

Lutheran Family Services
of Nebraska, Inc.

Connections

Summer 2011



The North Omaha Center
for Healthy Families Opens



Message from the CEO

Warm Summer Greetings!

Grounded in our mission, Lutheran Family Services (LFS) has responded for 119 years to ever-changing needs in our Nebraska communities.

Today we pray for our neighbors who have spent this summer coping with the impact of historic flooding. When the waters recede, the work of emotional recovery and physical rebuilding will begin. Already therapists from Lutheran Family Services have begun counseling those who have been traumatized by the destruction of the flood.

The personal stories in this issue of Connections reflect our LFS commitment to programs that make a difference...an impact! From parenting programs for teen fathers in North Omaha to a focused effort to find permanent homes for children in foster care, LFS is responding strategically to emerging community needs.

YOU are a part of our LFS response when you share your time, talents and treasures. Please know that I appreciate you and the important role you play in bringing this help and hope to people you will probably never meet!

Thank you for your support of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and for standing alongside your neighbor in need.

Ruth Henrichs, President & CEO



Col. David Sutherland

LFS' At EaseSM program gained national attention this spring for two major reasons: Colonel David Sutherland of the Joint Chiefs of Staff visited Omaha to learn how the community is supporting military families, and he classified At EaseSM as a community "best practice." Also, LFS CEO Ruth Henrichs participated in a national conference call with First Lady Michelle Obama under the new "Joining Forces" initiative.



JOINING FORCES



New Director of Community Services Named

Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska has welcomed attorney and educator Carol Cleaver to direct its growing Department of Community Services.

Carol oversees the LFS department which provides high-quality direct and supportive services for our newest community members—refugees, immigrants, secondary migrants, asylees and those impacted by human trafficking. With a staff that speaks at least 28 languages and dialects, these case-management programs guide citizen-hopefuls to self-sufficiency.

Carol says, "Joining Lutheran Family Services is the career opportunity of a lifetime, because it allows me to integrate my personal faith and desire to serve others. I look forward to working with the deeply committed professional staff and community partners to maintain the continuity of exceptional services Lutheran Family Services offers to the individuals, families and communities we serve."

Cleaver, a tri-lingual, second-generation immigrant, received her degrees from UNO and Creighton University School of Law. She is licensed to practice in three states and has experience in business, immigration, juvenile and family law. Cleaver is also a well-respected adjunct professor, most recently teaching at Creighton Law School and College of St. Mary.

Carol has a longstanding commitment to volunteerism and community service projects, including Justice for Our Neighbors, a volunteer-led immigration clinic. She is a member of many community, business and professional organizations.

“I’ve been where you are...”

The Power of Peer Recovery Support

Jay Minnick knows what it is to hit rock bottom. He’s been there. More than once.

He lost his wife and children. His home. His job. His freedom. Even going to prison twice wasn’t enough to keep him away from methamphetamines. Jay is the first one to tell you—he lied, cheated, stole, manipulated his family—whatever it took to feed his addiction.

His life finally turned around in 2004 when he entered into treatment in Lincoln, and then a halfway house in Kearney. There, he found a mentor—one person—who cared and understood. Jay’s mentor inspired him toward a career path that would allow him to use his experiences to help others. Jay started college in 2007 and has since earned his counseling certifications. He is now a Peer Recovery Support Specialist for Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska (LFS).

Jay remembers very well the first time he knew for sure he was in the right job. “A man came in to fill out his initial paperwork,” says Jay. “His hands were shaking from withdrawal. You could see the hopelessness in his eyes.” Jay gave the man his card and told him to call anytime if he just needed encouragement or someone to talk with. After the man completed his recovery, he made a point of coming back to Jay to say thanks—and to tell him just how much it meant to have someone who understood.

Zackery Stearns overcame similar challenges on his way to the LFS Peer Recovery Support team. He started using drugs at 13, eventually dropping out of school and spending the next 11 years in and out of trouble—treatments, institutions and incarcerations. Again, it was one person—Zack’s caseworker—who saw Zack’s potential to help others. “Now, I get to share with peers the hope of a

“It took one person for my whole life to change into what it is now.”

—Zackery Stearns

different way to live,” says Zack. “It took one person for my whole life to change into what it is now.” Zack says those who are struggling find comfort in his story. If he can do it, they believe they can too.

Not only do the peer recovery specialists provide encouragement and support from the perspective of someone who has “been there,” they can also advocate for the person.

Jay says that because of his recovery he has been able to build trust again with his family—and his recovery was the biggest gift he ever gave his mother, who died Thanksgiving of 2010. Says Jay, “I know my mother had forgiven me and was so proud of what I do now.”



Zackery Stearns



The Peer Recovery Support Specialist (PRSS) fulfills a unique role in the support and recovery from mental illness and substance abuse disorders. A PRSS is a person in recovery from a mental illness and/or substance abuse disorder, who has been trained to work with others on his/her individual road to recovery. This training incorporates the PRSS’s recovery experience as a means of inspiring hope in those they serve, as well as providing a positive role model to others.

Fandango

Hits a Home Run for Kids!

12th annual event raises over \$100,000 for foster care adoption!

For one February night, Champions Run Golf Club was all about baseball. No fancy duds in this dress code. This night was all about team jerseys and ball caps.

Fandango is an annual event that raises awareness and funding to find permanent homes for Nebraska's foster children. The theme this year was "Hit a Home Run for Kids."

Guests wore their favorite team gear and were greeted at the door with fresh popcorn and drinks. They had a lot to choose from during the silent auction of over 100 items – including a giant-sized director's chair, a mountain bike, and baskets full

of sports tickets, spa days and items for the home. A team of Children Services workers from Lutheran Family Services (LFS) manned a table of special dolls and other items used with children in therapy. Guests could also "buy" those items for donation.

Emcee John Oakey of KETV NewsWatch 7 told his story of being a foster parent, and Honorary Chair Amy Scott, along with her sons, told how the process of adoption had changed their lives. Following dinner, guests saw a video of Nebraska foster children telling what it is like to be moved from home-to-home and school-to-school (see article below). The live auction followed, with one lucky bidder taking home tickets

In Their Own Words

Special Video Tells Their Stories



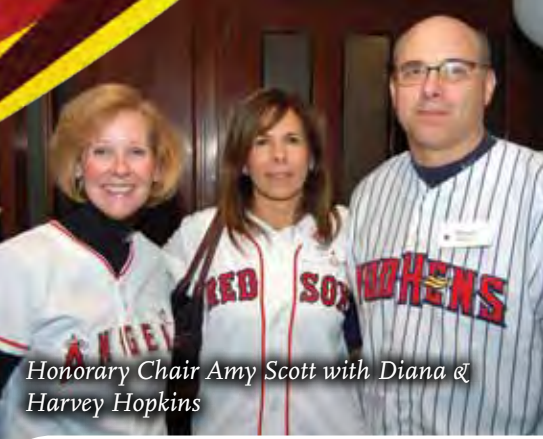
"Donte," in the Fandango video

During Fandango, guests heard from Nebraska children and teens who were recently adopted or are currently in foster care and hoping for a permanent home. Chavon talked about being in foster care since the age of nine, moving so often that she is a year behind in school. "I should be graduating this year," she said. "That's how it affected me the most." Chavon can't even remember how many foster homes she was in, but she's happy about the permanent guardianship she was granted. "I now have a place," the future military nurse says.

Donte is still hoping. He talked about how much he would like to play football, or really any sports, but there's no one to take him to practices. The 12-year-old says he believes everyone should have a loving, permanent home. He's still waiting for his.

*"I will love you for you
I will give you the love
The love that you never knew."*

—from "What Love Really Means" by JJ Heller



Honorary Chair Amy Scott with Diana & Harvey Hopkins



LFS President & CEO Ruth Henrichs, LFS Development Officer Cheryl Murray and Forever Families Guild President Teri Krohn



Jack Swanda with Joe & Gaye Lynn Schaffart (Chair, LFS Board of Directors)



Susan Pawloski, Christina Stolp, Mary Ellen Hurley & Christie Abdul

and a parking pass to the new TD Ameritrade stadium for the 2011 College World Series.

The event was organized by the Forever Families Guild, a committee of over 65 volunteer members. Teri Krohn is the Guild President.

The Event Chairs this year were Cindy Hartmann Tooher and Julie Geschwender, with Amy Scott and her sons as Honorary Chairs.

“We continue to be grateful for the ongoing support of the Omaha community and our terrific sponsors in helping make this year’s event another great success,” said co-chair, Cindy Hartmann Tooher. “This evening allows us to continue providing opportunities to build families through adoption, plus give hope to those children who are still waiting for loving and permanent homes.”



Fandango Emcee John Oakey



Dr. Joseph & Jean Stothert (Omaha City Council)



LFS President & CEO Ruth Henrichs, April & Kenny Rucker (LFS Board Member) and Dr. Thomas Tonniges (LFS Board Member)



Youth volunteers with Kim Lewis

Forever Families Guild

Volunteers are changing lives

Fandango and many other incredible LFS events would not be possible without the amazing volunteers who make up the Forever Families Guild. This group of 65 committed women are on a mission to impact the lives of thousands of children and families in our community. From Fandango, to Omaha’s Great Pumpkin and the North Omaha Center for Healthy Families, the Forever Families Guild is changing lives, one project at a time. If you’d like to learn more about guild membership, please contact Cheryl Murray at (402) 661-3138.



Forever Families Guild members Julie Geschwender (Fandango Co-Chair), Kim Lewis, Catherine Mahoney, Victoria Halgren, Nicole Payne and Anne Christiansen

North Omaha Center for Healthy Families

Community Applauds Grand Opening

It was standing room only during the Grand Opening of the North Omaha Center for Healthy Families on March 28. Hundreds of people walked through the new therapy rooms, playrooms and offices – and heard the excitement from the mayor and other community leaders.

“We believe this is going to solve some very serious problems,” says Ben Gray, Omaha City Councilmember, District 2.

Urban League Executive Director Tom Warren agreed, saying, “The investment in early childhood development will pay significant dividends.” Mayor Jim Suttle also praised the commitment of Lutheran Family Services to North Omaha.

Four-year-old Xavier Simmons and his mom helped dignitaries cut the ribbon for the new center. Xavier’s mom is a client in the Young Families Incentive Program, which rewards families for participating in healthy behaviors with their children.

As of June 2011, over 250 families are a part of LFS’ North Omaha Center for Healthy Families (NOCHF). **Eighty percent of these families include a pregnant or parenting teen.** Center services are generally offered at no cost thanks to the generosity of community partners, grantors and donors. The Centers provide support resources, including specialized therapies and peer support which lessen the sense of social isolation that can lead to child abuse and neglect.



According to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System for 2009, children younger than age four accounted for 81% of child abuse fatalities. Children in this age group are at an increased risk for abuse due to their dependency, small size and inability to defend themselves.

“Our ultimate goal is having healthy, well-adjusted children prepared for first grade,” says Justin Dougherty, Young Families Initiative Program Supervisor. “A child who has witnessed something traumatic, been neglected or worse – will have a more difficult time focusing and being engaged when it comes time to sit in a classroom. Our long-term vision is a reduction in abuse and truancy, which research clearly shows increases the chances of long-term success in school and life.”

The Center staff also includes a Fatherhood Specialist, who works specifically to help young fathers develop their parenting skills and increase their involvement in the lives of their children. And through partnership with Building Bright Futures, the Center provides support for young parents to complete their high school education. In fact, 46 teen parents graduated this May from five different high schools.

Clockwise from top left: Ed Cochran (Omaha Chamber of Commerce), Tom Warren (Urban League of Nebraska), Michelle Troxclair (Program Coordinator, North Omaha Center for Healthy Families), Ruth Henrichs (President & CEO, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska), Kenny Rocker (LFS Board of Directors), and Ben Gray (Omaha City Councilman, District 2) help Xavier & Rachelle Simmons cut the ribbon at the new North Omaha Center for Healthy Families.

The North Omaha Center for Healthy Families was made possible by of the generosity of our major donors:

**All Makes Office Equipment
Building Bright Futures, Early
Childhood Services
Deborah A. Macdonald Foundation
Douglas County
Howard & Rhonda Hawks
HDR, Inc.
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Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church
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United Way of the Midlands
Valmont Industries, Inc.**



Omaha Mayor Jim Suttle



Tom Warren (Executive Director,
Urban League of Nebraska)



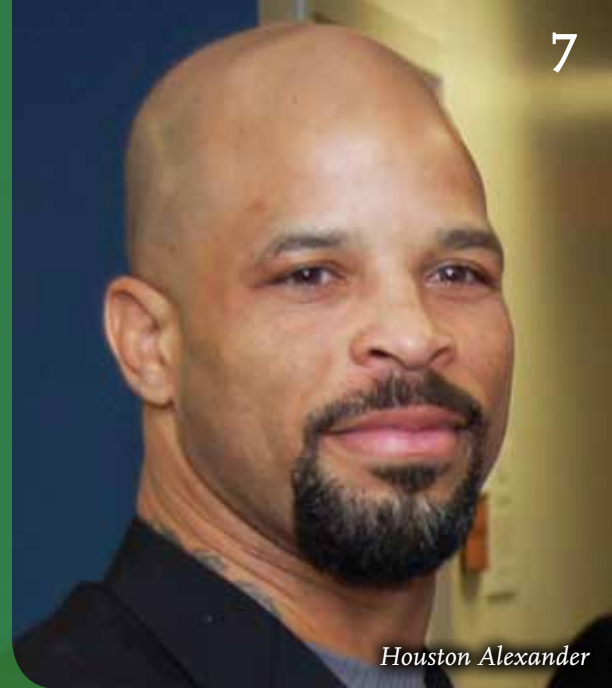
Building Bright Futures staff with
Michelle Troxclair



Amy Scott



Jerry Mathiasen (Senior VP,
Iowa West Foundation)



Houston Alexander

Meet Houston Alexander

Meet Houston Alexander, Fatherhood Specialist at Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. Houston, a single father of seven, knows first-hand the importance of fathers being engaged in the lives of their children. “I talk to kids about being a responsible father, educating them about child development,” says Houston.

Houston has been a popular radio personality in Omaha for the past ten years, as well as a successful mixed-martial arts fighter who still trains daily for upcoming bouts. In fact, some of his sons are now old enough to train with him – every morning, at the Butler-Gast YMCA, 6:00 am. His local celebrity gives him instant credibility with the teenagers he serves.

Houston is currently working directly with fifty young dads in the Young Family Incentives Program. He helps them understand the important role they play in the lives of their children. “Real men take care of their kids,” says Houston. “Helping these dads understand that will go a long way towards a better life for the children who are coming up.”

Programs & Services at the North Omaha Center

- Parenting classes
- Education and support groups
- Early childhood mental health therapy for children who have experienced trauma
- Intensive case management
- Peer mentors
- Groups and classes to promote the involvement of fathers in parenting and family life
- Specialized programming for pregnant or parenting teens, including programming to help them complete their high school educations (with the assistance of Building Bright Futures)
- A wellness-based incentive program for young parents to earn necessary baby and toddler items like diapers, formula, car seats and strollers



Diversion Program Graduate Off to College

Resilient Young Man Overcomes Odds

Calvin* signed into Lutheran Family Services' Western Nebraska Diversion Program with a "minor in possession of alcohol" violation when he was 19. LFS counselors quickly discovered that Calvin had aged out of foster care and was living with his best friend's family. His mother had died several years before. Not long after entering the program, his father, a McCook farmer, died unexpectedly.

Calvin was a high school senior already working two part-time jobs to pay his expenses. Now, he was also responsible for organizing the sale of his Dad's possessions, including all of the farming equipment.

After graduation, Calvin began working full-time for a local water well service. The auction was in June, and Calvin had a decision to make.

Should he stay – or should he go?

Calvin is currently a freshman at Southeast Community College. He stopped at the LFS office on his way out of town, excited to share his plans.

"I have been amazed at this young man's resilience and the ability to follow through with obstacles that were presented to him at a young age," says LFS Diversion Specialist Chris Berry. "He could have easily stayed in his comfort zone, continuing to just work and live in the area, but he knew he had to move forward to make a good life for himself. He is such a nice, polite, talkative young man."

Calvin admitted he was a little nervous about leaving McCook and going to college. But he aspires to a career in agriculture, and the college has just the programs he needs.

Berry assured Calvin he would find a supportive atmosphere at college, suggesting he contact his academic advisor or dorm director. Congratulations to Calvin for his courage and success!

**Not his real name*

The Grace Children's

Grace Hansen loves children. As a long time supporter of Lutheran Family Services (LFS) and Camp Carol Joy Holling in Ashland, she's made it very clear that she wants to help all children have a better life.

Enter the new, "Grace Hansen Children's Fund." The new fund was recently established with a \$50,000 gift from Grace to help neglected and abused children across Nebraska.

The new Grace Hansen Children's Fund will provide critical resources to help complement services for hundreds of neglected, abused and at-risk children.

New Opportunity

Washington has implemented an excellent charitable planning opportunity for IRA owners. You may take advantage of this new opportunity under these conditions:

- You are age 70 1/2 (or above)
- You have gifts up to \$100,000 which may be transferred (tax-free!) from an IRA by December 31, 2011
- If the gift transfers directly to a qualified public charity, like Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. Donor-advised funds, charitable remainder trusts or charitable gift annuities do not qualify.

Hansen Fund

The fund will allow for versatility and expediency when addressing unexpected programming needs, whether it's something simple like taking a foster child on a trip to Burger King, or as complex as providing therapeutic tools to children who have been victims of sexual violence.

In 2010, LFS programs served more than 3,900 children under the age of 18. The Grace Hansen Children's Fund will help sustain these services and greatly increase the number LFS can serve.

Thank you, Grace, for your heart for children.

If you would like to contribute to the



Grace Hansen

Grace Hansen Children's Fund, please contact Kelli at development@LFSneb.org or call (402) 591-5063.

ities for Giving

- If the gift does not create benefits back to the donor
- To use your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), or a portion of the annual RMD.

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, but hold assets outside of an IRA or Roth-IRA, you will need to convert your current assets to a rollover IRA first. This direct tax-free transfer of IRA assets to LFS will not increase your adjusted gross income for your 2011 federal income tax purposes.

For more information contact Mike Jones, Director of Major Gifts, at (402) 978-5612.



Lisa Ellis from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans' Lutheran Engagement Team, presented an \$800 check to CEO Ruth Henrichs in Fremont. The funds bought supplies for an educational and first-aid kit project for families served at the Centers for Healthy Families.

Did you know?

Federal employees can support Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, CFC #47038 in the 2011 United Way Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

CFC is a great opportunity to support LFS projects through pre-tax payroll deductions. Please ask your friends and family who are federal employees to support human care - consider Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, #47038, when making United Way CFC choices!



PRO TIPS | GREAT PRODUCTS | CHEAP TREATS | TOP TOOLS

Beauty

Call your friends over and spruce up your looks for spring!

The Makeup Party

CELEBRITY MAKEUP ARTIST ASHUNTA SHERIFF SCHOOLS US ON THE KEYS TO CREATING OUR OWN FLAWLESS FACE. GRAB YOUR GIRLS AND TRY OUT SOME OF HER TIPS

BY CORYNN E. CORBETT | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN

A "Model" Refugee Story



Courtesy Essence Magazine

Nyamuoch Jock, (AKA Nimoy Girwath) is obviously a beautiful young woman. Just look at her recent photo spread in the May 2011 issue of *Essence* magazine! Nimoy is also a Sudanese refugee and part of the LFS family. She was on our Community Services team as an AmeriCorps member from 2009-2010. She also served as the Secretary of the Omaha Refugee Task Force last year.

Nimoy's career took off when she won a modeling competition in Omaha. She flew to New York and now works for the prestigious Wilhelmina Agency.

Nimoy recently returned to Omaha for her naturalization ceremony. She celebrated her new U.S. citizenship with her family and LFS friends.



LFS to Celebrate 120th Anniversary

Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska is in the midst of planning for our 120th anniversary celebration next year. We're enjoying the research into our history and want to share some of it with you.

1920s to 1960s

"Some work of love begun, some deed of kindness done..."

—Rev. G.W. Wolter, 1942

By the 1920s, the Immanuel Children's Home and Lutheran Children's Home were firmly established, providing care for orphaned children. The directors of each facility realized that in addition to providing care and finding permanent homes for orphaned youth, there was a growing need to expand services to also help families experiencing difficult times. Over the next 40 years, several important steps were taken, shaping the future of what Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska was to become. Among these important steps:

1934 – The Immanuel Children's Home staff decided that even though their children were receiving the finest institutional care available, there was just no substitute for a more structured home atmosphere for the children. Immanuel launched a foster parent program, requiring high standards of care before a child would be placed.

1943 – The director of the Lutheran Children's Home realized that while the care and adoption of orphaned children was still their major role, social casework services to families undergoing times of crisis should also be provided. The result was a family social work service program. A year later, the office headquarters moved from Fremont to Omaha, where more resources were available.

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

Support Across Nebraska!



Eugene & Melba Glock of Rising City, NE. The Glocks donated 50 bushels of grain and have encouraged other farmers to do the same. Eugene is a former member of the LFS Board of Directors.



Dave & Debbie (Huebner) Knight of Keystone, NE are beef farmers. They have donated sides of beef for many years for auction at the Wicker & Wine Basket Auction. Dave is also a cowboy poet, and Debbie is a nurse.



Bethel Lutheran Church Care Committee of Holdrege, NE. The Care Committee at Bethel held a 'baby shower' for our three Centers for Healthy Families. Thank you for the many diapers, sleepers, blankets and other items to help our young families!



"Saved to Serve" Women of the ELCA at the Rupert Dunklau Center for Healthy Families. This amazing group of Lutheran women from across Nebraska collected hundreds of baby and toddler items for the three Centers for Healthy Families, and delivered them to LFS during the ELCA Synod Assembly in Fremont.

Calendar

July 29—**LFS Night at the Storm Chasers**
Werner Park, Omaha

September 17—**LFS Adoption Picnic**
Camp Carol Joy Holling,
Ashland

September 17—**LFS at the Farmer's Market**
Old Market, Omaha

Tuesday, September 20—**Faith in Action Dinner Honoring Dr. Tom & Nancy Osborne**
Embassy Suites, LaVista

Sept. 30-Oct. 2—**NE Synod ELCA Mission Field Trip**
The Welcome Center,
Lexington

October 3-4—**Omaha's Great Pumpkin tree on display**
Village Pointe, Omaha

October 9—**LFS at the Farmer's Market**
Aksarben Village, Omaha

October 27—**Wicker & Wine - An event to support the Pottawattamie County Center for Healthy Families**
Mid-America Center,
Council Bluffs

October 29—**Omaha's Great Pumpkin Carving & Lighting Ceremony**
Village Pointe, Omaha

November—**National Adoption Month**

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Basket Auction

Thursday, October 27, 2011
5 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Mid-America Center
Council Bluffs, Iowa

Honorary Chairs: Marie & Mike Knedler

An event to support the
Pottawattamie County Center for Healthy Families

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

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Connections

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Our Mission: To express God's
love for all people by providing
quality human care services
that build and strengthen
individual, family and
community life.

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