

Spring 2026

the Messenger

A quarterly publication of Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio

LSSNWO 2025 In Review:

Leading Individuals on
A Path to Achievement

Lutheran Ministries of Mercy



Terri Rodriguez
President and CEO
Lutheran Ministries of Mercy

HONORING THE GIFTS THAT BUILD OUR FUTURE

Dear Friends, Families, and Supporters,

Every time I pause to reflect on our work, I find myself thinking about the people who make it possible. Not just the staff or volunteers, but you—the individuals who have stood with us, believed in our mission, and given so generously over the years. Your support has shaped real lives in ways that matter deeply. When I think about the impact we've made together, I feel a genuine sense of gratitude for the trust you've placed in us.

As we look toward the future, one of the most touching gestures we receive is when someone chooses to include our organization in their estate plans.

It's a quiet, thoughtful decision — one that speaks to a desire to keep doing good long after today. Estate gifts give us the stability to plan ahead, to grow responsibly, and to make sure the work you care about continues with strength and purpose. They help us build a future that reflects the same compassion and commitment you've shown throughout your lifetime.

If you've ever considered leaving an estate gift, I want you to know how meaningful that choice truly is. It becomes part of your story — a lasting reflection of your values and the difference you want to leave in the world. And, it becomes part of our story. Thank you for being part of this community, for believing in what we do, and for helping ensure that the impact we make together continues for generations. Your kindness today, and your vision for tomorrow, mean more than you know.

In gratitude,

A GIFT THAT LASTS BEYOND A LIFETIME

Have you included one of our ministries in your will or estate plans, or are you considering it? A planned gift is a powerful way to support the ministries you love—today and for years to come.

With a legacy gift, you can:

- Give in a way that aligns with your financial goals
- Support programs that matter most to you
- Be recognized now as a valued member of our Legacy Society

Already included us in your plans? We'd love to thank you.

And if you would like to learn more, please reach out.

Contact Jeanette Hrovatich

419-972-4373 | jhrovatich@luthmin.org



Filling Homes, Luther Home of Mercy and Lutheran Social Services of NWO are working together under the Lutheran Ministries of Mercy umbrella to share resources. These combined efforts allow us to foster hope, create change and meet the needs of individuals and families in our care. Visit our website at lutheranministriesofmercy.org to learn more.

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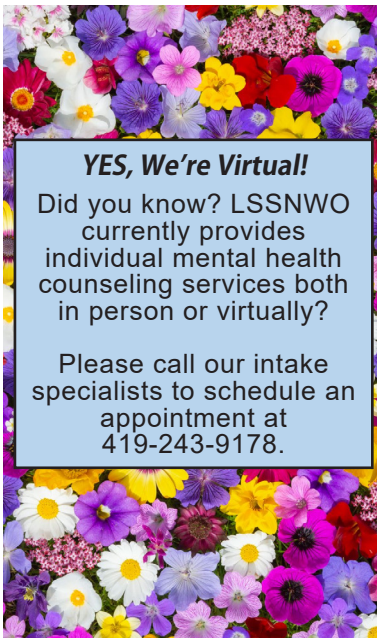
Tracia Jaksetic

Regional Offices

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

Administrative Office

- 2149 Collingwood Blvd.
- Toledo, Ohio 43620



YES, We're Virtual!
Did you know? LSSNWO currently provides individual mental health counseling services both in person or virtually?
Please call our intake specialists to schedule an appointment at 419-243-9178.

A Commitment To Serve



TRACIA JAKSETIC
Vice President



As Christians, we are called to serve those in need. At LSSNWO, that call comes to life every day through our work supporting others. Sometimes, it can be difficult to see the immediate impact of our efforts. But over time, if we are fortunate enough to continue walking alongside our clients, we witness both progress and setbacks, and we gain a deeper understanding of the journey they are on.

Active engagement in our community is essential to shaping the future of LSSNWO services. I currently serve on the Healthy Environments Workgroup for the Lucas County Impact Coalition Steering Committee. Our mission is to identify the community's most pressing needs and develop strategies to address them. Guided by Mary Cacioppi's Economic Development that Benefits Everyone, we are approaching economic development with an innovative, inclusive lens, where poverty reduction is a central strategy. This two-year process provides a blueprint for economic development, nonprofit, government, and policy leaders to create opportunities for all.

Our work examines five key areas of community well-being: Rewarding Work, High-Quality Education, Opportunity-Rich & Inclusive Neighborhoods, Healthy Environment & Access to Quality Health Care, and Responsive & Just Governance. By understanding and addressing these areas, we aim to create a stronger, more inclusive economic future. Many initiatives are already underway in the communities we serve, and participating in these solutions is truly inspiring work.

Standing on the sidelines is not effective for our clients or the services we provide. Moving LSSNWO into the future requires active engagement in the communities we serve, seizing opportunities to make a real difference. Serving takes many forms, and the impact of our work can look different to each person we help. If you notice gaps in services in your community that may align with LSSNWO's mission, please reach out, I would love to hear about them.



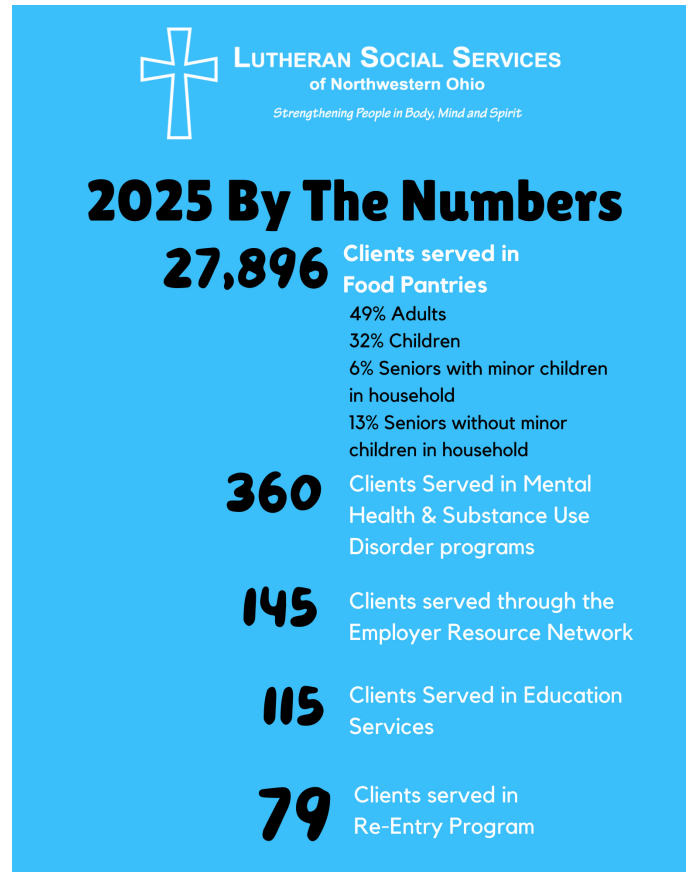
We are on Social Media!
Follow Us @ LSSNWO
On Facebook, X, and Instagram

LSSNWO 2025 In Review: Leading Individuals on A Path to Achievement

In 2025, Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio (LSSNWO) continued its mission to support individuals and families across the region with vital services tailored to meet a wide range of needs. LSSNWO's food pantry & affiliates, including Feed Your Neighbor Community Pantries, served 27,896 clients, with nearly half (49%) being adults, 32% children, 6% seniors living with minor children, and 13% seniors living without minor children in the household. Beyond food assistance, LSSNWO addressed mental health and substance use challenges, providing care and support to 360 clients, while 79 individuals benefited from the Re-Entry Program, which helps those transitioning from incarceration reintegrate successfully into their communities.

LSSNWO's commitment to workforce and educational support was also evident in 2025. The Employer Resource Network (ERN) assisted 145 clients, helping them navigate employment challenges and access career resources. Additionally, 115 individuals participated in education services programs, equipping them with skills and learning opportunities to strengthen

personal and professional development. Through these diverse initiatives, LSSNWO continued to provide comprehensive support, fostering stability, growth, and well-being for thousands of individuals and families across Northwestern Ohio.



LSSNWO Expanding Trauma and Behavioral Health Services in Fremont & Tiffin

MARY WRING, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIRECTOR

Working in a rural area poses different challenges than working in the inner city. In many ways, the problems that people face in both environments are the same: food insecurity, family struggles, substance use addiction, justice involvement, grief and loss, depression, anxiety, and trauma. However, how counselors approach clients in an inner-city population versus how they approach clients in a rural population must differ. As the behavioral health director, I am proud to say that each of our offices (Toledo, Tiffin, and Fremont) employs culturally sensitive and competent counselors and case managers to meet the unique needs of the people we serve, both in inner-city Toledo and in rural Seneca and Sandusky counties.

There are exciting things happening in our Tiffin and Fremont offices. In Tiffin, we have identified the need for trauma counseling for both women and children and are rising to meet that need. We have employed an experienced child trauma social worker and a certified Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) counselor for adults with trauma. EMDR is a structured psychotherapy approach that is evidence-based to treat adults with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

In Fremont, we have seen a sharp increase in referrals from justice organizations. Our substance use specialist has formed a strong, positive relationship with TASC of Sandusky County, and we receive referrals for substance use services and mental health support several times a month. Additionally, we have seen an increase in referrals from the Department of Job and Family Services to provide counseling for children and teens in foster care, as well as referrals from Sandusky County Juvenile Probation for justice-involved teens. The goals for the rest of 2026 and into 2027 are to expand the substance use program to include Intensive Outpatient Groups and an early intervention program for teens.

Uplifting Success Stories at LSSNWO



Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio (LSSNWO) provides practical, community-based support that helps individuals and families remain stable, employed and self-sufficient during times of hardship and crisis. Each year, residents across five Ohio counties rely on us for food assistance, behavioral health services, workforce support, and family stabilization programs.

To meet growing demands, LSSNWO is raising resources (\$3.2 million dollars) to expand its Toledo campus with a 7,000 square-foot addition that will include program space, an accessible first floor Choice Food Pantry, and an education and workforce training center. This expansion will increase our service capacity, improve efficiency, and allow individuals and families to access multiple services in one location. By strengthening access to coordinated programming, this project will help families navigate through temporary challenges, remain engaged in the workforce and reduce long-term reliance on public systems, resolving challenges more quickly and stabilizing households.

To date, we have secured donations and intent to pledge gifts totaling just over \$2.1 million dollars! We are on the final stretch of reaching our goal and would LOVE to have you join us. Please call Jeanette Hrovatich, Director of Planned Giving, at 419-779-4193 or email her at jhrovatich@luthmin.org to learn more. Together we can make this dream of coordinated services and new building space a reality.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: DEBBIE HAAS

We are grateful to highlight LSSNWO Food Pantry Volunteer, Debbie Haas.

Debbie, how long have you volunteered with the LSSNWO Choice Food Pantry? How did you get started?

Debbie: I've been volunteering with the pantry for 3 years now. Debbie Lisk did a program at our church years ago, explaining the program here. I thought it was a good time for me to serve and it was a good fit for me.

What do you love about volunteering here?

Debbie: I enjoy talking and listening to our clients. A lot of times they just need someone to hear them. I also enjoy working with the other volunteers. They are all very nice people.

What would you like to tell others that may encourage them to volunteer at the LSSNWO Choice Food Pantry?

Debbie: If you are looking for a place to volunteer that is easy and rewarding work, this is a wonderful place to be.

If you are interested in joining our LSSNWO Food Pantry team, call 419.243.9178 and ask for Debbie Lisk.

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**BEQUESTS, WILLS,
ESTATES**

Estate of Martin L. Meuser

**PLANNED GIFTS:
CHARITABLE GIFT
ANNUITIES**

Terry Bossert
Maumee, OH

**WE WOULD
LIKE TO
THANK ALL
OF OUR
DONORS FOR
THEIR SUPPORT!**

5th Annual



11 AM - 1 PM on Friday, May 15, 2026

2149 Collingwood Blvd. Toledo, OH 43620

Food Pantry Wish List:

- Canned meats (ex. tuna, chicken, spam)
- Canned Fruits and Vegetables
- Canned Soup, Ravioli, Chili, Beef Stew
- Juice (46 or 64oz bottles)
- Ramen
- Crackers
- Cereal
- Oatmeal or Grits
- Pasta
- Pasta Sauce (Marinara or Alfredo)
- Ketchup, Mayo, Mustard
- Cake or Brownie Mixes and Frosting
- Cereal Bars
- Jelly

Shop our Amazon list before the event!



Make a monetary donation to LSS!



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES
of Northwestern Ohio

Strengthening People in Body, Mind and Spirit

For more information, to donate, or sponsor:

Call: 419.243.9178

Email: Monique at mward@lssnwo.org



Thanks to the generous contributions of donors, sponsors, and volunteers, LSSNWO was able to feed over 9,000 individuals in 2025.

LSS Administrative Office
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INSIDE THIS EDITION

2025 By The Numbers
27,896 Clients served in Food Pantries
49% Adults
32% Children
6% Seniors with minor children in household

LSSNWO 2025: A Year In Review
36 Clients Served in Mental Disorder programs

145 Clients served through the Employer Resource Network

115 Clients Served in Education Services



Volunteer Spotlight

