

^{the} **Messenger**

A quarterly publication of Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio

SPRING 2024



2023: Year in Review



Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio
is an affiliate of Lutheran Ministries of Mercy



Lutheran Ministries of Mercy

Dear Friends, Families, and Supporters,

In the quiet, and not-so quiet corners of our LMM agencies, volunteers have, for decades, stepped forward to offer so much more than their hours. Not driven by paychecks but by purpose, volunteers have long-served as pillars of strength for our agencies. Their motivations are as diverse as the colors of the rainbow, yet they share a common purpose — to serve without expectation.

For some, it's a personal experience — a family member needing care, a neighbor without food, or a friend battling addiction. Others simply believe in the power of kindness. They see unmet needs ... their empathy fuels commitment ... and they step forward, ready to make a difference.

Every volunteer act carries a ripple effect. Their actions touch not only the immediate beneficiaries of this compassion, but also their families, friends and communities. A single act of kindness multiplies and their deeds reverberate far beyond what meets the eye.

Within our agencies we have been blessed by generations of volunteers who have passed the torch to others, each adding a chapter to our story. From those who stood with us when the first shovel of ground was turned to now the third and fourth generations blending tradition with innovation, they have formed an unbroken chain. This legacy is etched in the smiles of those we serve and the continued health of our agencies. Yesterday, today and tomorrow the spirit of volunteerism endures and we are thankful to all those who contribute their time-and their hearts, in service to others.

In gratitude,



Terri Rodriguez
President and CEO
Lutheran Ministries of Mercy

Upcoming LMM events

May 17: Stock the Shelves (Food Pantry collection) at Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio, Toledo office (11 a.m.-1 p.m.)

May 21: LMM Board of Directors Meeting

June 17-July 30:
Together Toward Tomorrow Summer Appeal: Filling Homes, Luther Home of Mercy, Lutheran Social Services



August 23: Luther Home of Mercy Golf Outing

Planned Giving Document Preparation

Having everything in one place always provides peace of mind for you---and your family. Spring is the perfect time to update and prepare. Here, we highlight a few documents that will help your loved ones have the details they need to be at peace and celebrate your life with love.

1. Last Will and Testament. Executor of Estate
2. List of Important documents and instructions.
 - Marriage License; Military Documents
 - Vehicle, Property titles or loan information
 - Investments (life insurance, IRA, etc.)
 - Bank accounts with named beneficiaries
3. Power of Attorney (ends upon death)
4. Health Care Directive and a HIPAA release so your family can receive your health information.
5. Statement of Desires. This letter from you would list items and passwords for things like social media, cloud storage, cell phone photos and more. These items are your property, and creating this list will be valuable information.

As always, consulting with a trusted financial planner or accountant would be helpful.



Lutheran Ministries of Mercy, founded in 2013 in partnership with Filling Homes, Luther Home of Mercy, and Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio, continues to find new ways to meet the demands of our clients and residents. Administrative services, information technology, and planned giving services are combined, shared and designed. Together, our organizations impacted 31,874 lives during 2023 and we look forward to working together in the years ahead.

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

Established 1911

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Findlay 419-422-7971
Fremont 419-334-3431
Tiffin 567-220-6495
Toledo 419-243-9178

Administrative Office

2149 Collingwood Blvd.
Toledo, Ohio 43620

About LSS

Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio provides mental health counseling, a food pantry, financial coaching, and an array of other services. With multiple service sites throughout northwest Ohio, we serve all ages, faiths, races, identities and economic status with professional and confidential services. For more information, visit our website www.lssnwo.org or find us on social media @LSSNWO

Impact LSS made in 2023 is staggering



TRACIA JAKSETIC
Vice President of LSS

Tracia Jaksetic

The impact our services had on people and communities in 2023 is quite staggering when you stop and think about it.

Our clients are fortunate that we're here to help fill unmet needs. The majority of them cannot afford the necessities, like housing, childcare, food and transportation.

Many of our clients are at or near the US Poverty threshold, which is just more than \$31,000 for a family of four. It's our mission to help lift them up by providing whatever services we can.

For our clients who don't fall within the poverty guidelines, many are in the ALICE population — an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. Those people are what you could call the "working poor," people with full-time jobs — and sometimes multiple jobs — who live paycheck to paycheck.

These workers often struggle to keep their households from financial ruin while keeping our

local communities running. In 2021, 13 percent of Ohio's 4.8 million households were living in poverty, while an astounding 25 percent fell into the ALICE category. Counties throughout northwest Ohio all fall above the 20 percent margin for ALICE households, including Lucas (24 percent), Hancock (22), Ottawa (24), Sandusky (27), Seneca (26) and Wood (21).

For information on ALICE, visit unitedforalice.org.

Chances are, we all know someone who fits this demographic. A huge number of people who walk through our doors could be categorized this way.

We are a bright light in many of our client's days when we can assist them with their needs and offer support services that can help.

It might be an occasional trip to our food pantries in Toledo and Findlay, just to help make ends meet. It could be regular visits with one of our behavioral health professionals to get their lives back on track. No matter what, we are here to serve people and communities throughout northwest Ohio.

We will continue to be the light that shines for those we serve.

We appreciate your support in referring individuals to our services or supporting those services throughout 2023.

We are off to an amazing start in 2024, and with your help and support, the momentum of our service continues to grow.



INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS

Ms. Diane Adler
Arcadia
Ms. Julie Beitelschees
Maumee
Mr. John Boesling
Defiance
Mr. Terry Bossert
Maumee
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Brossia
Perrysburg
Mrs. Carole Burgess
Perrysburg
Rev. & Mrs. Chuck Campbell
Toledo
Rev. Terry Cripe
Defiance
Mr. Al Deiter
Curtice
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Elmore
Maumee
Mrs. Marilyn Ford
Toledo
Ms. Doris Forry
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Ms. Ruth Gerber
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Napoleon
Mr. Fred Gohlke
Findlay
Mr. Robert Haaf
Toledo
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Toledo
Ms. Anne Heinemann
Woodville
Mr. John Heminger
Genoa
Mr. Rod Hochstetler
Toledo
Ms. Karen Howard
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Mrs. Traci Jaksetic
Toledo
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Elmore
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Maumee
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Walbridge
Ms. Lisa Underwood
Perrysburg
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Ware
Lakeside Marblehead
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Willier
Toledo

CONGREGATIONS, BUSINESSES & ORGANIZATIONS

The Andersons
Maumee
Bethlehem Evangelical Church of Okolona
Defiance
Chapter A I P E O Sisterhood
Toledo
Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
Bowling Green

Christopher Endowmend Fund
Chicago, Ill.
Concordia Lutheran Church
Toledo
Concordia Lutheran Church
Findlay
Corpus Christi University Parish
Toledo
Carl and Barbara Dierksheide Endowment Fund
Chicago, Ill.
First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Findlay
First Lutheran Church
Galion
First Lutheran Church WELCA
Findlay
First St. John Lutheran Church
Toledo
Frontstream
Reston, Va.
Good Hope Lutheran Church
Bucyrus
Grace Lutheran Church
Fremont
Grace Lutheran Church
Elmore
Hope Lutheran Church
Ottawa Hills
Kroger
Cincinnati
Harold & Carol Leupp Foundation Fund
Holland
LLB Charitable Fund
Boston, Mass.
Lutheran Church Of The Master
Perrysburg
Miller Bros. Construction, Inc.
Archbold
Olivet Evangelical Lutheran Church
Sylvania
Pilgrim Church
Toledo
Precision Business Solutions
Perrysburg
Solomon Lutheran Church
Woodville

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
McComb
St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
Stryker
St. John Lutheran Church
Port Clinton
St. John Lutheran Women
Hicksville
St. Johns Evangelical Lutheran Church
Findlay
St. John's Lutheran Ladies Aid
Stryker
St. Joseph Parish
Sylvania
St. Luke Lutheran Church
Curtice
St. Marks Lutheran Church
Wapakoneta
St. Michael Lutheran Church
Ottawa Lake, Mich.
St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
Jenera
St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
Clyde
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Napoleon
St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church
Norwalk
St. Stephen Lutheran Church
Sylvania
Sylvania United Church of Christ
Sylvania
Thrivent
Minneapolis, Minn.
Trinity Lutheran Church
Elmore
University of Toledo
Toledo
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
Lafayette
Zion Lutheran Church
Gibsonburg
Zion Lutheran Church
Petersburg, Mich.
Zion Lutheran Church
Huron
Zoar Lutheran Church
Perrysburg

IN KIND**Ms. Diane Adler**

Arcadia

Mrs. Julie Beitelschees

Maumee

Concordia Lutheran Church

Toledo

Concordia Lutheran Church

Findlay

**Corpus Christi University
Parish**

Toledo

**First Evangelical Lutheran
Church**

Findlay

**First St. John Lutheran
Church**

Toledo

Grace Lutheran Church

Elmore

**St. Johns Evangelical
Lutheran Church**

McComb

**St. Johns Evangelical
Lutheran Church**

Findlay

St. Joseph Parish

Sylvania

St. Luke Lutheran Church

Curtice

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Sylvania

MEMORIAL GIFTS**Mr. and Mrs. William Nelson**in memory of Loved Ones
Oregon**Mr. & Mrs. Terry Potter**in memory of Matthew T.
Potter

Lambertville, Mich.

Mr. & Mrs. David Raszkain Memory of Charles and
Miriam Fansler

Sylvania

Mrs. Judith Reberin memory of Bill Reber
Toledo**Mr. & Mrs. William Staib**in Memory of Logan and
Nathan Staib

Walbridge

**St. John Evangelical
Lutheran Church**in memory of Ed Aller
McComb**HONOR GIFTS****Mr. Janice Rohrs**in honor of John Sharpe's
75th Birthday

Liberty Center

Mr. & Mrs. William Staibin honor of Mason Staib's
Birthday on May 22nd

Walbridge

**PLANNED GIFTS:
CHARITABLE GIFT
ANNUITIES****Mr. Terry Bossert**

Maumee

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**Volunteer Spotlight****Sandi****How did you get involved at LSS?**

Corrine (a fellow volunteer) thought I'd be a good candidate!

What keeps you coming back to LSS?

It's a fun place to be, and the LSS staff are wonderful. I get to help people, talk with them and kid with them. It's so fun.

If you had to convince someone to volunteer at LSS, what would you tell them?

You would be helping someone by giving of your time and personality. You feel needed and listened to. It's so rewarding.

**Volunteer Spotlight****Kay****How did you get involved at LSS?**

A member of my church suggested that I go with her to the pantry. I saw the need for volunteers and decided to help.

What keeps you coming back to LSS?

The need for people to get help and to have someone to just talk to so they don't feel so alone.

If you had to convince someone to volunteer at LSS, what would you tell them?

It is rewarding and makes you feel good to know you are helping people. The clients are friendly and like the chance to talk and exchange recipes. It is a very friendly place to help your neighbors.

We always look for people with a servant's heart to help in our food pantry! For more information on becoming a volunteer, please contact Debbie Lisk, Food Pantry Coordinator at 419-243-9178 or email: dlisk@lssnwo.org.

"Unexpected blessing": LSS serves thousands in 2023

The numbers are impressive by themselves. In 2023, Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio impacted the lives of more than 30,000 individuals across the region with our variety of services.

While that number is huge, it can be hard to truly visualize what that impact means on a personal level.

Here are some success stories from clients.



EMERGENCY CHOICE FOOD PANTRY

The holidays are a stressful time for everyone. Whether it's buying and wrapping gifts or getting ready for big family gatherings, there's plenty to do.

But what if your stress is more basic? What if you don't know how you're going to put food on the table for a Thanksgiving meal?

That was the reality for the 870 people who visited our pantry in November 2023 ... an increase of 256 people over 2022.

One woman broke down in tears after receiving a full frozen chicken and all the trimmings she needed for a proper Thanksgiving dinner. She thanked our volunteers and Pantry Coordinator Debbie Lisk, admitting she had no idea how she was going to serve dinner to her family before visiting the LSS pantry.

"My son doesn't like turkey, so this chicken is perfect," she said.

POINT PLACE RELIEF FUND



After storms ripped through the Point Place area of Toledo in June 2023, residents were left with a mess. With red tape to work through and insurance deductibles to come up with, many residents were left without an end to their misery.

A collection of churches came together and approached LSS to form the Point Place Relief Fund, which would aid residents in paying for deductibles and costs associated with storm damage.

The LSS Financial Stability Program department handled the funds and evaluated the applications for the relief fund. In the end, more than \$37,000 was raised to help 62 families.

A few weeks later, a Point Place resident named Pat sent a thank you card to LSS. The handwritten note inside read, "Thank you so much for the tornado relief. It helped more than you'll ever know. It was an unexpected blessing."



FINANCIAL STABILITY PROGRAM

Our employees in the Financial Stability Program wear many hats. Not only did they handle the Point Place Relief Fund, but they've been at the center of the Emergency Rental Assistance funding over the last four years.

At the heart of their job, though, are the people who are ready to improve their financial lives and turn to us for help.

Hunter came to LSS in May 2023. She is an employee at the University of Toledo and is currently working towards her Master's degree.

She first got a loan through her church to help her pay down debt, and she's now working on paying off that loan to her church. With LSS Financial Counselor Katie R., Hunter has simplified her budget and worked on a plan of action.

In the 10 months since she came to LSS, Hunter has paid more than \$6,000 in debt and raised her credit score by 129 points.

"Hunter was very much aware of her situation, but it's overwhelming," Katie R. said. "We give them options and they decide on what they want to do for themselves. They choose which route they want to take. It's up to them to make the decision. I'm just here as a guide."



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

A huge part of our caring for an entire individual is their mental well-being, whether it's individual counseling sessions, Anger Management classes, or our Abusive Partner Intervention Program.

Last year, a 27-year-old woman, "Diane" came to our Fremont office after losing her boyfriend to a drug overdose. While grieving his loss, "Diane" found out she was pregnant. She already had one child from a past relationship who was also grieving his loss.

While working through her grief, "Diane" had to step away from work. She came to LSS for help to figure out how to deal with her grief, pregnancy and anxiety.

"Diane" participated in treatment two to four times per month. Now, she has steady employment and continues to care for her children, utilizing healthy choices and strategies. She has gone through various anniversaries with an appropriate attitude, and her children are thriving.

Another mental health client came to us seeking help working through emotions after her husband passed away at the end of 2021.

"Angie," a 57-year-old woman, had fears of being alone while also being afraid to leave her house and go to work for more than 10 years.

At first, "Angie" couldn't drive or go shopping by herself. She had trouble getting to sleep and staying asleep while also getting out of bed.

She attended at least two sessions of individual counseling with one of our therapists monthly for nine months. Now, "Angie" can drive herself to her sessions, pay her bills, and go shopping without assistance. Not only that but she's gotten a job and an apartment.

"Angie" once again enjoys painting, drawing, and crafting while living a full life.

LMM gathers for annual meeting



More than 100 people gathered at The Pinnacle in Maumee in March for the Lutheran Ministries of Mercy annual meeting. In addition to fellowship and dinner, attendees got to hear from LMM President and CEO Terri Rodriguez, top left, and Lutheran Services in America President and CEO Alesia Frerichs, top right.



Third annual Stock the Shelves coming up on May 17

With the demand in the Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio Emergency Choice Food Pantry continuing to grow, help from generous donors is needed to keep serving individuals at our current pace.

Our third annual Stock the Shelves donation event will be held at our Toledo office (2149 Collingwood Blvd.) from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. on Friday, May 17.

Again this year, individuals are encouraged to bring a donation for our pantry through the drive-thru event. There is no need for donors to even exit their cars, we'll get the donation out and bring it inside for you!

In the previous two years, our Stock the Shelves events have raised more than \$7,000 and 3,000 pounds of food.

We're proud to also announce the addition of sponsors for the event, businesses and individuals who believe in our mission. This year, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, Humana and Mr. Terry Bossert have signed on to be Platinum Presenting Sponsors, and CliftonLarsonAllen LLC is a Silver Supporter.



LSS volunteers sort through donations after the Stock the Shelves event in 2023.

We will also have donation boxes set up in locations throughout the Toledo area. Check our Facebook page @lssnwo for updated lists of where to find one of our donation boxes.

LSS Administrative Office
2149 Collingwood Blvd.
Toledo, Ohio 43620



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES
of Northwestern Ohio

Strengthening People in Body, Mind and Spirit

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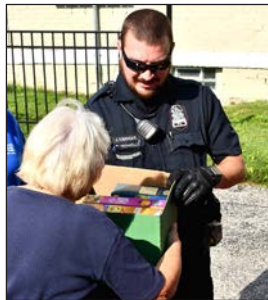
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INSIDE THIS EDITION



Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Sandi and Kay, two volunteers in the Emergency Choice Food Pantry



Stock the Shelves

Third annual event benefitting our food pantry coming up on Friday, May 17



LMM annual meeting

More than 100 people heard from special speakers during the March meeting

