

 Lutheran Family Services
of Nebraska, Inc.

Connections

Winter 2017-2018

125
years



Message from the President & CEO

“We are not called to be comfortable, but faithful!”

As I enter my final months of service at Lutheran Family Services (LFS), I am reminded of how powerful those words have been throughout LFS history. What began as two orphanages has grown into a major human care organization that serves children, youth, families, adults, refugees, immigrants and persons struggling with mental health and substance use problems. From orphans to veterans to children who have been sexually abused, LFS has served for 125 years with moral courage and integrity.

I want to personally thank each and every one of you for helping LFS celebrate our 125th anniversary during 2017. I pray and trust that you will continue your passion for our work, beginning with a warm Nebraska welcome to a new CEO in 2018. Much has been accomplished during my time at LFS. And much remains to be done in this next century of service as LFS continues to stand with all God’s people in their quest for safety, hope and well-being!

“May those who come behind us find us faithful!”

Ruth Henrichs, President & CEO



By Michael Kelly, Omaha World-Herald. Photo by Sarah Hoffman. Copyrighted material reprinted with permission. Edited for space.

LFS marks 125 years of helping ‘the poor, the rich, the lost and the lonely’

Celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2017, Lutheran Family Services (LFS) traces its founding to orphanages in Fremont and Omaha. The orphanages are gone, but the not-for-profit agency today operates an array of services on a budget of \$25 million and cares for “the poor, the rich, the lost and the lonely — all people.”

No “Lutheran ID cards” required, if there were such a thing. LFS welcomes people of any or no faith.

A client named Connie, 44, who spent seven months in a homeless shelter and suffered from depression, had never heard of LFS.

But the Stephen Center shelter suggested that she contact the agency, which led to therapy sessions that proved more than helpful.

LFS, she said, “gave me my life back.”

Today she takes buses to a hospital housekeeping job, which she hopes is just “a foot in the door” to something better. She has two grown children, one a student at Creighton University, and feels that her future is bright.

Hers is the kind of story that heartens Ruth Henrichs, who will retire as president and CEO in early 2018 after 41 years at Lutheran Family Services, including 33 years as its leader.

“It’s a tough job, but rewarding,” Henrichs said. “There’s drama and there’s trauma.”

But staffers do much good work that helps people and, she says, makes her smile each day.

“It could be a child sexually abused at age 4 or 5 who has come through our RSafe® (therapy) program,” Henrichs said, “or a veteran coming home after a fifth or sixth deployment. Or someone who has spent years in a refugee camp. We help people one by one.”

Lutheran Family Services serves thousands each year — with an emphasis on the word “family.”

In 1892, Pastor Peter Graef founded the Lutheran Children’s Home orphanage in Fremont. Pastor E.A. Fogelstrom later founded the Immanuel Children’s Home in Omaha.

At both places in the 1940s, LFS began to offer “whole family support, adoption care and foster-care programming.”

The first refugee settlement program began in Omaha in the 1960s. In 1984, the agency adopted the name Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska Inc.

Before that, in 1976, a former “farm girl” from Scribner, Nebraska, had arrived as a social worker in the pregnancy counseling and adoption programs. When she was named executive director in 1985, Ruth Henrichs had a staff of 25 and a budget of \$850,000.

Now the staff numbers 365, with

operations in Bellevue, Blair, Council Bluffs, Fremont, Grand Island, Lexington, Lincoln, McCook, North Platte and Omaha.

In the mid-’80s, LFS began treatment programs for substance abuse and outpatient mental health. Later programs included crisis response and an expanded program for veterans, called At Ease.

Nearly four-fifths of the people served have annual incomes of under \$20,000. LFS staffers collectively speak 34 languages and dialects.

Of the \$25 million operating budget, almost half comes from program-service fees, a fourth from government grants and contracts and about 20 percent from contributions and private foundations.

Offices are at 24th and Dodge Streets, and Henrichs said plans are to raze them and build anew. Specifics have not been announced.

A search committee has begun looking for a successor to Henrichs, a former board chair of Lutheran Services in America.

She predicted that the agency will continue to grow and to “address old problems in new ways.”

That may include more use of technology, including “telehealth” services to reach rural areas.

Though the agency helps people of all faiths, a majority of those served are non-Lutherans. But on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, she said Lutheran Family Services remains true to its faith-based beginnings.

“We’re grounded in our understanding of the gospel, the care of neighbors and what justice means to us,” she said. “It gives us moral courage.”

Lutheran Family Services, she said, also cooperates with agencies and people of other faiths, “our ecumenical partners.”

Helping people day by day in a wide range of services, Henrichs said, is why staffers love going to work each day.

From refugees to the homeless to the imprisoned to children, she said, “We want safety, hope and well-being for all people.”

Citing an example, she said: “If a child who was abused can be safe and have hope and go to sleep at night with a sense of well-being, that is a good day.” ■

Connections

President & CEO
Ruth Henrichs

VP of Development
Ruth Henneman

Director of
Public Relations
Kathy O’Hara Brehm

Creative Design Manager
Jeff Jensen

Articles, unless copyrighted by a source other than LFS, may be reprinted with the following statement: “Reproduction courtesy of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Inc.”

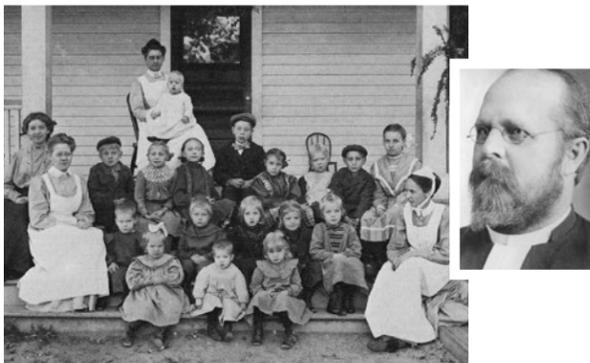
We welcome your feedback at (402) 591-5063 or email info@LFSneb.org

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.



Connections is published by Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, 124 South 24th Street, Suite 230, Omaha, NE 68102.

LFS: 125 Years of Expressing God's Love for ALL People



Late 1800s

Pastor Peter Graef, Trinity Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod - Nebraska District began a mission of love and care for orphaned children in Fremont. The [Lutheran Children's Home](#) started from that act of kindness. [Pastor Erik Fogelstrom and Immanuel Lutheran Church](#) in Omaha converted a room in the church basement to care for four orphaned children. Four years later, [the Immanuel Deaconess Institute opened an orphanage on its campus](#). These two orphanages, one in Fremont and one in Omaha, were the beginnings of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska.



1940s

In Fremont and Omaha, LFS began to offer whole family support, [adoption](#) and foster care programming.



1960s & 1970s

Efforts in Fremont and Omaha combined with a shared office space at the Omaha Church Center. The first [refugee resettlement program](#) began in Omaha. In 1978, the North Platte office was opened.



1980s

In 1985, the name Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Inc. was adopted, and [Ruth Henrichs](#) was named President & CEO. LFS began treatment programs for substance abuse and outpatient mental health. LFS responded to emerging community needs by opening a counseling office in North Omaha, offering counseling for those affected by the farm crisis, starting the RSafe® sexual abuse treatment program, and offering HIV/AIDS counseling.



1990s

The [Omaha Church Center](#) was purchased as the corporate headquarters and downtown Omaha counseling center and was renamed "The Dunklau Building." LFS raised over \$5 million through the "Share the Hope" capital campaign, and received its first accreditation by the Council on Accreditation.

2010s

In 2010, a crisis response program started in three Nebraska counties, and LFS expanded care for veterans through the At Ease program. In 2012, LFS completed purchase of the entire city block at 24th & Dodge in Omaha. In 2016, LFS became the lead organization for [Health 360 integrated care in Lincoln, opening a 23rd & O Street campus](#). This year, LFS will provide [mental health services in Omaha at 26th & Douglas Street](#) at Kountze Commons.



▲ Photo courtesy Mark Davis/Omaha World-Herald

2000s

In 2007, the [Rupert Dunklau Center for Healthy Families® in Fremont](#) opened on the site of the original orphanage that opened in 1892. That same year marked the opening of the [International Center of the Heartland](#), a partnership between LFS and United Way of the Midlands.



Faith in Action®

A celebration of people & programs furthering the LFS vision of safety, hope and well-being for all God's people



Donna & Coyner Smith accepting the 2017 Douglas E. Parrott Faith in Action® Award



Greg & Nancy Thrasher, Trinity Award recipients



Linda & Terry McClain, Immanuel Award recipients

On September 23, 2017, the Faith in Action® event proudly celebrated 125 years of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska providing quality human care services. The LFS mission of “expressing God's love for all people” has impact across the state of Nebraska and Southwest Iowa.

850 people attended Faith in Action® – the event’s largest turnout by far! Special guests included President of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service Linda Hartke, and Mrs. Universal Amanda Reinert – a strong advocate for LFS child sexual abuse treatment programs.

The crowd listened attentively as keynote speaker Steve Pemberton, Walgreens Chief Diversity Officer and bestselling author of “A Chance in the World,” told his emotional story of growing up as a foster youth. His message of hope and courage in the face of adversity

is an example of the power a single person can wield with a kind gesture. Pemberton reminded all those present to seize every opportunity to be change agents for children within their communities.

LFS is grateful to the Faith in Action® honorees. Their generosity and dedication to LFS is truly awe-inspiring:

- **Donna & Coyner Smith** received the Douglas E. Parrott Faith in Action® Award for a lifetime of humble commitment to “welcome the stranger” and their faith-filled generosity of time, talent and treasure.
- **Greg & Nancy Thrasher** received the Trinity Award for extraordinary generosity and faith-filled servant leadership to serve “the least of these.”

- **Linda & Terry McClain** received the Immanuel Award for their generous hearts and visionary leadership in support of safety, hope and well-being for all God’s children.

Not only was 2017 the 125th anniversary of LFS, but it was also the year when President & CEO Ruth Henrichs announced her retirement after 41 years at LFS, 33 as President & CEO. Her impact on LFS’ quality human care is evident across the footprint of the entire organization. ■



Keynote speaker Steve Pemberton



Honorary Chairs Jan & Dr. John Christensen and Drs. Martha & Bob Bruckner



LFS President & CEO Ruth Henrichs with Emcee Trev Alberts



On November 3, 2017, 410 people attended the first annual LFS Rally for Kids tailgate fundraiser and auction. Rally for Kids, formerly known as Wicker & Wine® and Fandango®, was a fun-filled, sports-themed event that raised awareness and nearly \$169,000 for LFS children services programs in Nebraska and Pottawattamie County, Iowa. The evening featured UNO Vice Chancellor of Athletics Trev Alberts as emcee and guest speaker. Alberts got the crowd energized for the evening's program, which featured remarks by Honorary Chairs Drs. Bob & Martha Bruckner and Dr. John & Jan Christensen, and LFS President & CEO Ruth Henrichs. The "All Stars" sponsors were Lockwood Development and The Dr. Thomas & Jane Tonniges Family.

This event was particularly special, because it was the last LFS event that Henrichs would preside over as President & CEO. Henrichs reflected on her tenure at LFS: "It has been my honor to work for LFS for 41 years; 33 of those as President & CEO. I'm proud of the work we all do together – sponsors, donors, volunteers and staff – to provide much-needed support for programs on both sides of the Missouri River." ■

◀ Barb Walsh, Council Bluffs Mayor Matt Walsh, and Pat & Jennifer Hensley



Fremont Family Friends

Celebrating 10 Years of Early Intervention & Prevention Programs for Children & Families

◀ Emcees Terry & Linda McClain



Marvin Welstead (center) with Event Chairs Paul & Liz Johnson



Honorary Chair Ruth Dunklau



At the Fremont Family Friends event on June 13, 2017, members of the Fremont community came together to celebrate two milestones: the 125th anniversary of LFS and ten years of early intervention and prevention for children and families at the Rupert Dunklau Center for Healthy Families®.

Ruth Dunklau was the Honorary Chair, and the event was hosted by Event Chairs Paul & Liz Johnson. With participation by 300 guests, the event raised a record-breaking \$142,000.

Emcees Terry & Linda McClain noted that 126 Fremont families, including 274 babies and preschoolers, received compassionate services at the Rupert Dunklau Center for Healthy Families® in 2016.

LFS President & CEO Ruth Henrichs recognized Cori Hoffman as the Rupert Dunklau Center "Volunteer of the Year" for three years of dedicated service, as she tracked immunizations of the center's young children. Henrichs shared the description that Cori's daughter, Kari Ritter, offered of her mother: "She loves, encourages, cares for, worries about and prays that her kids' and grandkids' lives are happy and full...What makes her unique and more than worthy of this honor is that she wants the same goodness for yours and for all kids."

Henrichs recognized three special guests in attendance who were adopted in the mid-1900s from the Lutheran Children's Home in Fremont: Max Borgmeyer, Ronald Rathke and Lynn Moeller. She also thanked the many great Fremont-area organizations that offer their partnership and collaboration in serving members of the local community.

Auctioneer Jay Nitz charged up the crowd to bid generously on many great live auction packages including tickets to a Paul McCartney concert, a full side of beef raised in western Nebraska, and a 20-foot tall flagpole made by Valmont, the event's presenting sponsor. ■

◀ Auctioneer Jay Nitz (2nd from right) tries coaxing a bid from John Sajevic. Also pictured: Lori Sajevic & Blake Dillon.



New Community Collaborations at Kountze Commons

Kountze Commons, located on 26th and Douglas in Omaha, is the newest LFS behavioral health location. Opening in October, it is a collaborative effort between Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church, LFS and Methodist Health System. This LFS location includes eight licensed behavioral health therapists providing on-site individual and family therapy, trauma-focused/informed care, and post-crisis response services to an estimated 1,000 clients each year.

Kountze Commons began as an initiative to expand two key missions of Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church: the Food Pantry and the Healing Gift Free Clinic. The pantry provides food, household supplies and toiletries to those in need, and served more than 19,000 people annually in 2014 and 2015. The clinic provides medical services and medications at no cost. Staffed entirely by volunteers, the Free Clinic reported 1,863 patient visits and filled 12,056 prescriptions in 2016.

Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church, Methodist Community Health Clinic and LFS are also on the path to eventually deliver integrated services and provide "holistic" care addressing the needs of the mind, body and soul. ■



▲ Ribbon cutting on October 6, 2017. (l-r) Josie Abboud (Executive VP & COO of Methodist Health System), Pastor Olaf Roynesdal (Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church), Ruth Henrichs (President & CEO of LFS), Pastor Inba Inbarasu (Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church), and Paula Kitt (Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA). Photo courtesy of Methodist Health System.



Susan Lewis (Chair, LFS Board of Directors) with LFS staff Lacey Studnicka, Ruth Henrichs, Lori Garabrandt and Emily Sutton

LFS Receives \$35,000 Women's Fund Grant

LFS is the proud recipient of a 2017 "Be the Change" grant from the Women's Fund of Omaha. Funds will go to the LFS International Center of the Heartland, which provides quality human care services to refugees, asylees, secondary migrants and victims of international human trafficking. LFS thanks the Women's Fund for supporting these vital programs! ■

Family's Story Intertwined with LFS History

It was a trip of 370 miles from Joplin, Missouri, three months by horse and wagon, through snow and sleet, over dirt trails, passing only tiny villages along the way.

Oren Wolf, father of three boys, had just lost his beloved wife, Mary, to illness. For a few months after she died, he had continued his work as a laborer in Missouri mines. It was grueling and dangerous. The hours were long, and with three children in his care it was a struggle to manage alone. After several months, he made a very difficult decision.

With that horse and wagon, he pushed north with his three young sons to find a Lutheran orphanage in Fremont, Nebraska. He'd heard about it from an acquaintance who told him about a home that took care of children, educated them and placed them with good families. Oren saw that as the best hope for 8-year-old Carl, 4-year-old Barry and William, age 2.

More than 100 years after that journey, Oren Wolf's grandchildren finally learned of their family's story. It is one forever linked to the history of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and one that speaks to the faith of a church and the value of offering a lifeline to a family in crisis.

The Wolf children spent about six years at the Lutheran Children's Home orphanage in Fremont before each was placed with separate families in the area. **"It had to be rough," said Dennis Wolf, the youngest son of William, "to start with a new family, all without their parents."**

The orphanage was crowded, but the brothers received an education there and learned to work the land. When William was eight years old, a family from Utica, Nebraska decided to take him home to live with his four new sisters. His new parents made sure he was baptized, confirmed and continued his education.



◀ Delmer & Dennis Wolf circa 2014, sons of William Wolf and grandsons of Oren and Mary Wolf



▲ Circa 1898: (l-r) Oren Wolf next to horse at left, Mary holding William, with Carl & Barry in front. Unknown women (at right).

Barry, the middle son, was taken in by a family in Randolph, Nebraska. After serving in World War II, he moved to the Pacific Northwest and later came back to Nebraska. Barry married but had no children and led a private life.

The oldest brother, Carl, is the one who provided the family's history to William's sons. He had become a member of the Strangaener family from Arlington, Nebraska. He had been baptized at the Fremont orphanage, and church was a powerful force in his life. He graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary in Illinois and was ordained at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Arlington. Carl served as a missionary in Argentina and loved to regale the Wolf family grandkids about traveling the jungle on horseback to spread God's word. Carl also made sure the brothers stayed in touch – and he focused on keeping their story alive for future generations of the family.

When the orphanage in Fremont eventually merged with Immanuel Deaconess Institute in Omaha, Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, as it's now known, committed itself to express God's love for all people through quality human care services that build and strengthen individual, family and community life. The Wolf family's story represents the roots of professional and compassionate care that continues today at LFS. ■





▲ The Mexican Dance Academy of Nebraska performed at the 4th annual New American Arts Festival on Friday, Aug. 4, 2017, in Omaha's Benson neighborhood. The festival was a collaboration between Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and Benson First Fridays that celebrated the artistic contributions of local refugees and immigrants. Photo: Alex Matzke/New American Voice.

Clinic Helps Refugees Toward Residency

This past summer, over 200 refugees and their families took the next step to becoming U.S. citizens at a free clinic for establishing legal permanent residency. The clinic was organized by Jeremy Roose, LFS immigration attorney and program manager, and saved clients over \$200,000 in legal expenses.

Ahmad Shah attended the clinic. Before coming to the U.S., he spent 3 ½ years in an Indonesian refugee camp. Ahmad is looking forward to achieving permanent residency so he can bring his wife and four children to the U.S. He has not seen them in nearly four years.

Despite the long separation, Shah smiled and joked his way through the eighteen-page form. "It's a need for me," he said. "I have to be happy. I need to be an American."

For refugees, having permanent resident status means stability and longevity. Five years after being granted legal permanent residency, refugees are eligible to apply for citizenship.

The clinic, the first of its kind for LFS, was run by volunteer attorneys and community partners from LFS, Refugee Empowerment Center, Justice for Our Neighbors, American Immigration Lawyers Association and Augustana Lutheran Church. Due to its success, Roose is hoping to host a similar event in the spring. ■



▲ LFS AmeriCorps VISTA member Leemah Nasrati helps Ahmad Shah complete his green card application at the legal clinic

Thrivent Helps Families Thrive During 125th Year

To recognize the 125th anniversary of LFS and shared roots, more than 180 people attended LFS "Helping Families Thrive" luncheons in Lincoln, Council Bluffs and Omaha in 2017. The luncheons informed Thrivent Financial members how they could use Thrivent Financial tools to support LFS programs that secure the safety, hope and well-being of children, individuals and families. Speakers included: Mrs. Universal Amanda Reinert, who advocates for the LFS RSafe® program which provides child sexual abuse counseling; Refugee Izdihar Murad, who resettled in Lincoln with LFS support; and LFS President & CEO Ruth Henrichs, who shared her experience as a Thrivent member and her service on Nebraska's first Thrivent Member Network Board.

An impressive 87 people from these luncheons stepped forward to volunteer as LFS Ambassadors, people who help LFS educate, engage and enlist support from passionate people and organizations. Thanks to Thrivent members and other caring people, LFS exceeded its goal of recruiting 125 ambassadors during the organization's 125th anniversary year. ■



▲ LFS is grateful to Thrivent Financial for their \$10,000 Regional Board grant, presented by the Thrivent Member Network - Nebraska Region

Welcome to Our Newest LFS Board Members



Teresa Anderson
of Hastings, NE is Director of the Central District Health Department in Grand Island which represents 78,000 people in central Nebraska.



Rafael Maldonado III
of Papillion, NE is the Talent Acquisition Manager for Omaha Steaks where he directs company-wide recruiting activities for all positions.



Rosemary Ohles
of Lincoln, NE is a community volunteer with experience in banking and finance. She has a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Melbourne, Australia.

LFS Snapshots

▶ To commemorate the 125th year, LFS was spotlighted at the July 13 Lincoln Saltdogs game at Haymarket Park. Thrivent Financial members donated 175 hygiene kits for LFS Lincoln clients.



▲ This summer's solar eclipse set the stage for a joyful celebration at Lincoln's Sheridan Lutheran Church, where members and neighbors gathered in the parking lot for the August 21 celestial show. Free-will donations for the food and fun totaled \$656, which the church donated to LFS.



▲ In this 500th anniversary year of the Protestant Reformation, Catholics and Lutherans held joint prayer services at both St. Cecilia Cathedral and Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church in Omaha as demonstrations of ecumenical unity.

▶ Bishop Brian Maas (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Nebraska Synod) and President Richard Snow (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Nebraska District) reading the opening litany at the 2017 Faith in Action dinner.



▲ Sue Walker's family was among four groups from Omaha's Rejoice! Lutheran Church who kindly donated Christmas toys for children who are LFS clients. Donors and friends of LFS are critical to its vision of providing safety, hope and wellbeing for all.



▲ Members of the International Quilt Study Center & Museum visited the LFS Lincoln office to deliver 58 quilts and blankets for clients. Thank you to everyone who made and contributed these!



▲ LFS is grateful for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska awarding the LFS At Ease program in Grand Island a \$10,000 grant supporting critical trauma treatment and peer support services for active duty military, veterans and their loved ones!



Jim Hegarty, BBB President & CEO, with Ruth Henrichs & Todd Reckling from LFS

"Safety, Hope and Well-Being for All People"

124 South 24th Street, Suite 230
 Omaha, NE 68102

LFS Earns 2017 BBB Integrity Award

For the second time in four years, LFS has earned an Integrity Award from the Better Business Bureau that serves Nebraska, South Dakota, the Kansas Plains and Southwest Iowa.

The BBB Awards focus on organizations that demonstrate ethical business practices with key stakeholders including customers, employees and community at large. Winners were chosen by an independent panel of judges. ■

Fuel the Hope



Donate



Cash Gifts



Requests or Estate Gifts



Gifts of Stock



Employer Matching Gifts



Gifts of Grain

Call (402) 591-5063, email development@LFSneb.org, or donate at LFSneb.org

Engage



LFSNEB



@LFSNEB



info@LFSneb.org



LFSNEB



LFSNEB

Act



Organize your colleagues or congregation to support a refugee family



Mentor a child aging out of foster care or a refugee



Donate new items for children under five

Call (402) 978-5665 or email volunteer@LFSneb.org

Automatic Support



smile.amazon.com



bakersplus.com/communityrewards



thrivent.com/choice

Sign up with our giving partners to automatically donate a percentage of your purchases or investments to LFS at no cost to you!