of polio cases worldwide.

The event raised approximately \$70,000, which will benefit Family Connections, a program of LSSI's Prisoner and Family Ministry, which helps keep children, caregivers and incarcerated moms and dads connected. Eighty percent of the approximately 3,000 women in Illinois prisons are mothers.

About 1,000 children are served each year through Family Connections, which offers two programs: Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP) and Visits to Mom/Visits to Dad. Twice a month, RAPP provides a support group for caregivers of children of incarcerated women at the Lincoln and Decatur Correctional Centers. In the Visits to Mom/Visits to Dad program, each weekend volunteers help to transport children and their caregivers to several Illinois prisons to visit the children's incarcerated parents. All services are free.

Every year, LSSI gives the Amicus Certus award to individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the human community. Former Amicus Certus Honorees include the late Paul Simon, United States Senator from Illinois; Anne M. Burke, Chicago Special Olympics founder; Dr. Timothy Johnson, ABC-TV medical editor and adoption advocate; and theologian The Rev. Dr. Martin E. Marty. Last year, Dr. Mary Nelson, President and CEO of Bethel New Life, and the Rev. Dr. Charles Infelt, pastor of Holy Family Lutheran Church and co-founder of Holy Family Ministries, received the award.

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. LSSI's services include counseling, mental health programs, substance abuse treatment, residential treatment for children and adolescents, early childhood education and child care services, programs for adults and children with developmental disabilities, foster care and adoption, housing and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, nursing care, and programs for prisoners and their families.

For more about LSSI, call 847/635-4600 or visit www.LSSI.org.

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