



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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Legacy Corps Celebrates Older Americans Month, Offers Respite to Caregivers

May is Older Americans Month, and as it celebrates this month – and the contributions of older Americans – Legacy Corps, a program of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), works to help make the lives of caregivers a little easier.

For example, when a loved one has Alzheimer's or another type of dementia, the disease affects more than just one individual. For the person who chooses to be a caregiver to that loved one, it can be difficult to be "on call" 24/7 with little rest from the responsibility. Legacy Corps, which is funded by AmeriCorps, provides respite for caregivers of seniors and other people with disabilities, which, in turn, helps those individuals to live as independently as possible. The respite service is available in Winnebago, Boone, Ogle and McHenry Counties.

"We give [the caregivers] three to four hours 'off' a week – or as needed – from their caregiving responsibilities," says Elaine Pfluger, program director.

Legacy Corps members do not provide any medical or therapeutic services or tasks, Pfluger explains. They help caregivers, such as the mother of a 15-year-old who has muscular dystrophy and is confined to a wheelchair. A Legacy Corps member comes to stay with the teen for a short time each week, enabling her mother to go shopping or run other errands. Another Legacy Corps member, who provides regular respite for a caregiver whose wife has Alzheimer's disease, also helped the couple move from a home to a condominium.

This is the fourth year of the program at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, and its members include approximately 50 people who are 50 years and older. Members can serve for as few as 10 hours a week, and in return, they receive complete orientation and ongoing training, as well as an annual stipend of \$2,000 to defray expenses – such as transportation – and the opportunity to earn an educational award of \$1,250 for lifelong learning.

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“There’s such a need [for it],” Pfluger says of the program, which is one of 12 in the country and the only one in Illinois. “And it provides adults 50 and older with a meaningful and important way to help others.”

One woman, who was caring for her husband who had Alzheimer’s disease, says that because of the Legacy Corps members, “My spirits were lifted, my life a little brighter” and that the weekly respite “provided me with strength beyond measure as the full-time caregiver to my husband.”

Another woman, who has recently completed her second year as a member of the Legacy Corps told Pfluger she never realized what caregivers go through until she became a member. Previously, the woman had worked as a nurse and an addiction specialist.

The Legacy Corps program is funded through AmeriCorps, a nationwide network of national service programs that engage more than 50,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet critical needs in education, public safety, the environment and other human needs, including health and housing. The programs are run by more than 2,100 nonprofits, public agencies and faith-based organizations, such as LSSI.

For more information about Legacy Corps, contact Elaine Pfluger at 815/395-8716 or at Elaine.Pfluger@LSSI.org.

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. Among the services offered for seniors are low-income housing, nursing and rehabilitative care, adult day services and home care services. For more information, visit www.LSSI.org.

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