



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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LSSI to Present St. John's Lutheran Church in Bloomington with Ministry of Hope Award

On Sunday, January 27, the Rev. Dr. Frederick Aigner, president of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), will present the congregation of St. John's Lutheran Church in Bloomington with the 2007 Ministry of Hope Award. The award, which recognizes an outstanding congregation that provides leadership in supporting the ministry of LSSI and other ministries in the community, is presented annually to one congregation in each of the three ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) synods in Illinois. The other Ministry of Hope Award recipients are Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Arlington Heights and St. John's Lutheran Church in Rock Island.

In Bloomington, the Social Action Ministry Team of St. John's Lutheran Church helps to coordinate various ministries to reach out to those less fortunate in the community. Among its activities, the church has initiated a year-round battery recycling program, joined with a local Mennonite congregation in neighboring Hopedale, Ill., to work with local farmers to plant designated land and sell the crop to combat world hunger (The Hopedale Growing Project). Last year, the congregation recently formed a group known as Open Door Missions, designed to promote short-term adult mission trips — including its first international trip in 2007 to work with a Lutheran congregation in Ecuador. The congregation also collaborates with local food pantries and homeless shelters, supports world and disaster relief, and conducts blood drives and clothing drives for women recently released from prisons.

“Our church's philosophy is to do a lot of different things for a lot of different people,” says the Rev. Knight Wells, senior pastor of the church. He estimates that the church is involved with about 50 different agencies throughout the local community and beyond, providing financial support as well as volunteers. Members of the congregation take a lead role in developing outreach projects, depending

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upon their interests. For example, Pr. Wells says, one member lifted up the idea of supporting a Lutheran student from Chad, an African nation, who was working on his doctoral degree. Over the past six years, the church has sponsored him and assisted his family in coming to the United States. The family has been a part of the worshiping community of St. John's during their time there.

“Every year it's exciting to receive the Ministry of Hope nominations and be reminded of the incredible ministries that congregations are providing to their communities and to the world,” says Lisa Hassenstab, associate director of LSSI's Office of Church and Government Relations. “The three recipients of this year's awards are outstanding examples of the carrying out of God's work in the world today, and LSSI is pleased to have the opportunity to recognize them for their ministry.”

Founded in October 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is celebrating its 140th anniversary, and is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

For more information on LSSI's Ministry of Hope Award, contact Lisa Hassenstab at 847/390-1447. For more about LSSI, go online to www.LSSI.org.

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