

Lutheran Family Services
of Nebraska, Inc.

Connections

Fall 2010



A More Powerful Voice for Children

*Adoption Links Worldwide joins
Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska*



Message from the CEO

As the old saying goes...“everything happens in threes.” That’s certainly been the case here at Lutheran Family Services...

- Three thriving core competencies
- Three Centers for Healthy Families
- Three major events (*Faith in Action, Omaha’s Great Pumpkin, Wicker & Wine*)
- Three honorees for Faith in Action
- And our new math—that shows how 1+1=3!

In 2010, Lutheran Family Services was invited to create a formal partnership with Adoption Links Worldwide, a child-serving organization in Omaha. During the process of discernment and due diligence, our LFS Board of Directors asked one primary question: does 1+1=3? Does coming together as one create more value than what we each had individually, because if not, why do it?

Today, we are one. ALW is now an affiliate of Lutheran Family Services, and we are using our resources wisely and efficiently. Instead of two CEOs, we have one. Instead of two infrastructures, we have one.

It is good stewardship, and it is good for children.

Through this affiliation we have broadened our continuum of services for children and families. Not only did ALW add tremendously talented staff members to LFS, it also brought two important assets: *Wendy’s Wonderful Kids*—which focuses on permanency for children in the foster care system; and Hague Accreditation—a standard of excellence for international adoptions.

It may not be the math that we learned in school, but it adds up. We are an even better and stronger organization because ALW is now part of the LFS family.

You can be assured that such decisions are being made strategically, deliberately and with an eye towards collaborations and mindful stewardship.

LFS serves in response to God’s love. We value you and all our partners as we work together to keep children and families healthy and strong.

Together in service,

Ruth A. Henrichs
President & CEO



Howard & Rhonda Hawks
Douglas E. Parrott Faith in Action Award



Kelsey Zach, Christine Stell and Lindsey Fonda of
Omaha Yahoo! Employee Foundation
Community Partner of the Year



Sheila and Scott Anderson
Volunteer of the Year

Faith in Action—A Night to Remember!

It was an evening full of defining moments, and it is hard to pick just one.

Was it the moment that little Wah Khu Shee, the youngest child of the Saw Joy refugee family, flashed a huge smile and waved to the crowd when her family was introduced?

Or was it when Scott Anderson emotionally thanked the audience for

their support in making *At Ease* a reality—and a life-supporting resource for returning troops and their families?

We think it might be when Howard Hawks stopped his own acceptance speech to encourage everyone to yell “Yahoo!” for other honorees—the Yahoo! employees who have embraced refugee resettlement as their community cause.

And everyone did... Yahoo!

The 2010 annual Faith in Action Dinner honored those whose actions demonstrate their commitment to faith-based values and principles.

• **Howard and Rhonda Hawks** accepted the Douglas E. Parrott Faith in Action Award for their tremendous commitment of time, talent and treasure to advance behavioral health and human care for children, families and communities statewide.

• **Omaha’s Yahoo! Employee Foundation** accepted the Community Partner of the Year Award for their phenomenal service and support of refugee families.

• And the Volunteer of the Year, **Scott Anderson** – for his

leadership and commitment to military personnel, veterans, and their loved ones through the LFS *At Ease* program, which provides trauma treatment and support for active military, veterans and their loved ones.

CEO Ruth Henrichs and emcee Jack Swanda presented these awards. Ruth wrapped up the evening by looking to the future. “We must continue providing hope for the journey,” she said, “and we need to leave a footprint big enough to stand for the rights and safety of all God’s people.”



The Saw Joy family with the
Omaha Yahoo! Employee
Foundation
volunteers and
LFS staff

New Members Bring Wealth of Experience to Board

Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska recently welcomed four new members to the Board of Directors.

Stu Dornan
Former Douglas County Attorney Stu Dornan is a partner in the Omaha firm of Dornan, Lustgarten & Troia. He has practiced law in Omaha since 1987 and previously worked as a Special Agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Stu has a long history of community service, serving on past boards of Westside Community Schools, Omaha's Ronald McDonald House and Rotary International. He also serves on many professional boards, including the Nebraska Criminal Defense Attorney's Association (NCDAA) and the state Child Death Review Team. Stu is a mentor and has coached sports for 25 years. He and his wife Dari have nine children and are deeply involved in their church. Stu received his degrees from the University of Florida and the University of Louisiana. He is a member of the Bar in three states.



Dornan



Holtorf

Brad Holtorf
Brad Holtorf is a life-long resident of Fremont and has practiced law there since 1977. He is a partner in the firm of Sidner, Svoboda, Schilke, Thomsen, Holtorf, Boggy, Nick & Placek. Brad is a member of the Nebraska State Bar and Dodge County Bar Associations. He and his wife Catherine are members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Fremont.

Kenny Rocker
Kenny Rocker is an Assistant Vice President with Union Pacific. He holds a leadership position within the Automotive Group of Marketing and Sales. In this role, he helps customers and manufacturers improve their supply chain competitiveness world-wide. Rocker has held positions of increasing responsibility since he joined UP in 1994. Rocker earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Finance from Tuskegee University in August 1994. He served on the Young Art Patron board at Joslyn Art Museum and is currently active in recruiting for Union Pacific at Tuskegee University. Rocker



Rocker

also leads a multi-cultural network for parents of children with Down Syndrome and previously led Union Pacific's Black Employee Network.

T. Parker Schenken
T. Parker Schenken is an attorney with Baird Holm and a member of the firm's Public Finance and Creditors' Rights Section. He practices in the areas of municipal law, finance, debtor and creditor, commercial law, corporate law and real estate, and is a member of the National Association of Bond Lawyers. Parker is listed in The Best Lawyers in America® 2011 (copyright 2010 by Woodward/White, Inc., Aiken, SC) for his work in both Corporate and Public Finance Law. Before beginning his law career, he was employed as a civil engineer for a nationally recognized architecture and engineering firm based in Omaha, Nebraska. He received his degrees from the University of Nebraska and Loyola Marymount University and is a member

of the Bar in three states. He is a former board member for Adoption Links Worldwide.



Schenken



RESTREPO

Captain Dan Kearney of Battle Company, 173rd US Airborne meets with local Afghan elders in the Korengal Valley, Kunar Province, Afghanistan. 2008. A film still from the documentary RESTREPO by Tim Hetherington and Sebastian Junger. Image © Outpost Films

A World Away Comes Home

The screen images were startling. Raw, stark, and very real. Young men, many of whom still had acne and peach fuzz, recounting their experiences in one of the most dangerous battle zones of the war. They talked of being scared, being excited—and watching friends die. And in each young face you could see the innocence lost and the unresolved heartbreak.

The movie "Restrepo" was part of a limited run at the Ruth Sokolof Film Streams theatre in early September. On Thursday, September 9, Lutheran Family Services was invited to be part of a post-screening panel on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other war-related trauma. Therapists from LFS' *At Ease* program, a chaplain from Offutt, two parents of soldiers

with PTSD and a VA therapist answered questions.

The nearly full house asked about identifying symptoms, the scope of the problem and availability of current resources. Deb Jones and Paul Greenwell, therapists for LFS' *At Ease* explained how the program is making a difference, not only for returning military, but also their loved ones.

At Ease offers trauma treatment and support for active military, veterans and their loved ones. No one is turned away based on inability to pay. To learn more about how you can support *At Ease*, please email development@lfsneb.org. For more information on the program itself, visit www.lfsneb.org.



After the Restrepo screening, panelists Bruce Cannon (father of a son with PTSD), Deb Jones and Paul Greenwell (therapists with At Ease) answered questions about At Ease, PTSD, and trauma treatment.

"AT EASE—IT IS NOT ONLY TAKING CARE OF THE VETERANS, BUT THE FAMILY MEMBERS ALSO."

—Bruce Cannon, PTSD survivor & parent

SAVE THIS DATE

Please plan to join BOB KERREY at Qwest Center Omaha, January 31, 2011, at a luncheon benefiting *At Ease*, a Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska program providing trauma treatment and therapeutic support for active military, veterans and their loved ones.



ALW affiliates with LFS

(How 1+1=3)

When the Board of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska first began to consider a relationship with Adoption Links Worldwide (ALW) this year—the directive was very clear: **“If 1+1 doesn’t equal 3, we’re not going to do it.”** In other words—if LFS + ALW does not create a better, stronger, and more effective organization to serve children and families than the two alone, we are not moving forward.

Turns out—the math added up. After much due diligence, two of Nebraska’s premier adoption organizations combined forces and by doing so created a full-spectrum resource for waiting children and adoptive families. Adoption Links Worldwide became an affiliate of LFS in June, 2010.

“This merging of assets preserves the unique programs of Adoption Links Worldwide and enhances the excellent adoption and foster care services offered by both ALW and Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska,” says LFS CEO Ruth Henrichs. “We are delighted to work as one and bring these resources to Nebraska families.”

Adoption Links Worldwide was Nebraska’s leading organization for international adoptions and specialized in the placement of older children of color. It was the only Nebraska-based organization with Hague accreditation, a designation which was established to protect children involved in international adoptions.

Furthermore, ALW was Nebraska’s only local adoption partner for *Wendy’s Wonderful Kids*, a signature program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Wendy’s Wonderful Kids aggressively recruits adoptive families for hard-to-place waiting foster children. Now, all of these excellent programs are part of LFS.

“We are very excited about our affiliation with LFS,” says Maureen Moseman, Former Board Chair of Adoption Links Worldwide. “This was a very positive decision that has strengthened and extended adoption services statewide to help more children find permanent homes through adoption.”

The staff of ALW joined LFS Children Services, while ALW former Executive Director Cheryl Murray is now a member of the LFS Development Team. Cheryl continues to work with ALW’s Forever Families Guild and adoptive families.

“After just a few months, it is already clear what a good decision this was for both ALW and LFS,” says Henrichs. “As we move forward, we may find out that our math was off... and 1+1 adds up to even more than 3!”



An affiliate of
Lutheran Family Services
of Nebraska



What is the Forever Families Guild?

Perhaps the most exciting part of the new LFS/ALW relationship has been the Forever Families Guild. The Guild is a group of child-focused and community-minded individuals who work diligently on behalf of children and families.

The Guild’s vision is that every child will have a permanent, safe and loving home. To achieve that vision, the Guild is committed to raising awareness and funds and to providing volunteer support for the combined children’s programs of ALW and Lutheran Family Services.

The amazing members of the Guild, led by Teri Krohn, are instrumental in organizing and implementing major events like the Great Pumpkin Family Festival, as well as planning the annual fundraiser “Fandango,” helping with foster youth and projects like stocking the shelves at the new North Omaha Center for Healthy Families.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Forever Families Guild, please contact Cheryl Murray at (402) 661-3138. Memberships are \$25 and can be mailed to: Lutheran Family Services, Attn: Cheryl Murray, 124 South 24th Street, Suite 230, Omaha, NE 68102.



Forever Families Guild members discussing logistics of this year’s Omaha’s Great Pumpkin Event on-site at Village Pointe

Why a Great Pumpkin?

During the month of October, families can visit Village Pointe Shopping Center at 168th and West Dodge—and see the Great Pumpkin Tree rising over center court. The 17-foot pumpkin tree is the centerpiece of the annual fall family festival, first created by the Forever Families Guild in 2009. On Halloween Eve, the pumpkins will come down to be carved by foster and adoptive families, local celebrities and families from our community! The carved pumpkins then go back on the tree—where they are lighted and glow through Halloween. The event brings attention to the need for adoptive and foster families. Each of the 600 pumpkins represents 10 children needing “out-of-home” care. You can see photos by becoming a fan of Omaha’s Great Pumpkin on Facebook.





Artist's rendition

North Omaha Center for Healthy Families Taking Shape!

The paint is barely dry, but LFS is already serving 23 families in the new North Omaha Center for Healthy Families! The Lozier Corporation is generously donating fixtures and shelving, both for storage and for the Boutique “store,” as well as office furniture.

Programs are being built on the successful models of LFS Centers in Council Bluffs and Fremont. In addition to the incentive programs, intervention and prevention therapies, case management and parenting classes—the North Omaha Center will offer specialized programming for teen parents. We anticipate that 80% of our 250 families will be pregnant or parenting teenagers. As usual—all services are available to qualifying families with children prenatal to age 5.

You’ll be hearing much more about the North Omaha Center as we start planning the grand opening this winter. In the meantime, we’ll continue sharing progress reports on Facebook.

The first Center for Healthy Families

In 1999, the citizens of Pottawattamie County believed that when given the essential skills and support, highly stressed parents and caregivers with limited resources would create healthier environments for their children, reducing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

This vision became the heart of the Building Families Boutique in Council Bluffs, and the Boutique “store” became the incentive for parents to participate. Specialized therapies, parenting classes and a supportive community bring them back week after week.

As a result of the program’s success in Council Bluffs, LFS replicated the program and added services to meet specific needs in each community. LFS will soon operate three Centers for Healthy Families, all serving families with children prenatal to age 5.



You can support the Pottawattamie County “flagship” Boutique at the Wicker and Wine Basket Auction on November 4. Tickets available now at www.lfsneb.org.

RSAFE Program Wins Major Federal Grant

One of only three awarded nationally

The U.S. Department of Justice likes what it sees in LFS’ innovative and successful sexual abuse recovery program, RSAFE. LFS learned in late September that RSAFE will receive a \$400,000 federal grant to identify and treat 10-14 year olds with sexually acting out behaviors (**RSAFE 10-14**).

“With RSAFE 10-14, the goal is to intervene at the very earliest opportunity,” says Amy Richardson, Vice President of Programs for Lutheran Family Services. “Not only will it spare further victimization, but it will also allow the child who is acting out sexually the best chance for early intervention and treatment.”

In most cases these children

with sexual behavior problems have been sexually abused, and without treatment, their prognosis is poor. To identify children needing these services, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska will collaborate with Project Harmony’s Child Advocacy Center.

RSAFE is the only coordinated and comprehensive treatment program in the Omaha metropolitan area for children and their families who struggle with the aftermath of sexual abuse. The ten-year-old program provides a unique continuum of care that involves the entire family. The program has a 0-1% recidivism rate.

“We are excited about what this grant means for our ability to help families who are dealing with sexual

behavior issues,” says Ruth Henrichs, President and CEO of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. “We know that when our therapists work with these children and their families—especially preteen and young teenagers—it plays a huge role in breaking the cycle of abuse. We’ve seen it happen time after time.”

The Lutheran Family Services program was one of only three grants awarded nationwide. “The competition was quite stiff, so you all [in Nebraska] should be commended on your efforts,” said Will Bronson of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The grant will allow LFS to ensure access to treatment within 48 hours, as well as provide significant data analysis to treat victims more effectively.

Immigrant Women Overcome Obstacles with Assistance

By Sherry Thompson, *Today’s Omaha Woman*. Reprinted with permission. Edited for space.

(The women featured in this article are LFS employees and the International Center of the Heartland is an LFS program)

Cultural differences, language barriers and legal hurdles are just a few of the challenges facing immigrant women. Here in Omaha, numerous agencies offer services to help these newcomers adjust to their adopted homeland.

“Most are ready, willing and able to contribute to our society,” says Dave Pantos, Executive Director, Legal Aid of Nebraska. “Our job is to get them over that hurdle so they can be self-sufficient, raise their family and contribute to society.”

International Center of the Heartland

Staff members at the International Center of the Heartland know firsthand the challenges facing immigrants. Hamdi Guled, originally from Somalia, Nyamouch Jok from Sudan and Anahi Reynoso of Mexico recently took time to talk about their experiences coming to the United States and their work at the center.

“We can connect with them in the sense we have been through these experiences in the past,” Reynoso says. Her family came to the United States when she was 12. Since she was in school and learning English, it became her responsibility to help the family navigate its way in a new and unfamiliar country. She wishes services such as those provided by the International Center of the Heartland were available to her family. “Then I wouldn’t have felt so much pressure trying to be a

child and a grownup helping my family.”

Today, she finds it rewarding to help others in similar situations. “I will hold their hand as much

as possible until they become self-sufficient,” Reynoso says. “For me to see them on their own with a job and their own place to stay, keeping up with the bills and getting their education – that is the best reward I could have.”

Guled was fortunate in that she knew English when she and her husband came to Omaha so he could attend Creighton University. Still, she knows that language is one of the toughest barriers immigrant women face. Her work at the International Center includes helping clients with Medicaid, food stamps, housing, transportation and English classes, as well as medical interpreting.

Most African women, she says, aren’t familiar with mammograms and pap smears. “You have to explain to them that they need to get them done for their health,” she says. And birth control is a taboo subject. “You have to find a nice way to explain it to them.”

Jok was 4 when her family was resettled in Rochester, N.Y. and in second grade when they moved to Omaha for her parents to find jobs. As a youngster, Jok recalls bringing her schoolwork home to teach English to her mom. She also accompanied her to doctor’s



Hamdi Guled, Nyamouch Jok and Anahi Reynoso came to America from other countries and now help other women acclimate to the culture.

appointments to translate. “We became the adults because we had to,” she says of herself and her sister.

Now, she advocates for other women. She’s especially proud of a young woman from Burma who came to Omaha on her own at age 18. “She is able to speak English and is about to go to college,” Jok says. “It feels good to transfer everything I learned to somebody, and now she will be able to give that to someone in her community.”

The International Center of the Heartland is a United Way community impact initiative that provides comprehensive case management services for refugees and immigrants. Community partners include Lutheran Family Services, Legal Aid, One World Community Health and Catholic Charities.

Clients are primarily from Burma, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Mexico and Buhtan, Thomas says. Staff members speak more than 20 languages.

“We are the voice for the people who cannot speak for themselves,” says Guled.

Continued on page 10



New Director of Community Services

Lutheran Family Services is pleased to welcome Shea Fitzekam, J.D. as the Director of Community Services. In this new role, Shea will oversee all Community Service programming, including immigration and refugee services, the International Center for the Heartland and AmeriCorps.

Shea graduated from high school in Omaha, but comes to us from Durango, Colorado—where she has been practicing immigration law for the past five years, most recently in her own law firm. Shea graduated from the University of Nebraska Lincoln and received her Juris Doctor from Syracuse University College of Law. She is a longtime volunteer working with refugees, by teaching English as a second language and participating within community outreach projects.

Shea's excited about her new role at LFS saying, "You all change lives with your work. It will be so rewarding to work with people who are so dedicated to helping others."

Immigrant Women

Continued from page 9

One Woman's Story

Omaha is now home for Dina Haqi, her husband and their three children. The family fled Iraq in 2006 after receiving threats because of her husband's work in the industrial arena. They were living in Syria when he came to Omaha at the invitation of a friend at UNO. Facing additional threats because the factory in Iraq was still operating, her husband applied for asylum and remained in Omaha.

Meanwhile, Haqi went to the United Nations in Syria and pled her case.

Because she was considered to be in danger, she and the children were able to come to the United States in November 2007. The Southern Sudan Community, one of three agencies handling resettlements in Omaha, handled her case.

Haqi first came to Lutheran Family Services for help filing an application to be reunited with her husband, whose asylum request had been denied. Soon she began volunteering with Lutheran Family Services, helping with clerical work and locating job opportunities for refugees.

Lutheran Family Services helped Haqi obtain certification through College of St. Mary to do medical interpretation, and she now translates Arabic at Creighton clinics.

In Iraq, Haqi taught English as a secondary language at a private elementary school, but her degree is not recognized here. Through Lutheran Family Services, Haqi met with Omaha Public Schools officials and applied for a para-professional position in the ESL department and now works at Northwest High School.

Celeste Mitchell of Lutheran Family Services went with Haqi to meet with UNO officials who evaluated her degree and determined the classes she needs to take to receive her elementary education degree. She's applied for financial aid at Metropolitan Community College, where Haqi plans to take basic classes before going to UNO for teaching courses.

"It seems it will take a long time. I will stay as a para and take some night classes and I will do it. No problem," says Haqi, who's also enrolled in Omaha Housing Authority's self-sufficiency program. It helps that her kids—now 19, 15 and 10—are settled and happy in school. The youngest will enter middle school this fall, one is in high school and the oldest daughter is studying pre-med at UNO.

"When you are in your own country, you have many friends," Haqi says. "Here where I have sad or bad moments or happy moments, I call Lutheran Family Services to share with me. They are my sweet home, sweet home," Haqi says.

LFS to celebrate 120th anniversary

Lutheran Family Services is preparing to mark 120 years of service in 2012. We're discovering all kinds of fun facts in our research and wanted to share with you:

ORPHANAGE AND HOME FINDING SOCIETY, FREMONT, NEBRASKA

The Rev. P. Graef, second pastor of our church at Fremont, was the founder of this orphanage. He described the origin of this institution to a friend as follows: "Childless ourselves, we were hardly half a year at Fremont when two requests came to us urging us to adopt orphans, and at the same time a letter was received from a pastor, a widower, asking us in case of his death to provide for, and bring up, his two little daughters for Christ's sake. After considering the matter for some time, I finally came to the decision to establish a Lutheran orphanage at Fremont. I laid my plans before my congregation on March 7, 1892. They decided to support them and offered a sum of money for this purpose."

If you adopted or are an adoptee of LFS, we would love to hear from you as part of our planning for our 2012 celebrations. Please contact Kelli at (402) 591-5063 or at development@LFSneb.org



New American citizens reciting the Pledge of Allegiance



The building where The Welcome Center is located

Navigating the Maze

Stories from The Welcome Center in Lexington

Rosita (*not her real name*) wanted to become an American citizen. Her first two attempts failed through no fault of her own.

First, a California notary filed Rosita's application, but didn't tell her about the citizenship exam she needed to take. On her second try, a Nebraska notary took Rosita's money, but never filed her application. It seems the third time truly was the charm. Rosita made her way to LFS' Welcome Center in Lexington and finally found the guidance she needed.

With support from The Welcome Center, Rosita studied diligently, even as she worked full-time at the Tyson Foods plant. Her Welcome Center counselor drove her to Omaha for her exam and was there when Rosita learned that she had earned her American citizenship.

The Welcome Center is a resource center where multiple community groups and faith-based ministries unite to provide spiritual, social, and economic support while building bridges across cultures to improve the quality of life for all people.

Calendar

October 30, 2010 10am-2pm

*Great Pumpkin Family Festival
Village Pointe (Omaha)*

November 4, 2010, 5:00pm-7:30pm

*Wicker & Wine Basket Auction for the Pottawattamie
County Center for Healthy Families
Mid-America Center, Council Bluffs*

December 2, 2010

*Grand Opening of Fremont Area Center for Healthy
Families, Fremont*

January, 2011

*Grand Opening of the North Omaha Center for Healthy
Families
30th & Lake, Omaha*

January 31, 2011

*At Ease Luncheon with Senator Bob Kerrey
Qwest Center, Omaha*

February 25, 2011

*Fandango Fundraiser
Champions Run, Omaha*



**Thursday, November 4, 2010
5 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Mid-America Center
Council Bluffs, Iowa**

Benefiting children & families served by the
Pottawattamie County Center for Healthy Families
(formerly the Building Families Boutique)

For more information, call (402) 978-5615 or email mfaubel@LFSneb.org

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- Email us at info@lfsneb.org.



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love for all people by providing
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that build and strengthen
individual, family and
community life.

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