What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works?

—JAMES 2:14

Nurturing Seniors’ Health, Independence, and Well-Being

“My home gives me independence, and that’s all I have left to call my own.”

—Client, Intouch Senior Services

A home can mean many things to different people, but to senior citizens dealing with the challenges of aging, living in their own home provides independence. That feeling of independence also affects their health, well-being, and dignity. Intouch Senior Services of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) provides non-medical assistance for older adults in their homes. Trained home care assistants, many who are certified nursing assistants, help seniors with housekeeping, laundry, meal planning, and grocery shopping. They also assist with personal care, provide medication reminders, and transportation to appointments. This assistance can mean the difference between living independently and living in a nursing home or assisted living facility.

“Seniors want to stay in their home for as long as possible,” said Carol Lentz, Associate Executive Director for LSSI’s Intouch Senior Services. “We help them do that, whether it’s seniors without family members to assist them, or family who can’t visit every day. We provide continuity.”

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4]
Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis often turn to hospital emergency rooms for care. And while they may find stabilizing treatment for a non-critical crisis, their long-term needs can be difficult to address.

“It’s easy for these individuals to get lost outside of the emergency room (ER),” said Manoj Patel, Director of LSSI’s Project IMPACT (Immediate Multidisciplinary Pre-Screening Assessment Crisis Team).

With its innovative approach, LSSI’s new Welcoming Center is a safe alternative to emergency room care for non-emergency mental healthcare, acting as a bridge to longer term treatment. Staff help individuals living with anxiety, depression, alcohol/drug problems, homelessness, post-traumatic stress, domestic violence, and other emotional stressors.

With soothing colors and comfortable couches, the Welcoming Center provides a relaxed environment. The Center serves walk-in clients from the community, returning clients, and individuals referred from Swedish Covenant Hospital’s Emergency Department and physician offices, and patients discharged from the inpatient unit at Swedish Covenant and other community hospitals, who need immediate linkage to behavioral healthcare.

A nurse gives all clients at the Welcoming Center a wellness check. Clients meet with a counselor, peer specialist, and case manager. Staff help de-escalate a client’s crisis, provide therapeutic support, and help link them to longer-term behavioral health providers. Advanced Nurse Practitioners can prescribe needed medication.

Clients can experience long waiting lists in the community for long-term providers. “The Welcoming Center can help engage clients in treatment for up to 90 days, which helps prevent them from cycling in and out of the emergency room as they wait to engage in longer-term services,” said Patel. “We give our patients hope and support.”

**EVENTS...**

**Sunday, Sept. 13, 2015**

**ELCA Day of Service—“God’s Work, Our Hands” Sunday**

Join Lutherans across the United States in celebrating “one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.”

For more information, contact Joy Medrano at 847.635.4653 or Joy.Medrano@LSSI.org.

**Saturday, Nov. 21, 2015**

**34th Annual Amicus Certus Celebration**

“A Harvest of Blessings”
Honoring John and Mary Satter
Union League Club, Chicago

For more information about sponsorships, call Ed Newton at 847.635.4656 or Edward.Newton@LSSI.org.

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**Join Cornerstone**

This spring Cornerstone Foundation Trustee Bill Fleck celebrated a big birthday—90 years old! Out of the pride he takes in the organization’s mission, Fleck asked that any gifts in his honor be made to LSSI. We thank Bill for his contribution and continued service.

The Cornerstone Foundation is looking for more individuals like Bill to serve on its Board of Trustees. The Cornerstone Foundation is the endowment of LSSI, ensuring our ministries provide many opportunities for service and development into the future. If you feel the call, please contact Linda Miller, Board Chairperson, at 815.229.8333.
Dear Friends,

The work of LSSI is rooted in the Gospel, and there is no shortage of inspiration! As I reviewed the stories in this month’s issue of Inspired, it is revealing how our programs so strongly reflect our mission.

Our Intouch Senior Services help seniors to age in the comfort and familiarity of their homes. Our newly opened Welcoming Center provides needed intervention and services for people living with mental illness. Volunteers from Lutheran Church of the Atonement in Barrington, and Our Savior Lutheran Church, Aurora, are responding to people in a variety of ways, including disaster relief and assisting families in need at Christmas. “I’m of the opinion that it is God’s work,” said Atonement congregant and volunteer Bob McGowan.

These programs and ministries bring to mind the Judgement of Nations in the Gospel of Matthew 25:30-41. Jesus talks of being a stranger and people welcoming him, of being naked and given clothing, of being sick and given care. The people ask the question, when was it that they helped Him this way. Jesus responds, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

How we help those in need is a direct response to the Gospel. LSSI is fortunate to have your commitment that enables us to live out our mission in communities across Illinois.

In Faith,

Mark A. Stutrud
Chief Executive Officer

“LSSI gives me peace of mind because I know they’re there.”

—SHIRLEY TYNER, LSSI SENIOR SERVICES CLIENT

For more information on LSSI’s Home Care services, visit our new web site: LSSI.org/HomeCare.
VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Unleashing the Power of Volunteerism

When floods devastated Minot, North Dakota in 2011, Pr. Jeff Mikyska was called to action, and a disaster relief ministry was born at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Aurora. Since then, Pr. Mikyska and volunteers, working with Lutheran Disaster Response-Illinois, have played an integral relief and recovery role in the Illinois towns of Washington, Brookport, Fairdale, and Coal City that were hard-hit by tornadoes recently.

“There is a lot of power involved in restoring hope and giving back,” said Pr. Mikyska of the ministry that took root after that first trip.

The Our Savior group has grown from five to about 15 volunteers who responded on recent trips to help Illinois communities devastated by tornadoes, working closely with Lutheran Disaster Response to provide appropriate assistance, said Joy Medrano, Director of Disaster Preparedness with Lutheran Disaster Response-Illinois.

“When a tornado hits, I contact Joy, and she has information on where to go and what needs to be done,” said Pr. Mikyska.

After tornadoes destroyed homes in Washington in 2013, the city didn’t have money for debris removal. Enter volunteers from Our Savior, who removed debris to start rebuilding.

No experience is required for the Our Savior disaster relief ministry. Some volunteers have skills helpful to the work. Others learn on the job.

“God doesn’t make bad things happen,” said Pr. Mikyska of the tornadoes. “But God is present in the hearts of the people who experience it.”

Our Savior volunteers rebuilding after a tornado.

Overwhelmingly, clients have stated that Intouch services enable them to stay in their homes, while providing them peace of mind, a sense of independence, and improved physical and mental health.

“Companionship also is important, and that goes along with the services we provide,” Lentz said. Home Care Assistants are thoughtfully matched with clients to offer the right balance of skills and rapport.

Intouch Adult Day Services in Moline provides educational and social programs for senior participants to maintain their independence. The program helps alleviate isolation for seniors living alone or those living with a family member who works during the day.

Intouch also collaborates with LSSI’s Legacy Corps program, which provides free caregiver support services and education to veterans and military families.

“As an aging society, home care services are critical not only from an economic perspective but from a societal, humanitarian approach,” Lentz said. “We’re promoting independence and well-being for our clients.”