

SUMMER 2020

# *M*<sup>the</sup>*essenger*

A Quarterly Publication of Lutheran Social Services of Western Ohio



## THE RENT IS STILL DUE

**Many families remain at risk of eviction and homelessness when the state's eviction moratorium expires.**



Poster by The Blue Ribbon Bulldogs 4-H Group



**The Messenger is published quarterly by the Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio.**

*Established 1911*

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**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

# LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE



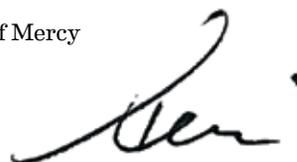
**TERRI RODRIGUEZ,**  
President & CEO

**AS OUR AGENCIES** begin to emerge from the turbulence of the past few months, we are blessed with the light of all those on our front lines who continue to battle the overwhelming effects-on so many levels-of COVID-19. Many of those served by our agencies are among the most vulnerable, with the pandemic threatening both their mental and physical health as well as their economic security.

Yet when threatened by darkness we seek the light. Coming together as never before in recent history, we see regulatory agencies, families, volunteers, donors and staff joining together in swift

response to become great agents of change. New safety guidelines were formulated...and reformulated as new information has been discovered. Many programs have been quickly and efficiently converted to virtual services. Donors have graciously reached out to fill the gaps as funding was reduced and expenses skyrocketed. Families and volunteers are there with acts of kindness and support when needed most. It's in this mission moment that we embrace hope and our collective action determines our future. A future where all we serve can find improved health and quality of life, and live with dignity and purpose. Now, more than ever before, our community needs the vital services of our Lutheran ministries. In these unprecedented times we are thankful for the many ways you have joined in this shared mission and "let your light shine!"

**Terri Rodriguez**  
President and C.E.O.  
Lutheran Ministries of Mercy



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# A DIFFERENT KIND OF GRADUATION

Jesup W. Scott High School held a graduation ceremony at the Stranahan Theater on June 3rd complete with diplomas, flowers and congratulations from family and school staff. But that's where the similarity to traditional school ceremonies ended.

**EACH FAMILY WAS** allowed one car for the drive thru graduation with no more than six people, including the graduate. Only the graduate was allowed to get out of the vehicle and be congratulated by Dr. Romules Durant, CEO & Superintendent of Toledo Public Schools, and the opportunity for a photo as they turned their tassel.

A virtual ceremony also streamed on YouTube along with speeches from Principal Dr. Carnell Smith, Dr. Durant and Wakeso Peterson, Valedictorian for the Class of 2020.

The school lawn was adorned with seniors' portraits. Along driveways around town, yard signs also highlighted the students' names. These are some of the ways Scott High School celebrated its graduates in a time when it could not have been done in person.

"The three tier graduation was an amazing experience for our community, staff, and most importantly our students. In a time of uncertainty, each graduate was provided a sense of normalcy and closure to the school year." said Joe Peterson, Hub Director.

This chapter all came to close on a year that began with an announcement from Philanthropist Pete Kadens saying he would pay tuition, room and board, books and fees for the seniors to go to college. He also offered to pay for their parents to go to college or trade school. Mr. Kadens also spoke at the virtual graduation wishing the students well and hoping they utilize his generous gift to them.



(Counter clockwise) Dr. Romules Durant presented diplomas to the Scott High School graduates. Photo Credit: JP Dynasty Photos, Valedictorian Wakeso Peterson receives lawn sign at his home to commemorate his graduation, The front lawn of the schools featured all the graduates photos in celebration of their commencement. Photo Credit: Amy E. Voigt.

REFLECTIONS ON GIVING

# LMM ANNUAL APPEAL

Lutheran Ministries of Mercy will kick-off the 2020 Together Toward Tomorrow Annual Campaign

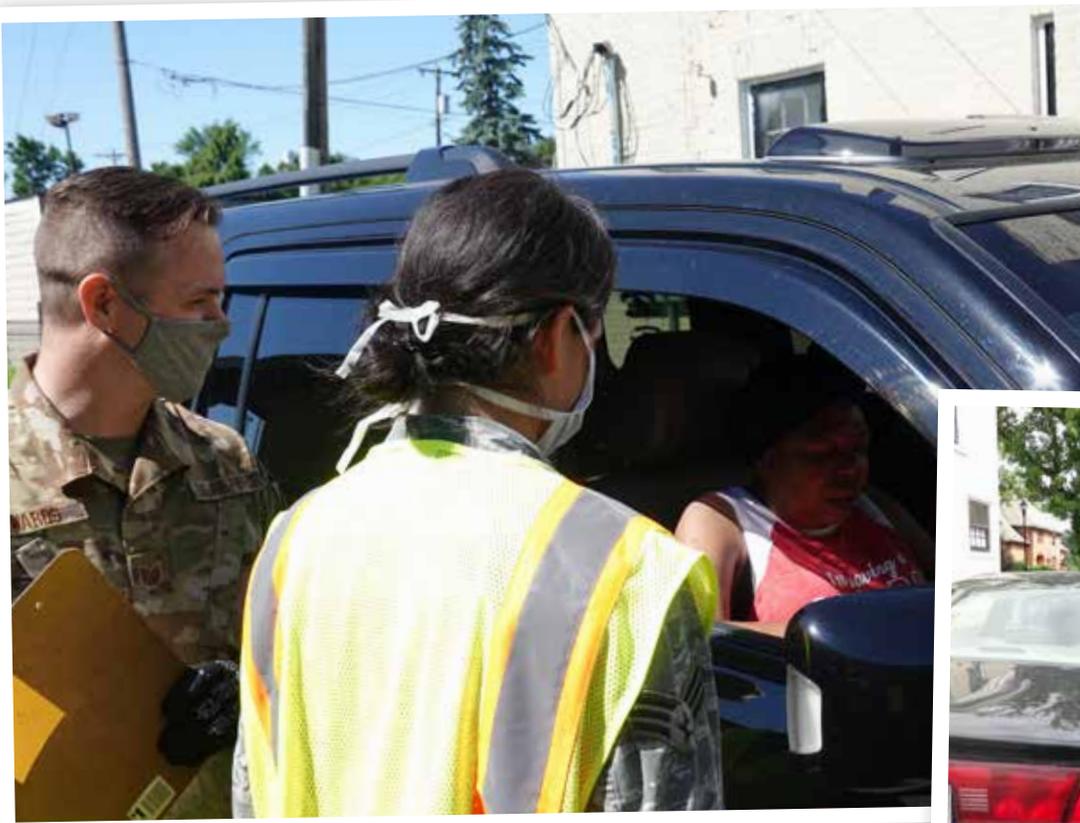
**THIS THREE AGENCY** appeal for Filling Homes, Luther Home of Mercy and Lutheran Social Services is our invitation for you to join us in our combined efforts as we develop programs and continue offering signature services that make a difference for those in our care.

While each of our affiliates is unique in how services are delivered, we know there is so much more that we can do together, because of our commitment to share resources and enhance lives. Special events and smaller campaigns will continue to take place throughout the year. However, our goal is to have this campaign serve as the foundation of our combined efforts.

A special appeal letter and envelope will be arriving to your home, or you are welcome to visit our website at [www.lssnwo.org](http://www.lssnwo.org) and make a secure gift online. If you would like to talk with us or set an in-person meeting, please call Jeanette, our campaign director at 419-972-4373. Thank you in advance for your continued prayers and support for our ministries.

Contact: Jeanette Hrovatich, Director of Planned Giving, 419-972-4373 | [jhrovatich@luthmin.org](mailto:jhrovatich@luthmin.org)





(Counter clockwise) Technical Sergeant Edwards, of the 180th Fighter Wing Ohio National Guard, checks in a car at the LSS drive thru food distribution, 2nd Lieutenant King places bags of food in the vehicle of a client, Senior Airman Snyder and Senior Airman Espino distributed food to those arriving without a vehicle, like Michael a long time client of the food pantry.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

# OHIO NATIONAL GUARD ANSWERS THE CALL FOR HELP

For nearly three months, about 500 Ohio National Guard members have been deployed to various food banks across the state to help with food packaging and delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**ONCE AGAIN**, hundreds of people from Toledo lined the parking lot to pick up food boxes prepared by Lutheran Social Services. Since March 20, the food pantry has been operating a no touch drive thru model to keep the community safe. The 180th Fighter Wing (Air Force) and the 148th Infantry Regiment (Army) of the Ohio National Guard have been helping to assist with food distribution due to a decrease in volunteer assistance.

“Food is one of the things I can’t imagine not having.” Joyce Willier, Food Pantry Coordinator said. “We are happy to be able to fill that need, especially to a lot of folks who might be furloughed or out of work because of the state of emergency we’re in.”

The increase in pantry clients comes as families

find their resources limited by economic setbacks amid the social slowdown designed to reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

“We have eggs, milk, cheese, some frozen meats and shelf-stable items: things like peanut butter, canned meat and soup,” Willier said. “We try to have a good variety in the boxes.” In addition, many companies have donated items such as personal needs products, socks, cookies and bread that are placed in the boxes as an added bonus.

The food pantry and the guardsmen have established an efficient system over the past 90 days, since Ohio’s governor deployed a group to help the agency. They keep the line moving so the wait is minimal and they place the boxes in the client’s vehicle to maintain social distancing.

“We couldn’t have done this without them,” Willier said. “We’re hoping they stay with us another month.” Joyce did receive confirmation that the guardsmen would assist through August. Plans are in place to open the choice food pantry located inside the Lutheran Social Services building to the public after their assignment is completed. Precautions will be taken to maintain social distancing, masks will be required and a limited numbers of clients will be allowed in at a time.



# FINANCIAL RELIEF AVAILABLE FOR RENTERS

Toledo residents who have been financially impacted by the coronavirus pandemic can apply for rental assistance. LSSNO was awarded \$1 million dollars for emergency relief from the City of Toledo.

**ON MAY 28,** Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz announced the creation of the City of Toledo COVID-19 Emergency Renter Assistance Fund (ERAF) during a virtual news conference. The city has partnered with Lutheran Social Services of Northwest Ohio and NeighborWorks to operate the program.

The CARES Act provides for a 120-day eviction moratorium for tenants. After the 120-day period has ended, landlords must issue a 30-day notice to the tenant, to vacate for non-payment of rent. This notice cannot be issued until July 25, 2020, meaning that evictions from covered properties cannot occur until August 24, 2020. Tenant advocates and landlords fear renters will be challenged once federal unemployment benefits expire in July and federal stimulus checks have been distributed. Renters will still need to pay their back-owed rent eventually, and for some, that amount is starting to add up. People who haven't been able to afford rent during the pandemic, which has prompted historically high levels of unemployment in Ohio, may face potential eviction soon. The rental assistance will help provide stable housing for the most vulnerable Toledo families during this crisis.

“COVID-19 has caused unprecedented job loss and income reduction to low- and moderate-income families in Toledo,” Mayor Kapszukiewicz said. “Inability to pay rent threatens housing stability for all tenants and the continued financial viability of Toledo’s affordable housing. To address this challenge, the city is dedicating \$1 million from the COVID-19 Community Development Block Grant funding and another \$1 million from the COVID-19 Emergency Solutions Grant funding to establish the City of Toledo COVID-19 Emergency Renter Assistance Fund. (ERAF)”

The ERAF will assist approximately 700 income-eligible households with three months maximum of emergency rental assistance (up to \$2,500), which will take the form of payments directly to landlords. LSS will aid approximately 340 of those clients with rental assistance. The payments may cover rent, past due rent, late fees, new renter fees, security deposits, utility deposits, and moving costs. Beneficiaries will be encouraged to meet with a financial opportunity center coach for financial management in the future.

*For more information on the program visit [www.lssno.org](http://www.lssno.org)*



(Counter clockwise) (left) Many apartment owners cannot bear the burden of delinquent rental payments and begin the eviction process. Evictions and housing instability leads many times to homelessness for families.



# MINISTRIES IN ACTION

In times like these, how you respond will have a lasting impact on others. We have risen to the occasion and adapted to continue to serve those in need. We will continue to work to provide relevant resources and services to those who turn to us.



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## 1) GROWING STEWARDSHIP

The Trust Company Family Offices organized a personal needs drive amongst their employees. The result was a van full of hygiene products that will be distributed at the Emergency Food Pantry in Toledo. Pictured: Maria Bailitz and Ann McCauley, CEO of the Trust Company Family Offices.

## 2) MANUFACTURING TRAINING

The fourth class of the Bridges to Career Opportunities (BCO) Manufacturing Class resumed training after a suspended break. The program is funded by CitiBank and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and offers a free eight week training to earn a Certification Production Technician (CPT) certificate.

# Grants

## THE TOLEDO EMERGENCY FOOD

Pantry has been awarded several grants to help support their operations. The Greater Toledo Community Foundation COVID-19 Response Fund and the United Way of Greater Toledo Emergency Response Fund awarded the food pantry a combined \$10,000 for food and personal needs items.

The Imagining Renewal Micro-grant from the Northwestern Ohio Synod, ECLA, helped fund the purchase of customized facial tissue boxes that highlight all the services of LSS while connecting food pantry clients with much needed services.

The City of Toledo Community Development Block Grant awarded over \$22,000 to the food pantry to hire a part time employee to assist with operations and reporting.

The Federal Emergency Food & Shelter Program Phase 37 awarded \$6,630 as well as an additional \$6,630 to combat the effects of COVID-19 under the recently passed CARES Act. The funds can only be used toward food and can be utilized through May 2021.

## DONOR RECOGNITION - MARCH 18-JUNE 19, 2020

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT

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## About LSS

Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio is here to provide Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Addiction Counseling with an array of other services. Assisting people within a 24 county area, LSS provides hope and compassion. With multiple service sites throughout Northwest Ohio, we serve all ages, faiths, races and economic status with professional and confidential services.

# Life.Support.

