Providing a Needed First Step in Recovery

An epic rate of heroin/opiate use is affecting Illinois residents, and the recently opened Medication Assisted Detox program at LSSI’s Kenmore Center is an important first step in treatment. The program, which also helps people with alcoholism, medically stabilizes clients and works with them to secure the next level of care that is vital in their recovery. More importantly, it serves a critical need.

“There are over 40,000 people in Illinois that need substance abuse services and cannot access them,” said Frank Harris, LCSW, CADC, Program Director. “The people we serve usually are underrepresented, with very little resources. It’s important to have a program like this where people are treated like human beings and not dismissed as ‘drug addicts and drunks.’ Substance abuse is no respecter of persons. Our clients are: mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, daughters, and sons.”

The 16-bed Medicine Assisted Detox unit provides 24/7 nursing staffing, with care oversight by a physician. A typical stay is three to five days, depending on medical necessity. Clients are admitted seven days a week between 8 a.m. and 9:30 p.m.
Volunteers for All Seasons

Three years ago, it started with the words, “Yes. We can do that.”

From there, volunteers at Bethlehem Lutheran Church-St. Charles, have shared their time and resources with children in foster care and their foster parents, continuing its long volunteer history with LSSI.

With its first annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner in November 2015, Bethlehem volunteers now have at least one volunteer project per season, said Kelly Collins, Director of Care and Connection. The event honored foster parents served by LSSI’s Aurora office. It enabled them to enjoy fellowship with others who share the unique joys and challenges of being foster parents. The church’s youth group organized games and activities for the children.

The church’s involvement with LSSI’s foster care program grew from a call Collins received three years ago from LSSI with a request to donate 200 backpacks and school supplies for children in foster care.

“Our church inspires us to go out and live our discipleship,” said Bethlehem member and volunteer Sue Kellner (pictured right in photo), who works on the backpack drive and Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner. “I’ve gotten back so much more than I’ve given.”

“LSSI is our ministry,” Collins said, referring to the organization’s role as the statewide social service agency of the Illinois synods of the ELCA. “We belong to it, and it belongs to us.”

Bethlehem Lutheran volunteers prepare the Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner.

Going the Distance for Kids and Families

Some days, staff from LSSI’s Children’s Community Services in southern Illinois might drive four hours round trip to serve foster children—taking siblings to a supervised visit with parents or picking up children being removed from their home. LSSI’s Marion and Vienna offices serve surrounding communities with foster care services, Intact Family services, and the extended family support program.

“Our staff put their heart into their responsibilities,” said Program Director Eve Rossin.

For parents reported to the Illinois Department of Children and Family services for suspected abuse or neglect, Intact Family Services staff provides guidance, case management, and community resources referrals, to help keep families together and minimize trauma for children.

The foster care program places children who are removed from their homes, and recruits and licenses foster parents. Foster parents Jim and Tonya Hammer have adopted two children through LSSI’s foster care program. Staff supported them as foster parents and through the adoption.

“Being a foster parent is hard work,” said Tonya. “We’ve had positive experiences with LSSI staff just listening to us.” Added Jim, “Kids are trying to form their life view and personalities. Positive life experiences produce positive lives.”

When children are removed from their home but can be placed in a relative’s house, the extended family support program assists that family member with acquiring DCFS licensure, which is required for relative and non-relative foster parents.

“Children now in their 20s call me to check in,” Rossin said of LSSI’s impact on families. “Moms stop by to say they still have their kids.”

Photos and services reflect actual programs of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois.
Dear Friends,

From Chicago to Moline, Rockford to Marion, LSSI is present in the lives of nearly 100,000 Illinois residents, every day of the year. We provide our services in a state environment that is very exciting and challenging, amidst simultaneous opportunity and threat.

This is an unparalleled time for change within health and human services. Healthcare reform brings us Medicare coverage focused on health and home for seniors; people with disabilities are living longer and within a true community, not an institution, and more than 2 million uninsured Illinoisans now have health insurance. These reforms call us to service—it’s what LSSI does in response to the Gospel.

Our mission continues during an incomparable time of disruption in Illinois. The budget impasse—now entering its seventh month—may last into spring or even fall of 2016. We must navigate both the opportunity to pioneer reform while navigating the threats to services. We’ve become accustomed to this as our 148-year history shows. We must evaluate and make adjustments to ensure effective use of our resources to serve people in need.

This issue of Inspired highlights our Children’s Community Services in Marion. Our work with children impacts young lives—and outcomes for future adults. LSSI is working with the Department of Children and Family Services to create reforms aimed at fewer children entering foster care, less time spent in foster care, increased family reunification, and faster time to adoption.

Your partnership with LSSI provides us with many blessings as we usher in the New Year: helping others realize their hopes and dreams, to integrate with community, to maintain independence, and to have the opportunity to make personal contributions.

In Faith,

Mark A. Stutrud
President and Chief Executive Officer

A LETTER FROM THE CEO

Navigating Challenging Times

ROBERTA DIETRICH

A Year-Round Passion for Helping Others

Christmas is over, but Peoria resident Roberta Dietrich’s efforts finding holidays presents for over 75 children in LSSI’s foster care program have begun.

“I have to restrain myself from buying too many sizes 3, 4, and 5,” Dietrich said. “I always have an overload.”

At Christmastime, Dietrich brings the gifts she’s purchased throughout the year to her congregation, Peoria’s Grace and Peace Lutheran Church. Congregants purchase a basket, wrap the gifts, and return them to give to the children.

For 40 years running, Dietrich has actively volunteered with LSSI’s Peoria foster care office, fundraising, organizing food and clothing drives, and helping with mailings.

“Roberta has been a mainstay for our Holiday Hope Chest for longer than my 20 years of coordinating it,” said Janet Davis, Program Director of LSSI’s Peoria Foster Care. “She is forever eager to get started shopping for her little ones. Her added touch of hand-knitted hats and mittens for each child is very special.”

Over the last 21 years, Dietrich has knit countless sweaters and hats, supervised the packing of school kits, health kits, and layettes and helped to construct over 2,500 quilts.

“Knowing I’m doing a good thing, and having people around me with a real passion for helping others,” is critical, Dietrich said. “And I never sit with my hands still.”

“We’d do it again in a minute. Being foster parents is the hardest job, but one of the most rewarding.”

—Jim and Tonya Hammer, foster parents who adopted a son and daughter through LSSI’s Foster Care program

A LETTER FROM THE CEO

Navigating Challenging Times
GIVING—WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY?

LSSI is grateful for the overwhelming support given to our programs each year, especially during Christmas. In addition to your annual support, we would like to encourage you to consider a planned gift—a simple deed which has a lasting impact on LSSI’s future.

Do something special for the LSSI that you love. Making a planned gift with LSSI can be a simple process, and every gift, no matter the designation or size, makes a sustainable, lasting impact on our ministry. In strained financial times, we’ve become even more grateful for these gifts, which have helped uphold our organization and its mission for 148 years.

Join our Cornerstone Foundation members who have already remembered LSSI through a gift plan by visiting LSSI.org for more information or contact me at David.Novak@LSSI.org or 847.635.4671.

Peace and Prayers,

David Novak, J.D.
Vice President of Advancement
Executive Director of the Cornerstone Foundation

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Thanks to all who attended our 34th Annual Amicus Certus Celebration on Nov. 21, 2015. It was an honor to recognize longtime donors and volunteers John and Mary Satter with the True Friend Award. More than $80,000 was raised for LSSI programs and services.

Patients are medically stabilized from alcohol and opiate intoxication and/or withdrawal, thus easing discomfort and potentially serious physical reactions. The prescribed medications also increase the chance that a patient will complete a detox episode. Master-level counselors provide group sessions, individual sessions, and case management for patients.

“Detox is absolutely the first step in recovery,” Harris said. “It provides physical stability as well as a chance to begin to clear the mind. Once a person is physically stable and medically cleared, the usual recommendation is further treatment.”

Further treatment can include residential rehabilitation, outpatient services, or extended aftercare services. These decisions are made collaboratively with patients based on past history. LSSI can provide the continuum of services at its various locations, or work with partner organizations throughout the state.

For more information on the Medication Assisted Detox Program, please call 773.275.7962.