



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

S U M M E R 2 0 0 9

The Cornerstone



Dear Cornerstone Society Members and Friends,

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) will soon be marking its 142nd birthday. Last year, even with all the challenges we faced, we still increased the number of people we were able to provide services to in their time of need. A total of 72,583 individuals were helped, and we rejoice in being blessed with the resources to do so.

The ups and downs of the economy give us all pause. It also gives us an opportunity to thoughtfully review our estate plans to make sure that our legacy gifts will accomplish our goals. An article in this issue — “Time to Revisit Your Estate Plan” — will help you think about your own plans in light of recent economic events.

Not so long ago, I met with a friend who wanted to make a gift to LSSI. Her husband had died, and she wanted to make a gift to honor his memory. We had several conversations about ways she might design the gift. She then went to her attorney who convinced her that another organization that the attorney was affiliated with was a worthier beneficiary. She called me to tell me that her attorney “would not let her make a gift to LSSI” and that she was afraid her attorney would be angry with her if she asked again. An article in this issue — “How Do I Find an Estate Planning Attorney” — is about how to select an attorney to work with on your estate planning. Foremost is to select someone who works with you and honors your wishes.

It is often difficult to find new ways of saying thank you for the gifts we have received and will receive from our Cornerstone Society members. I hope that behind my simple “thank you” you can hear the voices of 72,583 others who were helped last year.

Blessings and thanks to you,

Susan Gilpin

Executive Director, The Cornerstone Foundation

CORNERSTONE FOUNDATION
GOAL STATEMENT: Responding to the Gospel, The Cornerstone Foundation is the endowment that helps ensure the ministries and future of LSSI.

Celebrating
the spirit of
generosity and
ensuring
the future of
Lutheran
Social Services
of Illinois.

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Benefactor: TED HANSON

Ted Hanson was a busy professional when he was asked to get involved in creating The Cornerstone Foundation in 1989. Ted accepted the challenge of putting his estate planning and accounting experience to work to help establish The Cornerstone Foundation. He and the other founders envisioned a future where funds accumulated would ensure that LSSI's services to those in need would continue despite the political wrangling in Springfield.

Twenty years later, Ted, who is still a busy professional, is thankful for the opportunity to have been there at the inception of the Foundation and to have witnessed the 19 years of financial support it has provided to LSSI. Ultimately, Ted would like to see the endowment funds in the Foundation reach \$100 million. To help Cornerstone attain this \$100 million goal, Ted has consistently made annual gifts to the endowment.

Ted said that he is most drawn to the ministries of LSSI that focus on the needs of children and older adults. Both of these groups are vulnerable and may be in great need through no fault of their own. He said that it gives him satisfaction and joy to know that his gifts to the Foundation help to provide dependable care to those in need. As an example, Ted pointed out that last year, gifts from his family helped to provide for the Salem House Food Pantry at a time when its food supplies had dwindled.

When making a decision on where to invest his charitable dollars, Ted said that he looks not only at the usefulness of an organization, but how it manages its finances. As a member of the

Cornerstone Board, he has seen firsthand how the organization operates economically and how wisely it has invested its endowment funds over the long term.

The financial role that the Foundation plays in the life of LSSI is vital, and the gifts that flow from it to LSSI are essential in providing uninterrupted services to people in need. While the future is unpredictable, what is predictable is that some people will continue to need assistance during the dark times of their lives and that LSSI will be there to offer compassionate care.

Legacy gifts are the lifeblood of Cornerstone, and Ted is encouraged to see that our friends make commitments through their wills and trusts, insurance policies, and bank accounts to support our ministry in perpetuity. It is a blessing that so many people have been touched in a personal way by the mission of LSSI and have joined Ted as a member of the Cornerstone Society.

Membership in the Cornerstone Society is open to all with generous hearts and the desire to share their earthly treasures in the care of others. ■



From the Andover Lutheran Home to today's programs for children in foster care and other programs, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois has been involved with caring for the smallest persons in need since its inception.

Time to Revisit Your Estate Plan?

Estate plans may need a fresh look whenever there are marriages, divorces, births or deaths in your family.

It's important for people to review and revise their estate plans periodically, but recent events should elevate that task to the top of everyone's to-do list.

Stock Market Volatility. Investment assets you've left to certain beneficiaries may no longer be worth what they once were — or what you planned to leave. One way to cope with events such as the 2007-2008 market “meltdown” is to distribute your assets on an equal percentage basis, so everyone shares in losses or gains. You also might set ceilings or floors on inheritances to guarantee that heirs receive at least a specified amount, but not a windfall.

Estate Tax Changes. You may need to ask your attorney if your estate planning documents need to be revised for tax purposes. For 2009, the Federal estate tax credit exempts estates of \$3.5 million or less. But the Illinois state estate tax exemption remains at only \$2



million, so you may still need some “death tax” planning. *Note: Proposed tax legislation is expected to continue the federal estate tax beyond 2009, with a \$3.5 million exemption.*

Retirement Account Concerns. Have values changed significantly in your IRA, 401(k) or other retirement plan? Will your beneficiary be short-changed? If you've recently married, keep in mind that certain accounts, such as 401(k) plans, pass to a surviving spouse, regardless of the beneficiary designation or provisions in a will, unless your spouse has signed a waiver. Also, remember

that heirs will owe income tax on most retirement plan benefits, while life insurance, CDs and brokerage accounts pass to the recipient free of income tax. Ask your advisers if you should convert from a traditional IRA to a tax-exempt “Roth” IRA. Currently, only people with incomes of less than \$100,000

can make the switch, but that restriction is eliminated in 2010.

Other Life Events. Estate plans may need a fresh look whenever there are marriages, divorces, births or deaths in your family, or if you or your executor should move to a different state, or if there are significant changes in the assets you own or their value.

Consider LSSI in Your Plans. As you review, and possibly revise, your estate plan, we hope you'll also review your gift to LSSI. Remember that retirement accounts and certain other assets pass to LSSI free of income taxes. ■

Remembering Those the Law Omits

Statistics indicate that about 70% of all Americans give to worthwhile causes during their adult lifetimes. But only 6% to 8% leave anything to charity through their estate plans.

What accounts for this discrepancy? Sadly, a large number of people die without having made a will — 60%, by one estimate — with the result that part or all of their assets pass to family members under state “intestacy” laws. Unfortunately, intestacy laws make no provision for the organizations these individuals might have supported during their lives.

We hope that all of our friends will take time to make or review their wills in 2009. It's easy to assist LSSI through your will, living trust or beneficiary designations on life insurance policies, retirement accounts, and most financial deposits and brokerage accounts. Please contact Susan Gilpin at 847/390-1464 for more information or to inform us of your gift plans.

How Do I Find an Estate Planning Attorney?

Why should you employ an experienced estate planning attorney to draft a will, trust or other documents? He or she often will be able to spot potential problem areas in your estate and can offer solutions and opportunities that may not be forthcoming from your computer. Furthermore, the cost of using an attorney is relatively small, compared to the financial losses and family disputes that otherwise might occur after your death.

The estate planning process starts with a telephone call to an attorney. He or she will take matters from there and will start by sending you a planning checklist and scheduling an

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for references.

appointment. The hard part for many people is knowing whom to call. The answer can be fairly simple: Ask friends or family members for references. Who was the attorney

who wrote their wills or served as estate attorney when there was a death in the family? Were they satisfied with that person's performance? Did they feel that the attorney helped to fulfill their personal objectives? Did he or she display the highest ethical standards? Did the attorney's advice on bequests and beneficiaries seem free of personal preference or predisposition?

If you have recently moved to a new community and can't get the firsthand experiences of others, call the local bar association and ask for names of attorneys who are active in estate planning and probate work. The American Bar Association provides links to local associations at abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html. Ask prospective attorneys how much of their practice is devoted to estate planning and probate work, and if they are members of the local estate planning council. ■



(From left): Pernevlon Ellis, Rob Kazlauski and Darryl Clayton, who run the Steps to Life programs in Chicago and Peoria, met with friends to talk about the program.



Rick Hiatt, chair of the Cornerstone Foundation and Pr. Denver Bitner, president of LSSI, attended the May 20th luncheon.

CORNERSTONE LUNCHEONS

Celebrating Steps to Life

At our May 20th Cornerstone Luncheon, we celebrated the success of LSSI's Steps to Life program, which was the recipient of the Hallberg Award for Excellence. Steps to Life is a program offered in Champaign, Peoria, Rockford and Chicago that provides foster care youth with a solid foundation of life skills as they transition into adulthood, enabling them to have a healthy and independent adulthood and become productive citizens. The curriculum includes money management, career planning, accessing educational and community resources, and communication and relationship skills. Steps to Life is funded entirely by the gifts of our friends, and the luncheon was a wonderful opportunity to spotlight this very important program.

Our new President, the Rev. Dr. Denver Bitner, who joined LSSI in February, also greeted the group and spoke about the needs of those we

serve and the impact of these tough economic times on our ministry and mission. ■



YOUR LSSI CORNERSTONE TEAM

Peggie Imhauser (left), development associate and Susan Gilpin (right), executive director of The Cornerstone Foundation.



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UPCOMING CORNERSTONE SOCIETY
Events

We hope that you'll join us for one of our upcoming luncheons to thank our Cornerstone Society members and lift up our ministry.

September 15, 2009
 Dixon, Illinois

May 2010

Date and location to be announced.

To learn more about
 Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, visit
www.LSSI.org

**Updates to Cornerstone
 Membership Directory**

We welcome Mr. Eugene Coan of
 Arlington Heights, and the gift he
 has made in memory of his wife
 Ruth Coan.

We also acknowledge, with gratitude,
 the following memorial gifts:

Estate of Irvin D. Newgren,
 Evanston

Estate of Maria Swanson,
 Oak Lawn