



A resident at Washington Place Group Home learning sign language while sheltering at home during COVID-19.

# Inspired

"I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul."

3 JOHN 1:2

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

## "Healing Heroes" Personify LSSI's Mission

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) have shown incredible resilience and creativity in engaging clients despite physical barriers to the personal connections that ground their work. During the pandemic, they've earned the honorary title of "Healing Heroes."
- "I'm impressed by our staff's proactive, can-do spirit in providing critical services to clients during the pandemic," said LSSI President and CEO Mark Stutrud. "It shows professionalism in the field of human services and compassion for those we serve."
- Karen Orlowski, a counselor in LSSI's Step-Up School-Based Counseling Program, has employed creative resources to maintain relationships with her school-aged clients by holding video and phone conversations to replace in-person sessions at their schools. Her work now includes helping children cope with the pandemic. "It's been difficult to work with kids and transition to virtual or phone sessions," she acknowledged. "One unexpected benefit is I've gotten to know and support the parents I work with on a whole new level."

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4]



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

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## Making Masks to Save Lives

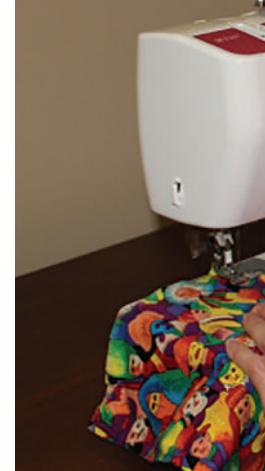
The COVID-19 Pandemic reminds people daily of steps that can be taken to save lives and protect others, like wearing masks—something that has been required in Illinois to prevent the disease's spread. LSSI staff and clients have benefitted from the grace of many mask-makers who cut, folded, and sewed creative patterns that adorn the faces of countless members of the LSSI family across the state.

Both individuals and church groups have contributed thousands of masks to help protect others and be distributed by LSSI.

"It was as much a ministry to the people who were volunteering because they felt helpless as to how else they could respond to a national pandemic," said Mabel Hayes, a member of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Marion. "It gave them purpose."

LSSI proudly thanks every mask-maker who donated and applauds their acts of kindness!

*Pictured: Ann Klicar, of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Downers Grove, was one of the many mask-makers who sewed masks for LSSI clients and families.*



### DONOR PROFILE: REV. MARK AND KATHY HELGE

## True Friends and a Blessing to Others

Mark and Kathy Helge's roots run deep in the Lutheran community. Growing up in Chicago, Mark remembered his Sunday school collecting change for Nachusa Lutheran Home. The Helges met at Valparaiso University, and they have been generous philanthropically to Lutheran organizations. For their commitment and generosity, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) will honor the Helges with the True Friend Award at its October 10 gala (see page 4) themed "Home is Where the Heart is."

LSSI presents the True Friend Award annually to persons or organizations making a significant contribution to the human community. Rockford residents and members of

Christ Lutheran Church, Belvidere, the Helge's generosity has impacted a large cross section of people here and abroad.

Kathy noted that the word "philanthropy" comes from the Latin root "to love others." "As Christians that fits," she said. They're continuing the philanthropic tradition modeled by Mark's aunt, Marion Breen.

Mark said their philanthropy is inspired largely from the Gospel of Matthew, 25:40: Whosoever you do to the least of my brothers, you do unto me. They also have confidence in LSSI's leadership. "I've had congregations in both the northern and southern parts of the state," he said. "I'm glad LSSI is reaching out to those in need. That's something we can be proud of."

The Helge's support has been instrumental in helping LSSI advance its strategic vision of Whole Person Care. They noted several programs where that is reflected. Kathy was inspired by LSSI's Storybook Project, which fosters connections between children and their incarcerated parent through personal recordings of storybooks. "Substance use treatment is important," Mark said. "Having been in congregational ministry, I've known people who need that help."

"We've been blessed to be a blessing to others," Kathy said.



## •The Endurance of Faith



## Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund Supports LSSI Clients Statewide

Over 4,000 children, adults, and seniors in 47 counties were helped with emergency food and supplies, utility assistance, and rent/mortgage assistance through a \$350,000 grant from the Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund (ICRF).

"Of households served by LSSI last year, 95% reported annual incomes under \$25,000," said Mark Stutrud, LSSI President and CEO. "The ICRF grant helped us provide timely, critical support for individuals and families LSSI serves in communities across Illinois."

One southern Illinois mother had to quit her job to stay home with her children when schools closed. The grant helped her purchase beds, mattresses, and pillows for her children.

The funds helped families served by LSSI offices in these communities: Aurora, Canton, Champaign, Chicago, Danville, Dixon, Galesburg, Marion, Moline, Peoria, Rockford, and Sterling. LSSI also used this funding at its affordable housing developments for seniors and residences for people with developmental disabilities located in Aurora, Beardstown, Danville, Decatur, DeKalb, Dixon, Freeport, Rockford, Rochelle, Sterling, Stockton, and Taylorville.

*The Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund was established by the United Way of Illinois and the Alliance of Illinois Community Foundations in collaboration with the governor's office.*

By the time you read this message, August will have arrived and we will mark roughly six months since our lives and work were changed with the full onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

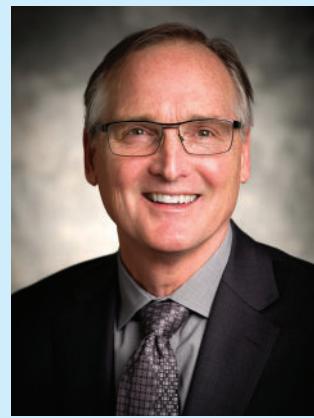
At LSSI, I have been lifted up by our staff and their proactive, can-do spirit in providing LSSI's critical services to our clients. Our workforce had to quickly adapt to new and effective ways of doing their jobs. In doing so, they've shown their competence and commitment, while demonstrating their compassion for those we serve. This issue's cover story highlights just a few of our staff—"Healing Heroes"—and their efforts that have been critical in service.

As needs arise in challenging times, we are grateful for the continued support of donors, foundations, and volunteers. We're privileged to lift up Rev. Mark and Kathy Helge, donors and friends to LSSI, who will be honored with the 2020 True Friend Award at our annual gala on Oct. 10. That too, will be a little different: this year we're bringing the party to you! (see page 4 for details).

The pandemic will continue to have an impact on LSSI in many ways. The cost of personal protective equipment alone this fiscal year may reach \$1.9 million. The world is in a race to find a vaccine and effective treatment, yet those of us not involved in those efforts run the daily marathon of the pandemic. Hebrews 12:1 talks of running a race with respect to faith, "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

Your support surely helps us "run with endurance."

In faith,  
Mark A. Stutrud  
President and Chief Executive Officer



# Virtual Race Benefits Foster Care

LSSI is looking for participants for a 140-mile virtual race—walk, run, or bike—between now and September 4 to raise awareness and funds for LSSI's Foster Care Programs.

Compete as a walker, runner, or biker. Prizes will be awarded in each category and everyone who finishes receives a t-shirt! Join LSSI's online community to compete with other racers and track individual progress.

The 140-mile-goal represents the 140 weeks that children in Illinois spend in foster care, 60 weeks longer than the national average. With its 153-year history as a child welfare leader, LSSI is working closely with the Department of Children and Family Services to help reduce the time children spend in care. Participants in the race can be a part of the solution, too!

Complete the race registration by creating a fundraising page to share. All funds raised support LSSI's programs to serve children, their families, and their foster families. Participants can start the race at any time but the deadline remains the same.

Learn more and register at this link: <https://www.lssi.org/140mi-race.php> or email [Mariah.Heinz@LSSI.org](mailto:Mariah.Heinz@LSSI.org) with any questions.

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LSSI's Mobile Crisis Team can also require in-person contact. Mobile Crisis Clinician Anna Waksmundzka responded to one call of concern for a client living in a city park. Despite not having a specific address, Waksmundzka located and met with the client, provided a meal, and connected her to LSSI's Transitions of Care team for additional services.

Residents of LSSI's Community Integrated Living Arrangement (CILA) homes for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities participate in structured community activities. COVID-19 dramatically changed residents' daily reality. At the Washington Place Group Home in Beardstown, Program Director Billy Jo Quincy and her colleagues have led residents in socially distanced board games, virtual Bible study and prayer meetings, outdoor chalk drawings, and sign language to help replicate their community routines.

"They miss their friends at workshop. They miss their case managers," said Quincy. "We try and keep things light and positive and assure them that this is for their health and safety."



# Events

## Saturday, October 10, 2020

### **VIRTUAL EVENT** 39th Annual True Friend Gala "Home is Where the Heart is"

This year, we're bringing the party to you!

Join us for statewide, small-group celebrations benefitting LSSI's Children's Community Services taking place in the homes (and hearts) of guests and hosts across Illinois. Honoring Rev. Mark and Kathy Helge as True Friends of LSSI.

Register for free today, and learn more details at the event website, [LSSI.org/TrueFriend](https://LSSI.org/TrueFriend). Request more information when you register to learn how you or your church can throw a True Friend Party and represent your area of the state, and celebrate LSSI programs near you.

For more information, contact Mariah Heinz at 847.635.4656 or [Mariah.Heinz@LSSI.org](mailto:Mariah.Heinz@LSSI.org).

