



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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Special 'LSSI Sunday' at Grace Lutheran Church to Focus on Services for Children

May is National Foster Care Month, and foster care services are one of the programs that will be discussed at an "LSSI Sunday" at Grace Lutheran Church, located at 313 S. Prospect Avenue in Champaign, on May 21. Representatives from Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) will speak at the church's two morning worship services and adult forum.

Darrin Holt, director of LSSI's Children's Community Services (CCS) office in Champaign, and Becky Moore, LSSI major gifts director, will speak during the 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. church services on LSSI's programs, including adoption and foster care. They will also present a program on LSSI to the church's Adult Forum, which begins at 9:15 a.m. An LSSI foster mother from the Champaign area is scheduled to be present to share her experiences. The forum will also provide an opportunity where people can learn more about how they can support LSSI as volunteers or donors.

A survey about LSSI's services in Champaign sparked the event, according to Grace Lutheran's pastor, the Rev. Roger Digges. "One of the members of our congregation, Roger Yarbrough, is also a member of the LSSI board and is a tireless advocate for LSSI," he explains. "He came to me with a questionnaire [testing our knowledge of LSSI]. We got low marks, and that helped us to understand that we needed to find out more about the agency."

Another impetus was a regional meeting of church leaders hosted by Grace Lutheran in March. Pr. Digges says that he was impressed by the speaker from LSSI and realized that the whole congregation needed to be more aware of what LSSI is doing. "I think that the work that [LSSI] is doing is irreplaceable," says Pr. Digges. He hopes that the May 21 presentations will "raise awareness of what LSSI is doing not only in our own area, but also throughout the state."

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He adds that some members of the congregation have used LSSI’s adoption services.

Grace has also just organized an “in-kind gift gathering” on LSSI’s behalf, collecting items for clients served by the agency’s Champaign office such as diapers, car seats and play therapy supplies, including puppets, dolls and clay. The church is also a major contributor of toys at Christmas for the foster children served by LSSI.

Pr. Digges hopes that the LSSI Sunday will increase awareness of all of the agency’s programs and encourage support by the congregation and individuals. He also would like to see more LSSI programs in the Champaign area.

Although LSSI’s Champaign office is focused primarily on adoption and foster care services, it also serves people with other needs. Last year, it began a new program, “Supporting Positive Change,” targeted to 10th grade students who were in danger of being suspended from school. The program, which includes a home visitor, case management and group meetings for both students and parents, is available only to residents of Champaign County.

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 (ELCA). LSSI serves people through an array of services at more than 180 programs at 89 sites across Illinois.

For more information, contact Darrin Holt at 217/398-3011; or visit www.LSSI.org.

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