

Russian Judges Visit Madison by Julie Daggett, director of government relations

Two Russian Supreme Court judges got a glimpse of our state's legislative and judicial systems as part of their LSS sponsored visit to Wisconsin in March. During the Madison leg of their tour, they explored the Capitol building and met with several state officials, including State Supreme Court Justice Patrick Crooks.

Justices Tatiana Shagdortova and Natile Sokolnikova from the Russian Republic of Buryatia, located in southern Siberia, were invited by LSS to study the American judicial system, its courts and its laws. Their special interest is in international adoption. LSS has facilitated 100 adoptions from Buryatia in Wisconsin—one of the largest commitments in the nation.

Justice Crooks spent two hours with the judges discussing the major differences between our court systems. The judges were particularly intrigued by the fact that Wisconsin Supreme Court judges have to run for election. In Russia, all judges are appointed for life terms by the President.

Justices Shagdortova and Sokolnikova also received special greetings from Governor Scott McCallum's chief of staff and State Representative Mark Gundrum, chair of the Assembly Judiciary Committee. The judges were impressed by the amount of public input afforded by our state's legislative system through public hearings and

direct accessibility to lawmakers by their constituents. The concept of a "lobbyist" was also new to them as no such profession or activity exists in their country.



Russian Supreme Court judges Tatiana Shagdortova and Natile Sokolnikova with State Representative Mark Gundrum, chair of the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

Their week-long visit to Wisconsin also included stops at LSS programs and courts in Milwaukee, Kenosha and Appleton. In Kenosha, Judge Mary Wagner hosted Shagdortova and Sokolnikova, where they were able to observe the termination of a parents' rights hearing in Wagner's court.

To learn more about how you can be involved with government relations, contact Julie Daggett at (608) 268-1404 or jdaggett@lsswis.org.

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of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.

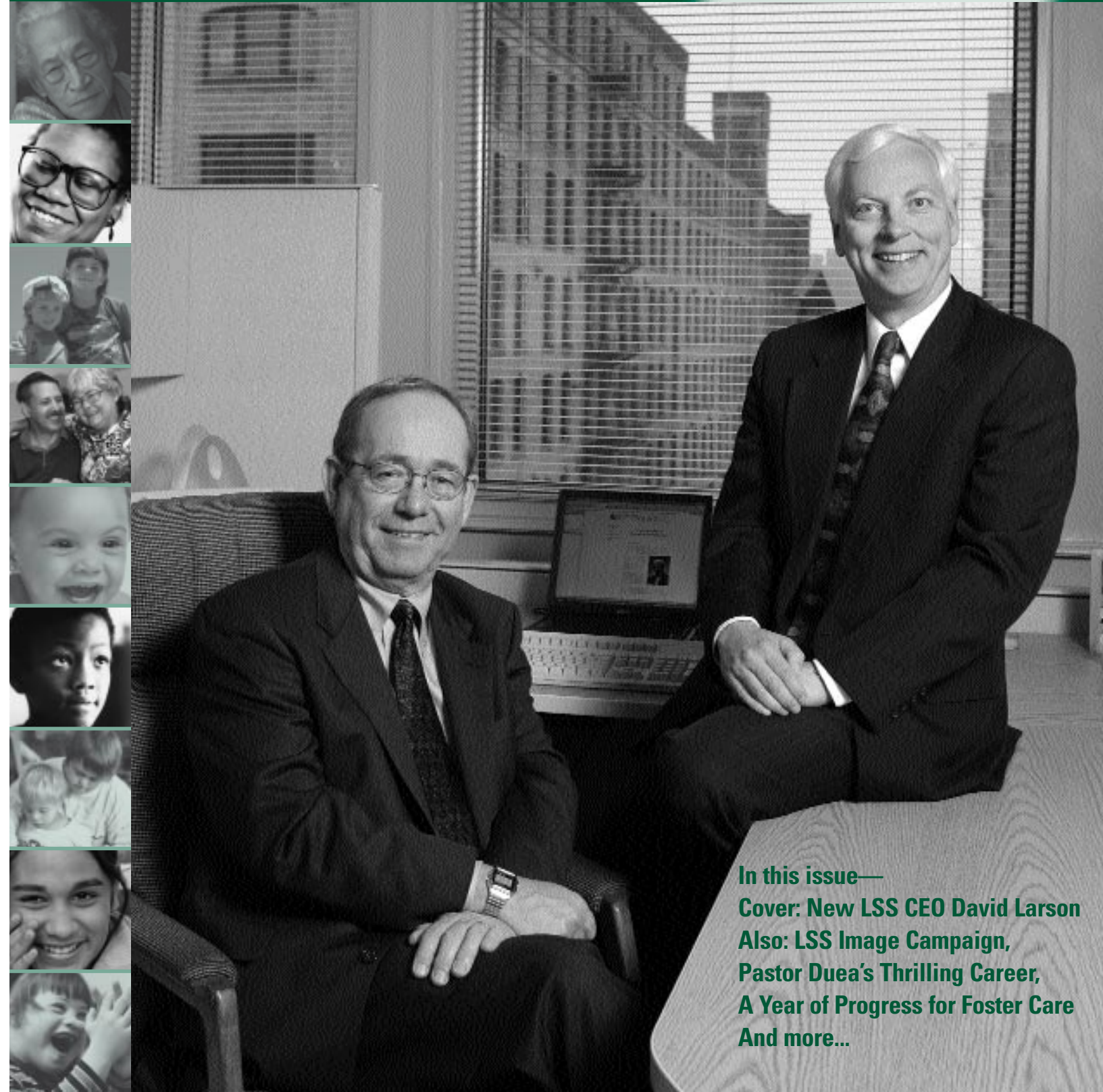
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A newsletter for friends of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan

CONNECTIONS

Issue 2 2002



In this issue—
Cover: New LSS CEO David Larson
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Cover: Following the retirement of Rev. Bob Duea, Rev. David Larson takes over leadership of LSS. Story on page 3.

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Vice President, South Inland Region

Criselda Ros-Dukler

Vice President, North East Region

TBD

Vice President, South East Region

TBD

Vice President of Resource

Development



From the President's Desk

I am writing this as the days of my leadership of this agency wind down and my retirement nears. In recent weeks, I have stood before a number of groups—staff, board, friends from church and community—to share some parting thoughts. Believe me, it's a daunting challenge to attempt to condense the experiences and feelings of 17 years into only a few moments!

Inevitably, on these occasions, I have found my recollections coalescing around people—people I've been privileged to work with and people this agency has been called to serve. It's like a computer-animated slide show where the images just keep on coming, merging from one to the other to create a powerful, overall impression.

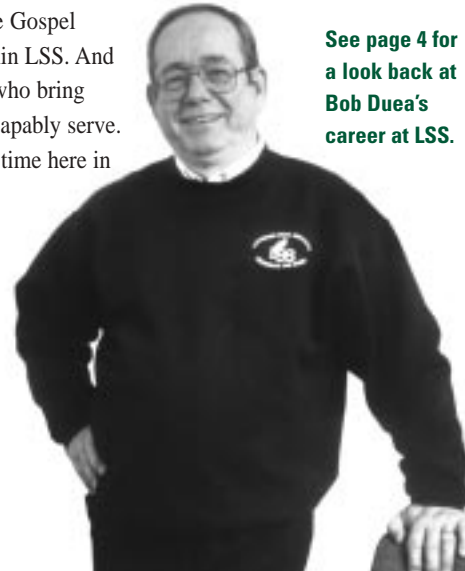
I see children from here and around the world who are growing up in the security of forever families through the gift of adoption. I see persons with disabilities who have been welcomed into our communities and congregations, and encouraged to live as fully as they are able.

I see an Afghan mother and her children, and a Hmong family, and other refugees who are breathing deeply of the fresh air of freedom. I see a teenager learning to replace defiance with trust. I see older adults flourishing in a day care center established by a group of congregations in a shared ministry with LSS.

I see board members who generously give time and talent to shepherd this marvelous agency. I see donors who share their treasure so that the Gospel message to "love thy neighbor" can thrive within LSS. And I see incredibly caring staff, past and present, who bring miracles of hope and healing to those they so capably serve.

So many, many people have enriched my time here in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. My prayer is that you and others like you will continue to support LSS so that LSS, in turn, can continue to touch lives.

I am thankful for an unforgettable 17 years.



See page 4 for a look back at Bob Duea's career at LSS.

Robert E. Duea, president & CEO

Donation Helps Residents RECONNECT

Concerts, amusement parks and baseball games are among the activities that residents of Toward Tomorrow, a 12-bed community-based residential facility for people with chronic mental illness, are looking forward to this year. These recreational opportunities are made possible thanks to a donation that Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan is receiving from the Winnebago Mental Health Association.

The Winnebago Mental Health Association is dissolving and donating its assets to organizations in the area. LSS programs in the region, including Toward Tomorrow, will share around \$10,000.

Toward Tomorrow is a treatment facility that prepares customers for independent living.

Staff lead structured group therapy sessions help residents recover from mental health issues or substance abuse problems. Offering residents the opportunity to participate in community activities is another aspect of treatment.

"Mental illness can make it difficult for someone to be social," said Linda Kaufmann, program manager for Toward Tomorrow. "Making activities available helps residents reconnect with people in the community, and starts them on the track to living on their own again."

"We've always offered recreational opportunities," added Kaufmann. "However, our budget was limited. This donation will allow us to go on some really special outings, and attend some fun events."

New LSS President and CEO Dave Larson

After 17 years as head of Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, President and CEO Rev. Robert Duea announced his retirement earlier this year.

Soon after his announcement, the search began to find Duea's successor. Members of the executive committee on the Board of Directors served as the search committee, with additional representation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the LSS Foundation. On May 10, the search process concluded and Rev. David Larson was chosen to take his place. The Board of Directors confirmed details of the transition at its meeting on June 17, and David officially took office on July 1. David is just the sixth person to lead the agency since its formation as a statewide organization in 1936.

Of his selection, David responded, "I am energized by this opportunity and humbled by the faith that was shown in me and my selection as the next president and CEO. I take on this challenge with great enthusiasm and look forward to an exciting future."

"We are impressed with the knowledge of LSS he has gained over the past two decades from an unusually wide variety of perspectives,"

stated John Silseth, chair of LSS board and search committee. David has related to the agency as a pastor, board member, staff director and, most recently as a vice president. After serving on the LSS board of directors for six years, David joined the agency in 1995 as director of church relations. In 1998 he assumed the role of vice president of resource development and was responsible for directing the fund-raising, church relations, and marketing and communication efforts of the agency. He also serves as vice president of the LSS Foundation.

Prior to joining the LSS staff, David obtained a bachelor of arts degree from Luther College and a master of divinity from Wartburg Theological Seminary, both in Iowa, and was ordained in July, 1982. He taught music at the Manitowoc public schools before going to seminary and after ordination his first call was to St. John's Lutheran Church in Spring Valley, where he served from 1982 to 1988. He was senior pastor of Immanuel

Lutheran Church in Wausau from 1988 to 1995.

When asked about his successor, Bob said, "I am delighted to be passing the baton to David, not only because I think he is very capable and has earned the respect of his co-workers but also because of the special gifts he brings to the

position. Anyone who has heard him speak on behalf of LSS knows of the intense passion he has for our mission and of his exceptional skills in motivating and inspiring others to share that passion."

"It is a tremendous gift to be a part of an agency with such a strong history.

Partnerships with communities

and donors have continued to grow and deepen. Along with our staff, these partnerships are the most valuable resource we have to make our mission come alive," explained David. "I'm convinced that together we can build and provide a deeper level of caring and compassionate service to our customers."



President and CEO David Larson

Lutheran Social Services Implements IMAGE Campaign

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) has implemented its first-ever, statewide image campaign. The campaign tells the LSS story—who we are and what we do—from our customer's perspective.

Each television or radio spot features a real customer who was touched by LSS' adoption and birth parent program, counseling services, special needs program or older adult services. The key messages of the ads are that LSS helps thousands of people improve the quality of their lives and we need financial support to reach even more people in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. The campaign, to be funded by operating revenues and media outlet donations, is going to be on-air in July and December of this year.

According to David Larson, president and chief executive officer, "One of the issues we have faced as an agency is low



Prior to filming, the director confers with Leana, one of the real customers featured in LSS's image campaign.

awareness with community members, business and government leaders, donors and even the faith community. For example, only about six percent of the general public knows of LSS' existence as a social service agency. If people aren't aware of us, they're less likely to donate to LSS, ask about our services and programs or consider the agency for employment. We are trying to change this."

"It is our hope that the ad campaign will lift up LSS as an agency and show the good work that we do. And, more importantly, we hope the ads will capture the hearts and minds of individuals, corporations, churches and foundations in such a way that they will desire to become an even bigger part of our mission. Maybe they can support us by donating cash, offering a company match, providing grants, making a planned gift, considering a job with LSS or praying for us on an ongoing basis," said Larson. "Each of these practical steps would be of great benefit to LSS."

Any donations received as a result of the ad campaign will be deposited into the LSS endowment fund, unless otherwise designated by the donor. "This campaign is an investment in LSS that will pay dividends in caring service long into the future," added Larson.

A Look Back At A **THRILLING** Career

"It is so energizing to see the interaction between our staff and customers, and to marvel at how God's grace is at work in people's lives."

When Pastor Bob Duea arrived from Oregon in 1985 to become the leader of Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, he knew he needed a crash course in the people and places that make up the agency. So he climbed into his car and spent much of the next seven months driving to LSS programs in communities throughout the two-state area.

Some 17,000 miles later, he concluded that LSS was a sprawling, complex agency with a rich history of service and a remarkably dedicated staff. Now, as he retires from his position as President and CEO, he knows those first impressions were right on the mark.

"I've made a practice of spending about 40 percent of my time on the road, and some of my most cherished memories over the years have come from visits to program sites," Duea recalled in an interview shortly before his retirement. "It is so energizing to see the interaction between our staff and customers, and to marvel at how God's grace is at work in people's lives."

Duea, 62, looks back on a tenure marked by significant growth—not only in size but also in scope and impact. In 1985 the agency had 550 employees, a \$14 million operating budget and \$4 million in assets. Today there are 2,500 staff, an \$82 million budget and assets of nearly \$24 million. Most important, LSS programs now reach more than 100,000 people annually and have expanded from a base of traditional family and children's services to include a range of other programs for persons with disabilities, older adults, refugees, criminal offenders and disaster victims.

Early on, Duea led an effort to develop a simple yet powerful mission statement that would effectively encompass the agency's diverse services. He takes great satisfaction in the result—*Motivated by the compassion of Christ, we help people improve the quality of their lives*—and in the fact that employees connect to it and can readily recite it from memory.

"So many of our employees," he said, "see their association with LSS as a way of living out their faith. That's very gratifying."

Duea also takes pride in how the LSS mission has been integrated with sound business practices. "Our board and staff understand that the agency's revenue must meet and exceed expenses if LSS is to survive and thrive," he said. "Our managers have learned to operate in a business-like fashion while still keeping the agency's mission and church relationship front and center."

There are many other achievements of which Duea is proud. He believes the restructuring of the agency in 1992

to decentralize authority and responsibility was crucial in laying a foundation for growth. And he feels the emergence of a total quality initiative and participatory culture that encourage staff to develop leadership skills, focus on customers and not shy away from risk has also been vital in shaping the LSS of the early 21st century.

One accomplishment that brings an especially warm smile to Duea's face is the blossoming of the agency's adoption program. As an adoptive parent himself, he had a keen appreciation for what it means to create "forever families." So when the opportunity arose to not only strengthen domestic adoption services at LSS but also venture into new international alliances, Duea moved eagerly ahead.

Of the 4,500 children placed with families during his years at LSS, more than 2,600 were from outside the United States. To build relationships with child welfare agencies in other countries, he traveled to Korea, Taiwan, China, Thailand and the Philippines, as well as to various regions in Russia five times.

On several occasions, Duea and his wife Marilyn brought back children from their trips abroad and experienced firsthand the joy of placing the infants in the arms of their anxiously waiting adoptive parents. "What an incredible feeling," Duea said. "I'll never forget the emotion of those airport welcomes." He expects to continue his involvement in international adoption through his work with the recently established Lutheran Adoption Network.

The public profile of LSS became increasingly visible under Duea's leadership. More resources were devoted to acquainting government officials, particularly at the state level, with the agency's capabilities, and a successful \$15 million fund-raising campaign in the mid-90s significantly raised awareness of LSS among donors.

Along with the inevitable ups and downs of managing a large organization came some hard-earned lessons. "I tried to always take something away from every experience, even those that failed, and apply it to the future," he said. "I learned most every problem is really an opportunity waiting to be changed into a positive. And I found it was important to cultivate relationships outside the agency as a source of fresh ideas and new insights into difficult issues."

Throughout his years at LSS, one truth has towered over all others. "Time and again," Duea said, "I've seen how God is active in the world, bringing care and healing to the broken human spirit. The other day I thanked the board for giving me this thrilling, 17-year ride. And I told them I leave with complete confidence that LSS will continue to be a place where God's love flourishes."

Cash or Stock: Which is Better to Give? By Steve Farwig, director of advancement

"We are certain that everyone in the area that LSS serves knows someone who has been touched by LSS in one way or another."

Greg & Lorene Fleckenstein

Jack Brown receives the latest appeal letter from Lutheran Social Services (LSS) asking him to consider a gift in support of our ministry to those who are hurting. Generous man that he is, Jack immediately pulls out his checkbook and writes a check for \$1,000. He thinks to himself: "I'll not only help LSS, but I'll also receive a nice income tax charitable deduction."

Assuming Jack submits an itemized tax return, falls in the 27 percent tax bracket and is able to use all of his charitable deduction, he can look forward to saving \$270 in taxes. To put it another way, his gift to Lutheran Social Services will "cost" him only \$730.

Jack's friend, Jill Smith, also receives the letter from LSS. But instead of writing a check, she calls her stockbroker for an update on her portfolio. She learns that one publicly traded stock, Spacely Sprockets, has appreciated significantly since she bought it about 18 months ago for \$10 per share. It is now trading at \$20. And since she owns 50 shares, she has an appreciated asset worth \$1,000 -- twice what she paid for it.

Ms. Smith has a decision to make. Should she tell the broker to sell the stock and send her a check in the mail (which she would then use to make a gift to Lutheran Social Services), or should she have the broker transfer the stock to LSS's account? In other words, should she give cash or stock? Jill chooses to donate the stock.

Consider the wisdom of Ms. Smith. Instead of selling the stock, paying the required capital gains tax on the

appreciation and giving what's left to Lutheran Social Services, she makes a direct gift of the stock. In so doing, she bypasses the capital gains tax entirely. She knows that LSS is a qualified charitable organization and therefore faces no tax consequences when selling the stock.

Let's take an even closer look. Ms. Smith originally paid \$500 for her stock. However, she receives an income tax charitable deduction for a gift of \$1,000. And since, like Jack, she is in the 27 percent income tax bracket, she also will save \$270 in income taxes, assuming, of course, she is able to use all of the deduction. In short, it costs Jack \$730 (\$1,000 less \$270 income tax savings) to make a gift of \$1,000, while it costs Jill only \$630 (\$1,000 less \$100 capital gains savings at 20 percent less \$270 income tax savings) to make a \$1,000 gift.

No matter what tax bracket you're in, making gifts with appreciated stock usually makes sense. The one objection people may have is that they believe that the stock they could donate is going to continue increasing in value. If you have both cash and stock available, why not donate the stock and use the cash to purchase replacement shares? If the stock continues to increase in value, you'll still have it but with a higher cost basis, resulting in a smaller capital gain when it comes time to sell it later.

For a more "real" perspective on this subject, please see the accompanying profile on Greg and Lorene Fleckenstein. The Fleckensteins make their annual gifts to LSS by donating stock.

Gifts of Stock Make it **EASY** to Give

As members of Calvary Lutheran Church and residents of Congregational Home and Independent Living in Brookfield, Wis., Greg and Lorene Fleckenstein give generously of their time and money to help people help themselves. Originally from Duluth, Minn., the

Fleckensteins have lived in Wisconsin and been involved with LSS for over 40 years. "We donate to Lutheran Social Services because we are in full agreement with the services that LSS provides," stated Lorene. "We are certain that everyone in the area that LSS serves knows someone who has been touched by LSS in one way or another."



Greg and Lorene Fleckenstein

Every year, the Fleckensteins make a gift of stock to support the overall ministry of Lutheran Social Services. They use stock to contribute to LSS because it is very convenient and it increases their contribution through a company match and lower taxes. "All we need to do is write to our broker to direct the transfer of the stock to the LSS account," said Greg. "We don't even have to handle the shares directly."

"If we would sell the appreciated stock and then donate the proceeds we would be subject to taxes on the gain, and the value of our gift would be reduced," Greg added. "By giving the stock directly to LSS, we don't have to pay the capital gains taxes, resulting in a larger gift that can help more people involved with LSS."

If you own stock, consider joining Greg and Lorene in using it to make charitable gifts. It is people like the Fleckensteins that enable LSS to live out its mission and vision everyday.

A Year of PROGRESS for Foster Care

Recently, First Choice for Children, a program of Lutheran Social Services (LSS) marked its one-year anniversary. The program works along with the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare to recruit, license, re-license, train and support approximately 2,000 foster families. These families in turn care for over 4,000 children in Milwaukee County. "It has been an interesting and productive year for us," stated Mary Protz, regional director of First Choice for Children. "The transition period was challenging, but our staff has met the challenge and we have been able to meet or exceed a number of organizational goals."

For example, as of January 1, 2002, potential foster families are required to complete a 36-hour training curriculum. Some of the topics covered include Abuse & Neglect, Child Development, Separation, Discipline, Cultural Issues in Placement, and Effects of Caregiving on the Family. The purpose of the extra training is to enhance the caregiving skills and abilities of foster families to provide a safe and nurturing home environment. First Choice also conducted a first-ever, needs assessment study with foster families that continues to guide the program in terms of strategic planning, recruiting, training and supporting foster families. However, the most important accomplishment this year, has been to ensure that our children are safe and secure. "To achieve this we have worked to get to know foster families, maintained high standards and worked closely with our partners within the Bureau," said Protz.

The most important need within the program is to have more foster families, especially those willing to care for older children and children with special needs. Essentially, foster parents provide foster children with a safe and

healthy environment on a temporary basis, that is, until the child can be reunited with his/her biological family or be placed in another permanent home. "As a foster parent, you make a lasting impression on a child," added Protz.

First Choice for Children supports foster families with nearly 100 staff members who have backgrounds and cultures as diverse as those of the foster families. The staff understands the issues

faced by the families and children they serve. As a result, First Choice can be more effective in supporting and regulating foster families. "The staff has enthusiastically developed their skills this year and have grown in experience with respect to their roles as recruiters, licensing and consulting specialists. Our vision, is to make the first placement, the best and only placement before reuniting the child with his or her family or other permanent home," said Protz. "We are definitely ready to begin our second year of providing children with loving foster homes."



"Our vision, is to make the first placement, the best and only placement before reuniting the child with his or her family or other permanent home."

Last year 54 million people nationwide served as a caregiver for an older adult. As our population continues to age, the stress of providing care for seniors and other people with chronic conditions is increasing on individuals, businesses and our communities.

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan is tackling the stresses placed on caregivers by sponsoring a series of workshops called *Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregiving*. LSS is a member of the Wisconsin Alliance for Family Caregiving and the Taking Care of You series is from the Legacy Caregiver



Workshop Offers **POWERFUL** Tools

"Having tools to resolve problems is a definite advantage in becoming a better caregiver and a happier, wiser, healthier me...and a healthier 'us'!"

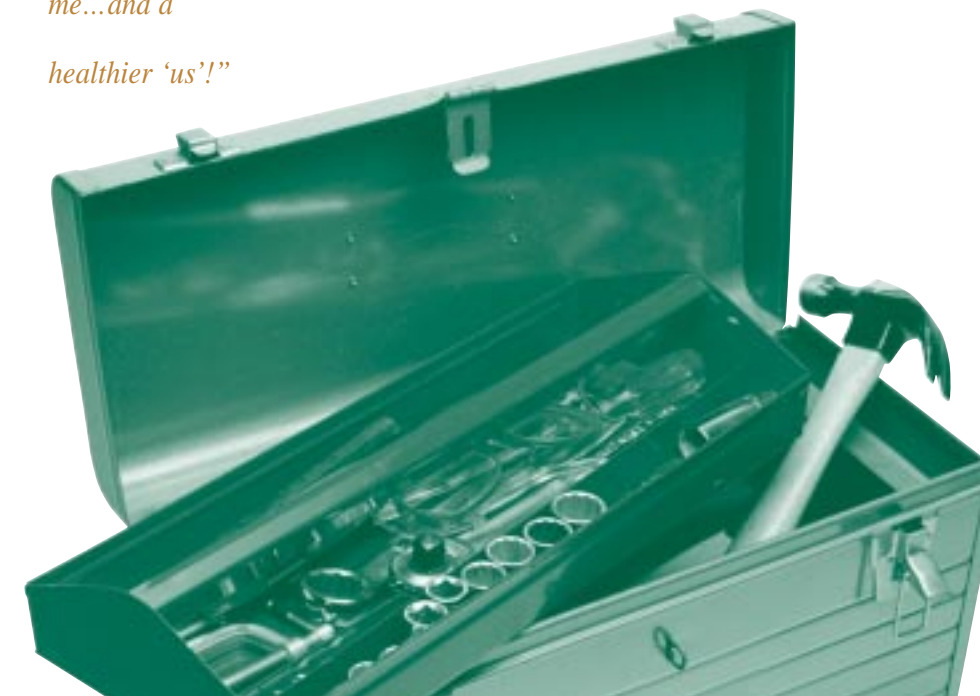
Services of Portland, Oregon. The series is an educational program for caregivers of persons with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, stroke victims or people who suffer from chronic diseases. Taking Care of You provides the caregiver with tools that can be used on a daily basis to increase coping skills, and in the process take better care of themselves, and subsequently, the people they are caring for.

The techniques learned in these workshops will help the caregiver reduce stress, relax, set goals and solve problems, communicate effectively with family members or doctors, as well as reduce guilt, anger and depression. Each participant will receive a book that corresponds with the class content and contains information on hiring in-home help, helping memory-impaired older adults, and making legal, financial and treatment decisions.

Participants from previous sessions

reported that they were more confident caregivers, and had significant reductions in anger and guilt as a result. A former participant said, "After taking this class, I am better able to make the decisions I need to make! Having tools to resolve problems is a definite advantage in becoming a better caregiver and a happier, wiser, healthier me...and a healthier 'us'!"

Class sessions are held at a number of locations in the North East Region, including the Thompson Community Center in Appleton, Wis. Please note that the class sizes are limited and registration is required. Scholarships and respite care are available to those who qualify. For more information or to register for a class, call or write: Lutheran Social Services, Taking Care of You: Powerful Tools for Caregiving 820 West College Avenue, Appleton, Wis. 54914, (920) 733-2860.



ElderServe Provides VALUABLE Care

"The main purpose of ElderServe is to be a moderately supervised social environment for older adults who are either lonely or who cannot be home alone during the day for a variety of reasons."

There are a lot of families out there who are really struggling with having to take care of mom, dad, husband, brother or sister," said Tiffany Schultz, program manager for ElderServe Adult Day Center, a program of Lutheran Social Services (LSS) located in Trinity Lutheran Church of West Bend, Wis. "They think they have to do this all on their own. They don't understand that there is help out there."

Fortunately, help does exist for families who are looking for assistance in caring for their aging or ill loved ones. The ElderServe program started over 12 years ago after Washington County expressed a need for older adult services in the community. "The main purpose of ElderServe is to be a moderately supervised social environment for older adults who are either lonely or who cannot be home alone during the day for a variety of reasons," said Schultz. In addition, it provides valuable respite for the caregivers and peace of mind for family members when they are at work.

The ElderServe staff provides quality social and recreational activities, including arts and crafts, group discussions, field trips, films and music, and physical exercise. For example, the highlight of every summer is heading to Milwaukee for Festa Italiana. The customers also have a chance to interact with children and young adults with developmental disabilities who are part of A

Place to Go, an LSS after-school and summer program. In addition, the ElderServe staff administers medications and provides transportation to and from the customers' homes. Lunch is

served via Saint Joseph's Community Hospital's Meals on Wheels program. ElderServe will soon be remodeling the facility to include bathing facilities and to ideally provide a host of services under one roof, such as a beautician and other amenities.

Currently, there are ten customers in the program, but the facility can serve up to 18 per day. Customers range in age from 40 to 90 years-old, and either have some type of mental or physical disability due to aging. Others come for a short time after they have been discharged from the hospital. Most of the customers are living in a group home, on their own or with their families. The goal of ElderServe is to help keep individuals in their homes longer, without the need for institutional care.

Many individuals and families have benefited from the program over the years. For example, a gentleman who recently suffered from a stroke started at ElderServe two half-days a week because his wife was afraid to leave him at home alone. Seeing the remarkable strides he was making, he and his wife decided he should attend the program three full days a week. After his stroke he was afraid to be in public, but now he is more social, and with the help of speech therapy, he is able to communicate better with his wife and family.

This is just one of many successful customer stories and with the expanding need for older adult care, there will be many more. The need for these types of facilities has been rapidly increasing in the last several years. It is expected to grow as the baby boomer generation ages and the average life expectancy continues to rise.

However, despite the growing demand, ElderServe currently has openings. If you

or a family member are interested in learning more about this program or would like to volunteer, please call Tiffany Schultz at 262-338-7730 for an inquiry packet. ElderServe offers a free assessment and a half-day trial, including lunch, to interested individuals.



Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan touches the lives of nearly 100,000 people each year, through a variety of compassionate social services that benefit people of all faiths.

PASSION FOR SERVING

www.lsswis.org



LSS offers competitive wages and benefits such as health/dental insurance, flexible schedules, paid vacation, sick pay and a generous retirement plan, along with opportunities for personal and professional growth.

LSS is an AA/ Equal Opportunity Employer



LSS is looking for those with a passion to serve to join our team. LSS offers services for people of all ages to meet the challenges that face our communities. We are always looking for caring, responsible individuals to assist us in our mission: *Motivated by the compassion of Christ, we help people improve the quality of their lives.*

LSS offers employment opportunities in all facets of human services, including careers as youth care workers, community living specialists, program managers, certified social workers and many other positions.

If you have the passion to serve, please call **1-800-216-3437**, or visit our web site at www.lsswis.org for more information regarding job openings in your area.

LSS Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.

New Home Proving to Be a SUCCESS

Earlier this year, Lutheran Social Services (LSS) opened BonnieView, an adult family home for four adults with mental illness and/or developmental disabilities in Pickett, Wis. BonnieView is designed to help people who were previously living in an institution learn community living skills, develop relationships in the community and eventually move into a setting of their choice.

"Our basic program philosophy is that every person regardless of age, disability or special needs has a right to live in the most normal and least restrictive setting possible," said Patrick Curran, program director. "The environment, staff and structure of BonnieView was built around each customer's unique needs."



In the summer of 2001, Winnebago County case managers identified four people that were ready and willing to transition from more restrictive residential centers into an adult family home. Then, each person worked with staff from the county and LSS to develop a lifestyle plan. The lifestyle plan identifies personal growth and development opportunities, and outlines ways that each BonnieView customer can make a contribution to his/her community.

BonnieView provides personal care, educational, vocational and counseling services that complement each customer's established goals. BonnieView staff also offer assistance with medications, coordinate transportation and assist customers with budgeting their income. BonnieView is staffed round-the-clock by LSS employees experienced with working with special needs populations. The large two-story home allows each customer to have his/her own bedroom. The yard has a perfect spot for a garden.

In the year since its opening, there have been many touching moments and large successes with the men who call BonnieView home. Paul, age 50, has lived at Winnebago mental health institution since he was 13-years-old and is now extremely excited to have his own home. In Bill's lifestyle plan he has outlined many goals including having his own garden, helping to cook his own meals and being out of the institution before his parents pass away. He has worked very hard with the help and encouragement of the Winnebago staff to fulfill these goals. "These lifestyle plans are extensive, but seem to be working. It won't be long and this program will be viewed as proof that people who hope to be independent can be successful, given the right support from the institution, the community and county," said Curran.

Project Youth Success Story



Cathy Pape, a program coordinator at LSS' Project Youth Independent Living Program in Sheboygan, Wis., has had many blessings cross her path each and every day. One of those blessings is Katie.

Katie came to Project Youth a few years back, when she joined the 16-session independent living group. Her confidence, poise and determination immediately caught Cathy's attention. For a 16-year-old, living in an out-of-home placement, this girl had big dreams! Her enthusiasm made it easy to assist her in developing the life skills necessary to "make it on her own." After a few weeks, she shared that her goal was to live independently by the time she turned 17 and a half.

Realistically, most children in care do not transition out on their own before age 18 and research shows that when they do leave the system they are at a substantially higher risk for homelessness, pregnancy, dropping out of

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Project Youth Independent Living Program serves teens aged 15-21 and their families in Sheboygan and Manitowoc Counties. On average, the program serves 90 teens a year. Project Youth provides a 24-hour crisis line, emergency shelter in licensed foster homes (up to 14 days), free counseling (34 sessions), and follow-up and referral services. For additional information, please call either the Sheboygan or Manitowoc Project Youth programs at 1-800-686-1346.

school, incarceration and alcohol or other drug addictions. Katie's goal would take extremely hard work, and an impeccable track record, but she assured Cathy that she could do it. They worked toward her goal together with her social worker, foster parent, school and family to develop a plan for an early transition.

Katie made it! She moved into her apartment just a few months ago. She continues to maintain a B average, holds down two jobs, was recently accepted into college and arranges weekly to meet with her siblings, still in care.

What a truly amazing spirit Katie has. She has done a great job of budgeting time, money and responsibilities. She continues to participate in extra-curricular activities, to make sure she still has time to enjoy being a kid. Recently, her landlord told Cathy that when he walks past her apartment he often pauses and listens to the joyful noise she and her siblings bring to the building. He admits he took a risk renting to a 17-year-old, but he is so very pleased with the maturity Katie displays. He wishes all tenants were as cheerful and resourceful as she has been.

Katie is one of several teens Cathy and Project Youth have the privilege of supporting as they transition into the adult world. This year they have assisted four teens in finding and maintaining housing following discharge from the foster care system.

Among other services, Project Youth helps teens to transition into the adult world by helping them find and maintain an apartment.

Program for Troubled Teens to Build New Facility

In April, Homme-Neillsville, part of Lutheran Social Services' (LSS) Homme Youth and Family Programs, celebrated its one-year anniversary of serving teens with emotional, behavioral or addiction issues on the former Sunburst, Inc. campus in Neillsville, Wis. LSS is kicking off the second year of operation by announcing plans to construct a new facility to meet the growing needs of high-risk youth.

Sunburst, Inc., an outreach program of the United Church of Christ, was founded in 1920 as the Winnebago Indian School and served the children of many northern Wisconsin tribes. In 1957, recognizing the changing needs of children, the school changed its focus to care for abused, neglected and troubled boys and girls. In 1974, Winnebago Indian School changed its name to Sunburst, Inc.

LSS' connection to Sunburst began in December of 2000 when LSS learned that Sunburst was experiencing financial problems

and might be forced to close. LSS, because of its long

history and experience with serving teens and children, would be needed to assist with the placement of Sunburst's residents and employees.

Driven by compassion for both the teens and the Sunburst employees, LSS president and CEO Robert Duea urged his staff to discover some way to continue the much-needed program. After several intensive months of planning, LSS leased a portion of the Sunburst property, hired 35 former Sunburst staff and on April 1, 2001 began providing services to youth at the Neillsville campus. In just one year, staff, churches and community supporters were able to revitalize the program and its finances, keeping the mission of helping youth alive and well in Neillsville.



Needs assessments predict a long-term demand for the services provided at Homme-Neillsville. However, the facility, currently leased from Sunburst, is too outdated to meet the needs of the teens served at Homme-Neillsville. To maintain the high-level of care provided by Homme Youth and Family Programs, LSS is moving forward with plans to build a new facility.

Early in 2002, LSS staff found eight acres of land, located on the south side of Neillsville, on which to build the facility. In its March 26 meeting, the Neillsville Common Council approved the zoning of the land, clearing the way for the construction of the new treatment center.

This new facility will include three classrooms and two separate living units made up of single bedrooms, which will house up to 28 boys. Other amenities in the facility include recreational areas, chapel, full kitchen and cafeteria, group counseling rooms, staff offices and a 'time-out' area.

Ted Hakala, vice president of the West Central Region is extremely excited about this new facility, "In order to meet the needs of troubled youth, programs are required to offer cutting edge, outcome-based services. LSS strives to lead the way as the first choice for providing services to these youth and this new facility will definitely help us continue on this path."

The groundbreaking ceremony took place on June 27 and a grand opening in mid November planned.

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