

Harrison Morris, HOME Counselor/Case Manager,
at one of his outreach locations.



Inspired

“...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” – MATTHEW 25: 35-36

HOME Program Supports People Experiencing Housing Instability

No day is the same, including where it starts, for Harrison Morris, a Counselor and Case Manager with the HOME Program (Housing Outreach and Meaningful Engagement) at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI).

The new outreach program began in January 2024 to support people experiencing housing instability and homelessness on Chicago’s northwest side. State funding for the program was championed by State Rep. Lindsey LaPointe and State Sen. Robert Martwick.

Using a whole-person, multi-pronged outreach approach, the HOME program helps stabilize individuals through referrals to counseling, healthcare, substance use services, employment, public assistance, and providing linkages to housing options. LSSI offers many of these services, and all clients are linked with community services based on their individual needs, goals, and preferences through a person-centered approach.

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Responding to the Gospel, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois brings healing, justice, and wholeness to people and communities.



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

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Foster Parents Make a Difference

When asked why she became a foster parent 29 years ago, Marnie Jamison said, “I knew I could do this. I can make a difference.”

And make a difference she has. During that time, she has fostered or provided respite foster care to nearly 100 children. When LSSI piloted its Therapeutic Foster Care Program seven years ago, Jamison was one of the first foster parents in the program, a role she continues in today.

“I have always worked with children. I became a foster parent in my early 20s when I worked at a daycare center,” she said. “I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.”

LSSI’s Therapeutic Foster Care Program is an evidence-based program that places children with severe emotional and behavioral issues into therapeutic homes for nine to 12 months with the goal of a permanent placement home.

Jamison has witnessed the success of the program first-hand. A recent child she fostered dealt with housing instability and family mental health issues before coming

to live with her. Despite that trauma, the child has made great strides. “She can grow and become something wonderful,” she said.

That positivity is part of her success as a foster parent.

“I’ve seen such a difference with this program,” Jamison said. “When you give these kids a strong family base, it’s almost as if they can do anything.”



Marnie Jamison and her husband Earbie Hill look at photos of the children she’s fostered over the years.

Aigner Foundation Fuels Innovation in Mental Health Care

Throughout LSSI’s history, generous friends have been crucial to advancing innovation to ever-changing social service needs. The Aigner Foundation has been an early supporter of LSSI’s behavioral health services, including the Welcoming Center and Mobile Crisis Program.



Aigner family and Aigner Foundation members, from left: Karen Aigner; Seth Aigner, Treasurer; Molly Aigner Russell, Secretary; Pr. Frederick Aigner, President; and Scott Russell.

“These programs are important because they are a generative response to care,” said Pr. Frederick Aigner, Foundation President and CEO Emeritus of LSSI.

“They embody LSSI’s community-based programming.” Aigner’s late wife, Sally, was an avid supporter and dedicated member of the Women’s Network of LSSI.

The Mobile Crisis Team responds 24/7 to children and adults in crisis on Chicago’s northwest side and provides services to people in their homes and communities.

The Welcoming Center is a mental health clinic for adults (18+) who are having a mental health crisis or who cannot access mental health services in a timely manner.

“The clients are understood in the fullness of their dignity and humanity rather than by their diagnoses,” Aigner emphasized. “Through this one institution and its committed staff, a donor may address almost every human need imaginable in every age group.”

In recognition of the Aigner Foundation’s support, LSSI dedicated a plaque in the Welcoming Center that reads, “We gratefully acknowledge the Aigner Foundation for its faithful, visionary support of behavioral health services.”



Lutheran Home Finding Society, Chicago, 1950s. LSSI still owns this building, known as Portage Cragin Counseling Center.

Cornerstone Foundation Celebrates 40 Years

When a community of concerned neighbors and Lutheran congregations founded Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) in 1867, they were responding to an immediate need to care for children whose parents died in a cholera epidemic. Little did they know their compassionate action would still be helping children—and adults—more than a century and a half later.

To help guarantee the legacy of its founders, The Cornerstone Foundation was established 40 years ago. It receives legacy gifts, including those made through wills, charitable gift annuities, charitable trusts, and beneficiary designations.

Pr. Donald Hallberg, CEO Emeritus at LSSI, recalls the impetus for Cornerstone was to ensure long-term support for LSSI's programs, fueling innovation and helping sustain programs in economic downturns. Hallberg not only helped create Cornerstone, he and his wife Susan have remembered LSSI in their charitable estate plan, helping to sustain it.

"We all can 'leave a legacy' for LSSI's ministry that will continue to support LSSI long after we have joined the heavenly chorus," he said. "I am thrilled at the progress the Cornerstone Foundation has made over the past 40 years."

For more information on including LSSI in your estate plan, visit [LSSI.org/PlannedGiving](https://www.lssi.org/PlannedGiving).

A MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

•Living Our Mission

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

When asked why they support LSSI, people frequently cite this passage from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, as their inspiration. Among its many lessons, universally it teaches the importance of caring for those around us and responding to the needs of others with love and hope, rather than fear and avoidance. From our Lutheran faith, it shows Jesus' love for people, particularly for those in need.

And of course, this speaks to LSSI's Mission: Responding to the Gospel, LSSI brings healing, justice, and wholeness to people and communities.

LSSI's mission shines through in this issue of *Inspired*. A foster parent using her gifts for nearly 30 years to help children dealing with trauma and uncertainty. A case manager building trust among people who are homeless and ultimately helping them access needed services. And generous friends who are ensuring LSSI's programs continue well into the future.

LSSI recently celebrated the 157th anniversary of our founding. In 1867, a group of caring community members established an orphanage to help children left parentless by a cholera epidemic. They responded with love and hope and created what is now LSSI.

During this blessed season of giving, we are grateful to you for helping carry on this legacy of love and hope for the over 50,000 children, adults, and seniors served by LSSI.

Peace and Prayers,

David P. Novak, JD
Vice President, Advancement
Executive Director, Cornerstone Foundation



A Day in the Life of HOME's Counselor/Case Manager

Where Harrison Morris starts his work day can vary by location depending on where a potential client in need may be. As the counselor and case manager for LSSI's HOME Program (Housing Outreach and Meaningful Engagement), he meets clients where they are at, which could be a train station, a park, or a church soup kitchen.

Using a progressive engagement approach, Morris' style is friendly and helpful. He doesn't want to confront people by assuming they have a specific urgent need, but

rather gain their trust so they know he is an available resource to help.

Morris has been in his role for a year with the HOME Program, which has housed 13 people. He's also been able to help individuals in other ways. Some he simply provides information about hours and locations for a local soup kitchen. A calming place and hot meal can be the encouragement they need to ask for help. He has helped others with getting their social security benefits and obtaining a state i.d. card.

"Just giving them the option of knowing that they have someone they can go to is bigger than anything," Morris said of working with his clients. "As long as they know there are options out there and people care, that's bigger than anything."

[HOME PROGRAM SUPPORT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

Morris receives referrals from a variety of sources, including mobile crisis programs, religious organizations, concerned citizens, law enforcement, and government offices. He uses a progressive engagement approach, which starts small, helping individuals with immediate needs and adjusts over time as a person's housing needs evolve. This approach builds trust and does not assume the person wants help.

"I always have a gift card to break the ice, and I ask if the person knows someone who needs help and build from there," he said. After a year in his job, he has opened the door. People he has encountered now approach him as he makes his rounds. (To learn more about his work, see above article.)

Since January 2024, the HOME Program has received and reached out to 145 referrals, housed 13 people, and secured housing for five clients.

Secured housing means LSSI either assisted people with paying back rent to avoid eviction and/or utilized case manager skills to expedite their waiting list housing approval; 79% of the assisted clients are households with two or more children.

The ultimate goal of HOME is to place individuals in secure and stable housing that will improve their health and enable individuals to live a self-directed, purposeful life.

Events

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

GIVING TUESDAY

Created in 2012, Giving Tuesday started as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. This Giving Tuesday season, LSSI is looking for 50 caring people to become monthly donors and help us finish the year strong, with the financial foundation we need to change lives in 2025. **Visit LSSI.org/GivingTuesday to make a gift.**

Happening Now PROJECT ROOM AT THE INN

Project Room at the Inn is LSSI's Christmas giving program and an opportunity for individuals, churches, or groups that would like to help spread joy to children in their communities served by LSSI. Our goal is to raise \$50,000 to provide a Christmas gift for 2,500 children served by our programs.

Learn more at LSSI.org/Christmas.



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Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois does not discriminate in admission to programs or employment in compliance with the law.

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