Inspired

“For surely I know the plans I have for you . . . plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”
—JEREMIAH 29:11

Responding to Children and Teens in Crisis

Teenagers face continual emotional and physical changes. Children, too, have times where they need someone to talk to, help handling emotional problems, or someone to turn to if they are being bullied. Help navigating these challenges can make a critical difference in their lives.

Through a state-sponsored program called Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS), Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) provides crisis intervention and follow-up mental health on Chicago’s northwest side to youth who have no insurance or Medicaid coverage.

Karah Kohler, LSSI’s Director of Children’s Mental Health Programs, emphasized the dire need for services to help children in crisis that can include self injury, suicide thoughts, or suicide attempts. An appointment at a community mental health clinic can take up to a year.

SASS is a mobile program—clinicians bring their services to clients within 90 minutes of a call. A pre-hospitalization screening is done to understand the level of crisis, and outpatient services are available for 90 days, which can be extended if needed.

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

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH, PROSPECT HEIGHTS

Expanding its Reach and Impact

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Prospect Heights, has a long and comprehensive partnership with LSSI dating back to 1971. Congregants have volunteered at many program sites over the years, as well as given generously to LSSI.

Pr. Eric Schlichting estimates that three-quarters of his 260-member congregation has been involved with LSSI.

“We have a group of generous people and seeing the results of their generosity is really important,” he said. “LSSI allows us to expand our reach and impact, much greater than we can do by ourselves.”

Good Shepherd was one of five churches in the Metro Chicago area to house a community-based counseling center for local residents. They even created a line-item in the church’s budget to help support the program.

Good Shepherd members have served on LSSI’s Board of Directors, the Cornerstone Foundation, and The Women’s Network, including its current president, Bev Moody.

Recently, a congregation member gave $600 to purchase duffel bags for the Women’s Network’s current service project. The bags were filled with items like a blanket, book,

PRISONER AND FAMILY MINISTRY

The Storybook Project

For more than 20 years, the Storybook Project, part of LSSI’s Prisoner and Family Ministry, has been sending children a book and recording from their parent in prison. The project continues thanks to dedicated volunteers like Normajean and James Sanders of Springfield.

There are several steps to becoming a Storybook volunteer, and the Sanders said they always “felt that this is what God was telling us to be involved with.”

Normajean has witnessed many affirming, heartwarming moments as a Storybook volunteer: a weeping father promising not to miss any more birthdays; a son reading the Bible to his mom for the first time; a man of Native American heritage chanting an entire book; a child bringing their book and CD to school for show and tell.

The couple is part of a group that volunteers throughout central Illinois, currently working with prisoners at Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln. Normajean and James call the prisoners “our men” because of the relationships they’ve formed over eight years.

“You’re doing it for the prisoners, but you’re really doing it for their families,” Normajean said. “I had a young man who asked if they have the program at women’s prisons. He was excited that his daughter might get a book from his wife as well. Sometimes I walk out of [the prison] and just say ‘thank you’ to the Lord for the opportunity to serve.”

Using Her Talents to Help Others

VOLUNTEER PROFILE: STEPHANEY ODLE

A social worker at heart and a knack for planning and bringing people together, Stephaney Odle has combined her talents and compassion to organize a variety of third-party event fundraisers in her hometown of Marion that have benefitted LSSI.

Through a degree in social work, Odle knows its importance in helping children and families, like those served by LSSI’s Children’s Community Services office in Marion. She owned Stephaney’s Bargain Boutique in Marion for many years, and with her husband, John, own The Mobile Music Man DJ business. A cancer survivor, Odle enjoyed fundraising through her participation in the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life. She and her husband made contacts through their vendors. They decided to organize local fundraisers to raise money for area nonprofits.

“We like fundraising and it all morphed together that way,” she said. In the last four years, Odle has organized the
Dear Friends:

As September begins, I hope you had an opportunity to find rest and rejuvenation this summer.

After operating without a budget for a full year, the Illinois state legislature passed, and the governor signed, a six-month stopgap budget on June 30. The temporary budget includes funding for human service organizations, public schools, and universities. We are disappointed that a full-year budget was not passed, as this still leaves a great amount of uncertainty for state and human service organizations regarding what programs will be cut and what new tax revenues will be approved.

Yet we move forward! We began a new five-year strategic plan in June that will be our roadmap for the future. The main tenets of the plan expand on our current work. We will look to be “generative” in our services, that is creating ongoing changes that help those with who we share in life to contribute and thrive. The strategic plan also reflects redesigns of child welfare and healthcare. I’ll share more detail in upcoming issues of Inspired.

As with every newsletter, I am reminded of the breadth of our work and the commitment of our staff, volunteers, and donors. I am struck by the words of a longtime volunteer quoted in this issue, “Thank you Lord for the opportunity to serve.”

In Faith,

Mark A. Stutrud
President and Chief Executive Officer

“I would never be here if it wasn’t for LSSI. I couldn’t have prayed for anything better.”

—Robert Gobert, Client Case Management and Community Support
Thrivent Financial members can create a Thrivent Action Team* of volunteers, friends, and family to benefit LSSI. It’s not a gift or a grant—it’s an investment to help get your project started and gain awareness for LSSI.

How could such a team help LSSI? One way is through our 21 housing communities throughout Illinois for seniors and adults with disabilities. Many residents are on a fixed income and appreciate gifts of food, time, and fellowship. Action Team projects for residents of our affordable housing sites could include:

- Landscaping/beautification at a housing site
- Funding a professional entertainer to perform for residents and hosting a reception with refreshments.
- Funding a bingo event, with prizes and refreshments. Action team members can also volunteer to run the event.

For more information about how you can form an action team to benefit LSSI, contact Susan Greeley at 847.635.4617 or Susan.Greeley@LSSI.org.

To apply online, go to Thrivent.com: at the top of the page, click on “Making a Difference” and then choose “Action Teams.” Alternatively, you can apply by calling 800.847.4836 and saying “Thrivent Action Teams.”

*All Thrivent members are eligible to lead a Thrivent Action Team. Multiple members cannot apply to receive a Thrivent Action Kit to be used toward the exact same project.

**Thrivent Action Teams**

**Investing in Human Potential**

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**Planned Giving Resources Available**

LSSI is pleased to announce its new planned giving newsletter, *What Brings You Joy: The Gift Planning Newsletter of LSSI*. Along with the newsletter, LSSI has unveiled a new website that is specifically designed to answer questions about estate planning. Together, the new website and *What Brings You Joy?* will focus on how thoughtful estate planning can bring joy to others, as well as in our own lives. The newsletter is available in print and online at LSSI.giftplans.org.

**Events**

**Thursday, October 27, 2016**

**LSSI Day of Giving**
A day-long event to raise awareness and funds for LSSI’s programs.

**Saturday, November 19, 2016**

35th Annual Amicus Certus Celebration
Union League Club, Chicago
Honoring the Gerald A. and Karen A. Kolschowsky Family Foundation. For more information, contact Barb Hailey at 847.635.4686 or Barb.Hailey@LSSI.org.