



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Jo Ann Dollard

847/309-1446

Carol VanderMey

847/635-4604

LSSI Recognizes Prader-Willi Awareness Week, Provides Special Residence in Aurora

With obesity reaching epidemic proportions worldwide, one little known syndrome is perhaps one of the best windows of opportunity to gaining further understanding of hunger and metabolic mechanisms in the body. Prader-Willi Syndrome (PWS), although rare, is the most common known genetic cause of life-threatening obesity. Current estimations figure that up to 80 percent of individuals who have PWS in the United States do not know they have it and may see doctors who do not know about it or test for it.

In an effort to reach individuals who are struggling unknowingly with PWS, Prader-Willi Syndrome Association (USA) has launched PWS Awareness Week, a public education initiative to increase awareness and save lives. Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) joins other organizations, families, and professionals from around the nation in highlighting this observance from April 30-May 6.

PWS is a complex genetic disorder that causes a chronic feeling of hunger. If left unchecked, people with the condition can literally overeat to the point of death. To survive, they must have assistance to control their eating and manage their weight. It is estimated that one in 12,000 to 15,000 births results in a baby born with PWS. That means close to 25,000 people in the United States have PWS. The syndrome affects both males and females and all ethnic groups. At this time, there is no cure for PWS, which also involves learning disabilities, borderline mental retardation and obsessive/compulsive behaviors, such as repetitive thoughts and verbalizations. An involuntary urge to eat constantly, coupled with a reduced need for calories, leads to obesity.

LSSI provides a group home in Aurora for adults with PWS. Fox Hill is one of three facilities in the state for adults with PWS, ages 18 and older. The other facilities are LSSI's Washington Place, in Beardstown, which opened in 1991, and the Dixon Group Home, in Dixon, which opened in January 2000.

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“It’s really important that people are getting involved and learning about what Prader-Willi is,” says Jackie Baker, Fox Hill program director. “A lot of people are misdiagnosed, so the more awareness of this disorder, the better.”

She adds that the home has really helped so many of the people. Two of the parents of residents have retired, and it means so much to them to know that their child is safe, she says. “When parents get older they are looking for someplace where their children will be kept safe,” she adds.

Fox Hill, which opened in July 2005, is currently home to four residents and has a capacity of eight. The home is a Community Integrated Living Arrangement (CILA), which means that it meets requirements set by the Illinois Department of Human Services’ Office of Developmental Disabilities. The Fox Hill Group Home provides the structure, medical support, diet restrictions and supervision of food supply that residents need as they become older and move into a more independent life style. Residents must be 18 years old or older.

Residents spend most of their days in programming by the Association for Independent Development (AID). Upon returning home, they have a snack at 3 p.m. and then spend 30 minutes exercising. Baker noted that on Saturdays, residents are participating in a bowling tournament at the Fox Valley Special Recreation Association.

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 with more than 100 program locations, as well as an agency of the United Way.

For more information about LSSI’s Fox Hill CILA or PWS Awareness Week, please call 630/89-8418. For more information about Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, visit www.LSSI.org.

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