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# BARBARA DITTRICH

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 38<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

February 1, 2024

**Rep. Barbara Dittrich Testimony on AB 984 – a pilot school-centered mental health program and making an appropriation.**

**Assembly Committee on Education**

Thank you Chairman Kitchens, and committee for taking up Assembly Bill 984 today. I know we're in a busy time in the legislative session with many more priorities yet to be tackled so I appreciate your time to review this bill. I want to express my gratitude to Sen. Testin as well, who was unable to join us here today but has submitted written testimony in support of this legislation.

Mental health is an issue that affects so many families and individuals across our state. Coming off the governor's "Year of Mental Health", we can't let the issue fade from focus when there is still so much work to be done. While school based mental health programs are providing services and relieving some of the burden in addressing mental health issues in our schools, school-centered mental health programs are a little different and come at the problems in a unique way. Let me explain what I mean. A school centered mental health program goes a little further in wrap around services providing care, family coaching in a much more comprehensive home and family dynamic. Additionally, in a school centered mental health program, services are provided all 12 months of the year instead of the 9 months a student attends school.

Another great part of school centered mental health programs are the evaluations to monitor student performance. These are not only ongoing to help determine best course of action to help the students, but are included in the required audit to take place at the end of the 2year pilot program. Which brings me to the nuance and detail of the execution of this bill.

AB 984 would create a 2 year pilot program under the management and direction of Lutheran Social Services to identify at-risk students, and provide school-centered mental health services on a year round basis. The program would include evidence-based individual or family therapy at school in the home or elsewhere in the community. Services would be based on observations in the classroom and student behavior. Additionally, it would facilitate school staff training. At the end of the two year pilot, unlike most government programs that automatically roll into permanency and full funding, this program would automatically be required to undergo an extensive, independent audit to determine the efficacy of the program based on metrics such as student achievements within the program, grades, and school attendance. If the audit proves the program ineffective, further funding would not be allocated and the program would cease

operation. The pilot program would allocate \$428,000 each year of the biennium and include an independent audit of the program's outcomes, including a comparison of other school-based mental health programs.

In closing, I believe it's important we don't lose focus on mental health issues in this state. This bill will provide resources and tools to our school districts, families, and most importantly students.

Again, I thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

**February 1, 2024**

**TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education**

**FR: Joseph Arzbecker, Chief Operating Officer**

**RE: Testimony in Support of AB984 (Pilot of School Centered Mental Health)**

For over 140 years, LSS has provided compassionate and loving care to nearly 30,000 individuals per year at every stage of life in all 72 Wisconsin counties. Our staff includes over 800 licensed therapists, professional social workers and counselors, and certified peer specialists. We offer multiple programs and services including affordable housing & homelessness services; public adoption & foster care; long-term care & disability services; refugee resettlement; residential treatment for substance use disorder & mental illness; and additional supportive community-based services. LSS ensures that neighbors who have been marginalized by society find community belonging and are able to reach their greatest potential.

While our name is Lutheran, we serve all faiths and walks of life.

We ask your support for AB984 requesting additional funding for our School Centered Mental Health (SCMH) model.

For years, we have operated the historical school based mental health model with a therapist working with children in the schools. While we saw some success, we also saw the need to innovate in a way that would reach the parents, guardians, and families who are central to improving the mental health impact on young students.

In 2018, LSS developed the SCMH model, which builds on the current success of traditional school-based mental health programs.

Our SCMH model is different than the typical therapist in school model because:

- It is holistic – serving the child within the family, school and community systems.
- Services provided will reach beyond the school and go into the child's home and community.
- We go beyond therapy; the family coach addresses parenting skills, Social Determinants of Health needs such as housing, food and transportation and links to community resources.
- Services extend beyond the school day as we work with families on their schedule which includes evenings and weekends.
- Services also reach beyond the school year, with child and family interaction throughout the summer.
- 

Since 2018, we have implemented this comprehensive model at ten schools: serving elementary through high school students. We have seen strong outcomes in both student academic achievement and family improvement in SDOH.

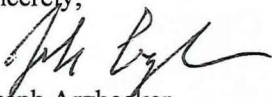
The challenge has been funding. SCMH is currently mainly funded by LSS and donors.

Our request is for \$428,000 in each year for two years to expand the program.

We will include an independent audit of the program's outcomes which we believe will allow us to support efforts to sustain funding beyond this pilot.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Joseph Arzbecker

Chief Operating Officer

Lutheran Social Service of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.

Joe.arzbecker@lsswis.org

January 31, 2024


To the Assembly Committee on Education:

I am writing you in support of AB984.

School Centered Mental health is not your typical school-based therapy. Our model embeds teams of therapists and family coaches into the culture of the school that also extends to a student's home. Our staff functions as parent educators, school and therapy liaisons, advocates and case managers and they are accessible to all faculty and students. We have a daily presence there, and in the community, as we journey with families through life's toughest challenges – food insecurity, unemployment, homelessness. We connect them to resources that address these and other social determinants of health, and we provide them with individual and family therapy, classroom observations, parent cafes, and anything else that the team identifies as a way to empower their health and well-being.

Beginning in 2018, LSS partnered with the United Community Center schools in Milwaukee. Since then, we have expanded into partnerships with Marquette University's Center for Peacemaking and Milwaukee Public Schools. We now provide this model of service to 10 schools in Milwaukee's highest need neighborhoods. Schools continually ask us to increase capacity, especially following the pandemic. They see, first-hand, our team's ability to co-create with parents and guardians to successfully address their barriers and to remove these adult-sized stressors from their children, allowing them to focus on academics, extracurricular activities, and play.

I support this model of service as I have seen the results and impact on those that we serve, not only the students but the whole family and school community.

 MS, LPC, CS-IT

Signature  
Valerie Becke, MS, LPC, CS-IT  
Milwaukee Regional Director

1/31/2024

Date \_\_\_\_\_



January 31, 2024

To the Assembly Committee on Education:

Hi. My name is Erionia Dixon, and I currently serve as a School Centered Mental Health therapist in Milwaukee, WI.

I come to you all as a parent, public school alum, advocate, and Wisconsinite in support of AB984 requesting funding to extend SCMH services throughout the state.

As a youth, I remember attending multiple MPS schools and having limited insight and support around mental health. During my high school years, I experienced a life changing event that left me feeling alone, worthless. Guidance staff suggested a school transfer. Social workers suggested HSED. Both options resulted in a hopeless feeling. Thankfully, I had great friends and family to support me during this event, but this isn't the case for everyone. At that moment, I vowed that I would be the person I needed in the world. I became a counselor.

As a counselor, I have been able to empower students and families through psychoeducation and providing cultural relevant interventions to ensure positive outcomes. I recently provided services for a student diagnosed with selective mutism. During the treatment process, I learned that the reason for her silence was to maintain safety in the school setting. The student expressed being bullied by peers and misunderstood by adults. As of today, she is excited to return to school and open to fostering positive relationships with her peers. We were able to identify qualities of healthy friendship, importance of self-advocacy to ensure academic success and reinforced the value she adds to the community, school, and home setting. Her mother reported a visible change in her walk and self-expression. She no longer hides behind her mother to manage discomfort.

SCMH has the potential to increase academic performance by allowing the child to be focused on the present moment and not survival. From my experience, in class tasks completion has increased and office referral have decreased. It is a model that encourages students and families to be aware of themselves, their value, triggers, needs, and wellbeing. It is a community partnership spare-headed by the family coach who provides parent coaching as well as the implementation of coping skills in the home to maintain consistency. Our family coaches also provide community resources relating to the basic needs of families. Students and families have raved about the opportunity to access services in a convenient location through an unbiased partner. SCMH creates a trusting relationship between schools and families. This is a positive contribution to building strong, safe, and supportive communities which impacts our future overall.

Thanks for your support.

Respectfully,



Erionia Dixon, MS, LPC  
3872 N 8<sup>th</sup> St,  
Milwaukee, WI 53206  
Phone: 414.308.3156  
Email: [erionia.dixon@lsswis.org](mailto:erionia.dixon@lsswis.org)

January 31, 2024

To the Assembly Committee on Education:

Good morning,

Thank you, members of the committee, for the opportunity to speak in support of AB984 and a program that has impacted so many in our community. My name is Amanda Krzykowski, and I am the Director of Performance and Quality Improvement at Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan (LSS) and a parent of a child with hearing loss and an ADHA Diagnosis.

LSS has been operating the School Centered Mental Health program since the 2018-2019 school year. At that time, we provided services in three schools. Now in our 6<sup>th</sup> year, we have grown to provide services in 10 schools throughout the city of Milwaukee. We have impacted the lives of nearly 400 students and their families. Our commitment to those we serve is not only to provide access to services but also to hold ourselves accountable to providing quality services.

The SCMH program utilizes several assessments and screeners to measure factors such as reduction in mental health symptoms, barriers to social determinants of health (food security, stable housing, steady employment, quality education, etc.), and overall attainment of individualized goals. More recently we were awarded a grant by the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, to look more closely at SCMH outcomes. In collaboration with our academic partners for this project, UWM's Institute for Child and Family Well-Being, we will continue to research the SCMH model and the impact it has on students and families while identifying opportunities for quality improvement.

In the last 6 years, 93% of students coming into the program were assessed to have clinically significant difficulties in at least one mental health area identified by the assessment. Of those students:

- 67% have substantial difficulties that hinder their ability to build relationships with peers.
- 63% have considerable issues with conduct behavior.
- 63% have significant symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- 54% have significant impulsivity and hyperactive behaviors that interfere with their learning and relationships.

In the 2022-2023 school year, we continued to see a positive impact on students. At the end of the school year 65% of students served were assessed as being in the typical range for conduct behaviors, peer problems and anxiety and depression symptoms. While 85% of students were assessed as being in the typical range for impulsivity and hyperactivity. LSS therapists work with students on skills such as emotional regulation, positive peer interactions and impulsive thoughts and behaviors. Implementation of these skills not only impacts the students' receiving services but also the classroom as a whole. Improving the learning environment for all students.

As a parent of a child with hearing loss and an ADHD diagnosis, I have sought programs for my son both in the school and in the community. I was told there were no mental health services for him in the school and after calling a community provider, I was told there was a 4-month waitlist. As frustrating as this process has been, I have the knowledge and resources to know how to maneuver through the system and many others do not. The School Centered Mental Health Program supports not only the student and their family but also the learning environment of the classroom. With LSS's documented success in the Milwaukee area, now is the time for LSS

to expand our scope and reach Wisconsin families living in other parts of the state and AB984 would allow LSS to do just that.

Respectfully,



Amanda Krzykowski, MSW  
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## **Support Letters**

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UNITED COMMUNITY CENTER  
CENTRO DE LA COMUNIDAD UNIDA

January 31, 2024

To the Assembly Committee on Education:

I am writing you in support of AB984. The United Community Center (UCC) Schools (Bruce Guadalupe Elementary School, Bruce Guadalupe Middle School and Acosta Middle School) have been in partnership with Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan's (LSS) School Centered Mental Health (SCMH) program since 2018.

SCMH has changed the landscape of mental health services for our students and families. By removing barriers to traditional therapy, alongside partnering with parents, we have seen our students, and their families thrive.

This model is unique, as SCMH staff are truly embedded in the culture of the schools. They are accessible to students, staff and parents daily. The family coach is an especially unique team member, as they serve as liaison between home, school and therapy.

I truly believe the SCMH has allowed our students to overcome obstacles so that they can live happy and healthy lives and focus more on school.

I wholeheartedly support AB984 and appreciate the opportunity to share my opinions with you.

Sincerely,

Laura Gutierrez

Chief Executive Officer, United Community Center & UCC Schools

1028 S. 9th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53204  
(414) 384-3100 www.unitedcc.org



## DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P.O. Box 29 • Baraboo WI 53913  
(608) 355-4200 • FAX (608) 355-4299  
JESSICA MIJAL, Director

February 1, 2024

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

FR: Jill Ellinwood, Integrated Services Manager

RE: Testimony in Support of AB984 (Pilot of School Centered Mental Health)

I am writing to express my support of AB984.

I am the Integrated Services Manager at Sauk County Human Services overseeing our community based mental and substance use services to youth and their families. I have worked in the area of youth mental health for over 30 years, and I know firsthand the heavy toll that lack of access to needed mental health supports has taken on Wisconsin kids and families. High rates of anxiety and depression, suicide and poor access to needed mental health care are notable for youth in Wisconsin youth. (1, 2). In Sauk County, we have seen positive outcomes for youth and their families when services are provided in wholistic and coordinated fashion and with a strong partnership with schools. However, currently these programs are often only available to youth who are Medicaid recipients which leaves many youth with unmet needs. Individual office-based therapy is only effective with smaller subset of youth. Best practices of providing services in the community and in schools results in the best outcomes. I believe we are continually in need of new and innovative ways of addressing mental health and behavioral needs in our communities.

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) model of School Centered Mental Health is a unique and innovative approach. LSS has developed and implemented a holistic model serving the child within the family, school and community systems. The model includes:

- Services provided will reach beyond the school and go into the child's home and community.
- Going beyond therapy; the family coach addresses parenting skills, Social Determinants of Health needs such as housing, food and transportation and links to community resources.
- Services extending beyond the school day as we work with families on their schedule which includes evenings and weekends.
- Services reaching beyond the school year, with child and family interaction throughout the summer.

This model is unique, as SCMH staff are truly embedded in the culture of the schools. They are accessible to students, staff and parents daily. The family coach is an especially unique team member, as they serve as liaison between home, school and therapy.

Supporting youth in the context of their families is essential to facilitate sustainable change and wellness. Further, school staff alone cannot provide the needed skillful and therapeutic support that Wisconsin youth need.

I wholeheartedly support AB984 and appreciate the opportunity to share my opinions with you.

Jill Ellinwood, MA, LCSW, LPC  
Integrated Services Program Manager  
Sauk County Human Services

1: Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2021 conducted by the Wisconsin Dept of Public Instruction.

<https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2022/youth-risk-behavior-survey-wisconsin-mental-health>

2: Office of Children's Mental Health annual report.

[https://children.wi.gov/Documents/ResearchData/OCMH%202023%20Annual%20Report%20Briefing\\_Final%20-%20for%20printing.pdf](https://children.wi.gov/Documents/ResearchData/OCMH%202023%20Annual%20Report%20Briefing_Final%20-%20for%20printing.pdf)





January 31, 2024

To the Assembly Committee on Education:

I am writing to you in support of AB984. The Kelben Foundation has been a supporter of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan's (LSS) School Centered Mental Health (SCMH) program since 2020. Kelben is a long time supporter of youth mental health, and we believe this bill could be life changing for so many students.

We choose to fund this program because SCMH gets therapy services to children within their school environment, and LSS also wraps support around the entire family. The SCMH family coach model ensures that families are united in addressing youth mental health – and they go even further than that. Family coaches help to connect caregivers to important resources such as rental assistance, healthcare, affordable food, and adult mental health and substance use programs. In using this model, LSS recognizes that bringing a young person to health requires a wholistic approach.

Through annual reports to the foundation, LSS demonstrates that SCMH staff are truly embedded in the culture of the schools in which they work. SCMH team members are available to students, staff and parents daily. The family coach is an especially unique team member, as they serve as liaison between home, school and therapy.

The Kelben Foundation is proud to provide this letter of support for AB984 and we appreciate the opportunity to share our opinions with you.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Lueck".

Laura Lueck



# School Centered Mental Health

## The Need

As a country and a state, we have fallen short meeting the needs of our children. We have a mental health crisis that is severely impacting our children and families. In 2019, 49% of Wisconsin students reported being affected by anxiety and depression. This situation has worsened in 2020 with the COVID pandemic, according to a study conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, the rate in which symptoms of anxiety and depression are reported continues to rise month over month. One of the most effective interventions, according to the Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health, is family engagement.”

## The School-Centered Mental Health Model

In 2018, LSS developed the School Centered Mental Health (SCMH) model, which builds on the current success of traditional school-based mental health programs. Since then, LSS has implemented this comprehensive model at nine schools; serving elementary through high school students. SCMH is currently mainly funded by LSS and donors.

The SCMH model utilizes the school as the family and community hub through which the partnering agencies will provide services. SCMH sees the child as part of the family, school and community systems and provides holistic support impacting each system. Services provided will reach beyond the school and go into the child’s home and community, thereby increasing access and improving the likelihood that services will be used and maintained. Services also reach beyond the school year, with child and family interaction throughout the summer.

### Traditional SBMH

At school therapies for students

- Therapist \* (may include consultation with teachers)

In order to make a more significant and lasting impact, families need to be engaged in the process, the learning and the solution. SCMH goes beyond the traditional school-based mental health approach that relies exclusively on mental health services being provided in a school.

### LSS SCMH Health Equity Model

At school and in home therapies for students families and the community

- Therapist\*
- Trained Family Coaches
- Behavior Interventionist
- Teacher/Parent Skills Development Trainers
- Multi System Level Research

The SCMH model has far-reaching potential for statewide implementation and includes engagement with public, charter, private and parochial schools, as well as with early childhood education programs such as Head Start. The model drives the development of community partnerships and support from local leaders which breaks down silos and facilitates communication and collaboration.

\* Therapists provide clinical symptoms assessment and mental health support for individuals and groups





## What makes **School Centered Mental Health (SCMH)** Different ?

- Family Coach
- Reach the child in the school AND the family at home
- Flexibility in scheduling
- Meeting clients where they are at and where they feel most comfortable (home, school, or other location)
- No "three strikes and you are out" policy
- Strong partnership with schools and LSS team (therapist and family coach)
- Extends beyond regular school hours
- Extends beyond the regular school year

## SCMH Model

### School Partnerships

- Provide referrals and onsite space for therapy
- Implementation of child-specific interventions
- Support data collection for program outcomes
- Share data related to academic success, attendance & behavior referrals

### Training and Education

- Provide parent and community education
- Facilitate school staff training

### Behavior Interventions

- Conduct classroom observations
- Develop child-specific behavior interventions and support teacher implementation
- Foster positive teacher/student relationships
- Improve classroom learning environment

### Therapy

- Evidence-based individual and/or family therapy at school, in-home or community
- Increased parent engagement and access to services

### Health Navigation

- Connect families to needed community health services
- Help establish primary care providers
- Expanded health education

### Research and Assessment:

- Collect data using valid and reliable assessment tools
- Conduct shared analysis with other school based programs
- Use data to measure impact

### Family Coaching

- Provide skill development, parent education that align with therapeutic goals
- Co-create strength-based home interventions
- Connect the family to needed resources that impact social determinants of health





# School Centered Mental Health

## The Results

We have seen significant impact in the short time that we have operated this program. Families have indicated improvement in reducing barriers of Social Determinants of Health factors including:

**SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH**

**71%**  
stated that in the last 6 months they have not worried about running out of food

1 in 2 families stated at the time services started that their income was not enough to cover their living expenses, and through services 67% were able to improve their financial security.

Of families who identified that maintaining utilities was a concern, 57% identified that through services they no longer worried about maintaining their utilities and overall 71% felt their barriers had been reduced.

In addition to these short-term impacts, the SCMH model will produce back-end benefits through:

**ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT**  
Improved school attendance  
Improved academic achievement

**SAFETY IMPACT**  
Improved safety & reduced school violence

**ADMINISTRATIVE SAVINGS**  
Less time and expense addressing truancy  
Less time spent disciplining students

**COMMUNITY FUTURE**  
Improved graduation rate  
Avoided juvenal crime  
Avoided juvenal suicide  
Improved life-time income

Avoided adult crimes  
Lower cost and impact on social service and justice systems





## Other obstacles with both current model and our SCMH:

- DPI grants have restrictions (does not cover direct care...training focused)
- Medicaid will cover therapist services; however the system is often very complex to get participants enrolled in CCS
- No Medicaid funding for family coach
- Workforce is a barrier to both models.

## Funding Request

Create a pilot program in the 2023-2025 biennium that will provide support for 2 schools to offer SCMH.

The total budget request is for \$856,000 to fund two years at two schools. Each school will require \$214,000 per year to fund the model. This funding will support a full-time therapist and a family coach plus supervision at each school.

The pilot program will serve the most at risk students and families at each school. The program team will maintain an active caseload of approximately 25 per school reaching between 30 to 40 students in a school year. The comprehensive model will engage the family around the identified child, including parents, grandparents, siblings, and other identified supportive individuals and will provide services year-round.



### Mission Champion Moment - United Community Center (UCC)

When it came time for elementary student Catalina\* to go to school at United Community Center (UCC), she most always complained of tummy aches and headaches. The LSS School-Centered Mental Health (SCMH) Therapy Team worked with Catalina, her parents and UCC teachers/counseling staff to find that she also had a lack of focus in school and little-to-no peer relationships. A combination of SCMH family coaching and therapy services coupled with growth mindset instructions/practice in therapy and at school, empowered Catalina to return to school symptom-free, make new friends and develop positive teacher relationships.

LSS SCMH services are delivered in strong partnership with schools like UCC. This innovative program supports students in the school and at home along with their parents and extended family members. Find out more at [www.lsswis.org/services](http://www.lsswis.org/services).

*\*Name and image changed to protect client identity*



## School Centered Mental Health 2022-2023 School Year

### School Partners

Acosta Middle School  
Andrew Douglas Middle School  
Bruce Guadalupe Elementary School  
Bruce Guadalupe Middle School  
Gwen T. Jackson School

Lafollette Public School  
Marvin E. Pratt Elementary  
North Division High School  
Ralph H Metcalfe School  
Success Center



6737 W. Washington St., Suite 2275 | West Allis, WI 53214 | [lsswis.org](http://lsswis.org)



## Therapeutic **Services** Family Coaching **Services**

### Students Experiencing Trauma

■ Score 0  
■ Score 1-2  
■ Score 3  
■ Score 4+

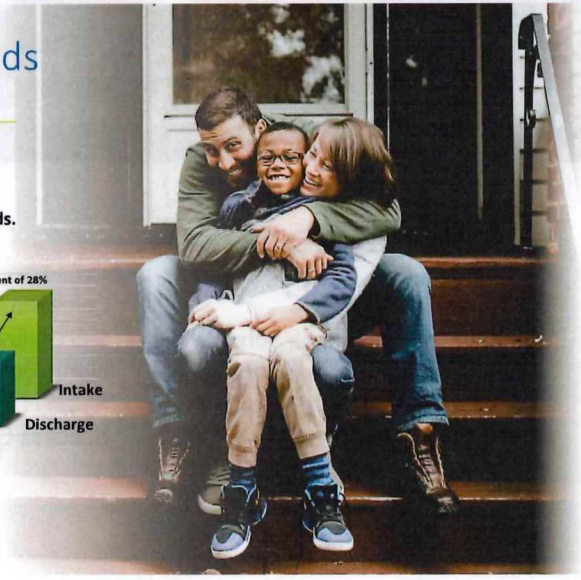
Score	Percentage
Score 0	6%
Score 1-2	43%
Score 3	38%
Score 4+	13%

Nationally, 16% of adults have ACE scores of 4+. LSS SCMH students with 4 or more traumatic childhood experiences is at 38%.



## Overall SDOH Needs Reduced

The following graph demonstrates the improvement seen as Family Coaches connect families to resources in the community that meet their SDOH needs.

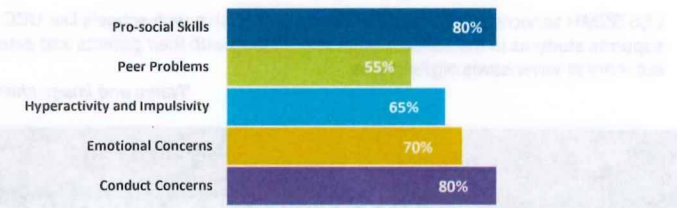


## Improvement in **Symptoms**

### Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) - Parent



### Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) - Youth



The above scores represent the percentage of parents and youth who saw improvement or maintenance of positive behaviors over the course of treatment in 5 domain areas.





Lutheran Social Services  
of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.

140 Years

Act · Serve · Lead

EST. 1882

# Community Impact Report 2022

*Your Love Transforms Lives*



Your  
Love

# TRANSFORMS LIVES



2022 was a year of celebration for LSS as we commemorated 140 years of Servant-Leadership!

Just feet away from the original Homme Homes founded by Rev. E.J. Homme, we joyfully rang the large, on-site school/church bell fourteen times: once for each decade that our LSS family of supporters have shown mercy and love to the hungry, meek, mourning, and persecuted (Matthew 5: 3-12). As we look to our Sesquicentennial, one additional ring of the historic bell affirmed our shared hope and gratitude for the future LSS.



The many activities, events, and heartfelt stories that occurred over our special anniversary year have more than doubled the size of this year's impact report. We travelled our two-state reach meeting up with you, our donors, funders, community partners, volunteers, and friends. Thank you for sharing your personal experiences with LSS. We are in awe of the countless ways you have strengthened families, inspired recovery, and empowered independence and belonging.



We encourage you to find special time to page through and savor the pictures and stories in this report told by our clients, partners, and advocates. Your love is in every one of these stories.



Dear Friends,

**You are living proof of Rev. Homme's legacy of love!**

Thank you for your compassionate assurance that individuals and families in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan have safe and affordable housing.

Thank you for your belief in the infinite worth of all people, especially our clients who are elderly, and/or living with a developmental or physical disability.

Thank you for your immediate and generous response to the hundreds of Afghans forced to relocate from their homeland to Wisconsin.

Thank you for your help in reducing stigma around mental illness and substance use disorder throughout our two-state reach. We are most grateful for your collaboration around growing our residential treatment and School-Centered Mental Health programs.

The state of LSS is strong. Our collective work in 2022 has forged innovative partnerships, solidified funder relationships, improved client outcomes, impacted colleague financial health and overall well-being, and activated our donor's extraordinary benevolence.

**Our mission carries on through your acts of compassion, humble service, and courageous leadership.**

A profound end to our anniversary year gave us the opportunity to honor and celebrate the life of Bela Maroti, Founder of the LSS Foundation. Bela died on December 13th leaving a 50-year-legacy of hope and impact on thousands of lives because of his "yes" to using his God-given gifts to serve others.

Bela was both a guidepost and a beacon for LSS and the LSS Foundation. He was advisor, advocate, and champion in helping to shape our programs. Through his visionary, Servant-Leadership, he recognized the need for long-term financial support of our mission work through planned gifts, investments, and endowment.

Thank you for your continued interest in, and love for, LSS and the nearly 30,000 people we serve each year. We are excited about the many ways we will grow our legacy of love together for future generations.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hector Colon".

*Héctor Colón*  
President & CEO



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jose Olivieri".

*José Olivieri*  
Operating Board Chair



Your  
Love

# STRENGTHENS FAMILIES



"Our son Dawson was diagnosed at birth with Trisomy 21 - Down Syndrome, and while we had known of the high likelihood since our genetic screening early in my pregnancy, that official confirmation came with a wave of fears.

"The minute we met Sue from Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin & Upper Michigan, our hearts calmed down. **The LSS team became our anchor in a storm.** They reminded us to celebrate Dawson's "terrible yet typical twos," taught us how we could help Dawson, and reminded us when we should step back and let him do things so he can move ahead.

"By the time Dawson graduated from the LSS Waukesha County Birth to Three program we felt **specially equipped** as parents to handle the needs that Dawson would have."

- Rhonda Schmidt, parent in LSS Waukesha Birth to Three program.



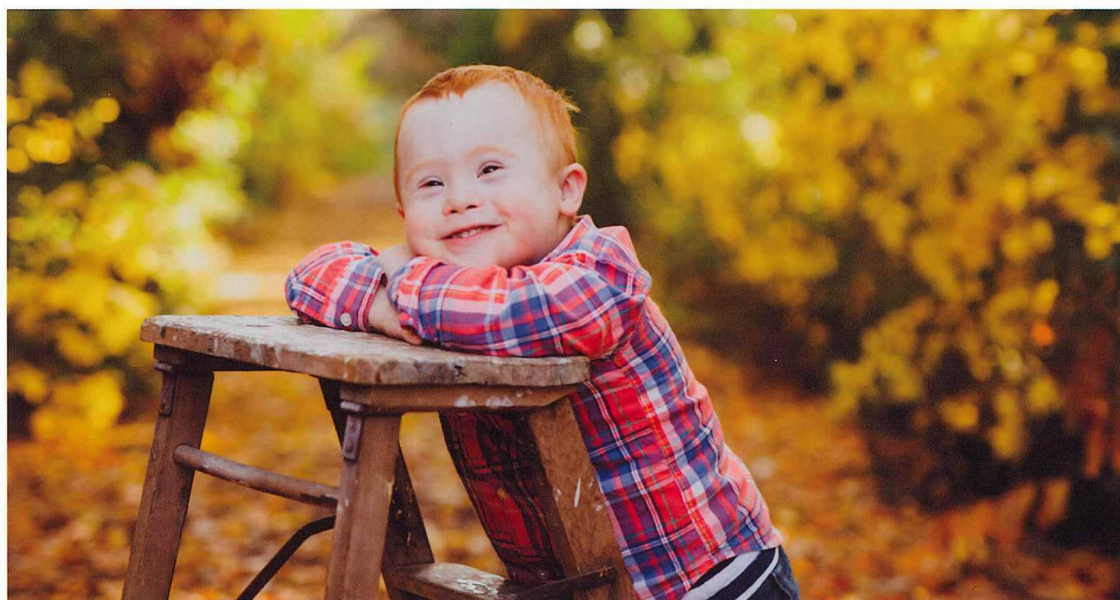


Tia\* has been living with an LSS foster family for a little more than a year. Like most children in foster care, Tia has suffered trauma and difficult times. But she is not letting the difficulties of the past define her future. Tia is embracing new beginnings and transformation!

Soon Tia will graduate high school and turn 18. She has been looking at colleges and already applied to a few that offered to waive application fees. She would like to pursue the social work field because of the LSS and school social workers who have been such a tremendous help to her. Tia is well on her way to a bright future in other ways as well.

Knowing that she will soon age out of foster care, her foster parents shared with her their plan to pursue adoption once she turns 18. Tia will have a forever support system and family, even after graduation.

*\*Name changed to protect client confidentiality.*



"Families who have children with disabilities have to navigate the resources available. To have a team come to our home, become our family and support system, to offer advice and guidance as we figured out the first few years, is an experience we will never forget."

*- Rhonda Schmidt, parent in LSS Waukesha Birth to Three program.*



# Your Love INSPIRES RECOVERY



When children returned to school post-pandemic, third grader, Tomás\*, experienced intense debilitating anxiety being separated from his parents. This made attending school and learning nearly impossible for him. Tomás would try to participate, but he was so overcome with anxiety he became physically ill and endangered his own safety by running out of the building into the street.

With the help and guidance of LSS therapists at his school, Tomás worked through a course of cognitive behavioral therapy, specifically exposure and response prevention treatment, which allowed him to face his fears in a gradual manner. In addition, our family coach provided translation services and called the family in between sessions to ask about progress on the therapy homework assigned. Our coach also provided recommendations from the therapists on how to support the exposure therapy at home and assisted the family in connecting with other community resources.

Today, Tomás fully participates in class and interacts with his friends again. At the end of treatment, he described himself as “happy” and “proud” of what he overcame.

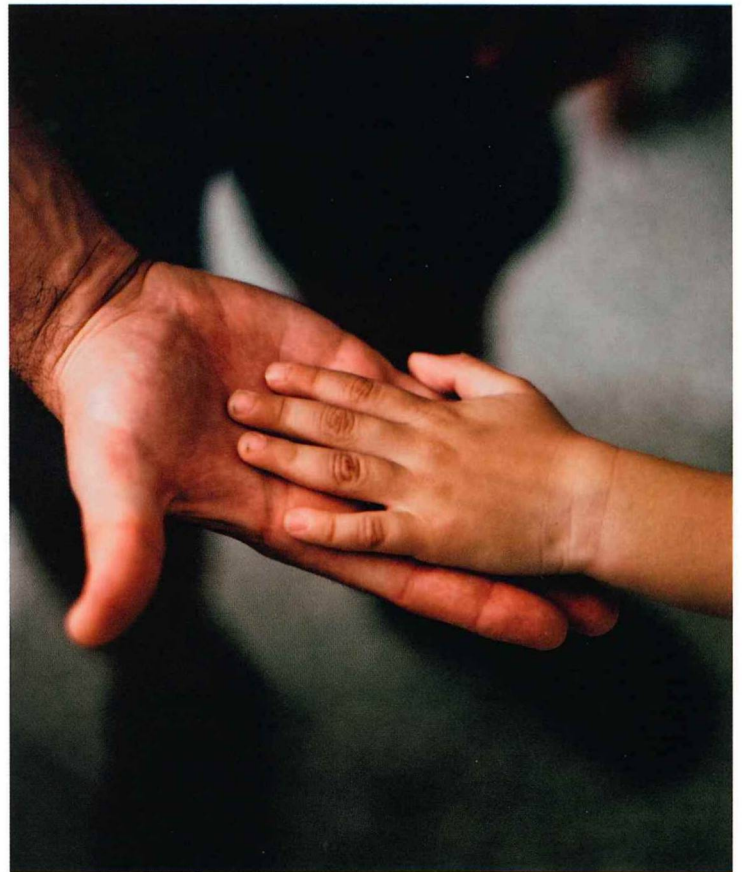
*\*Name changed to protect client confidentiality.*



Jesse's\* drug dependency stripped him of his good judgement which affected his parenting ability. He sometimes took his children with him to buy drugs or he would leave them at home alone. His amphetamine addiction exacerbated his mental health challenges. Upon admission to the LSS Aspen Center Jesse embarked on an individualized treatment plan.

Eventually, he was able to reunite with his children during family visits and work on those relationships. By connecting with local 12-step programs, he started to build a strong support system. After reaching several milestones, Jesse completed the program and was discharged to a sober living facility. He is employed and remains actively engaged in his recovery. He participates in outpatient group therapy and attends to his mental health.

*\*Name changed to protect client confidentiality.*



“What brought me here? Drinking was the major factor. In the Air Force I was athletic. I never used any drugs or alcohol much. But I had an accident in Thailand during the Vietnam conflict. My fuel truck turned over on me during a bad rainstorm. I was trapped in a river of excrement. Afterwards, I would have bad dreams. I would drink to go to sleep. Now I work out and do art instead of lying on the floor passed out. I haven't drank or taken illegal drugs in over a year. This is a life changing place.”

*- Lewis Boyles, LSS Veterans Homeless Services*

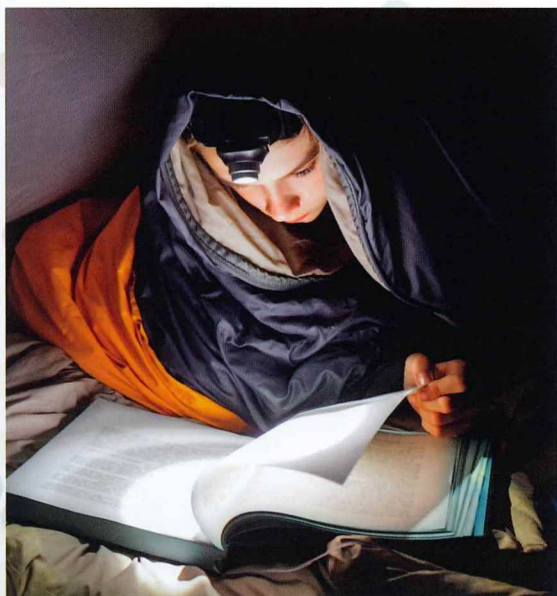


# Your Love EMPOWERS INDEPENDENCE AND BELONGING

Arif and his family were resettled by LSS when Afghanistan was evacuated. Arif, a quadriplegic, was in very ill health and experiencing severe bedsores. His extended family did all they could, but immediate medical care was needed.

The medical team determined that Arif would greatly benefit from a specialized wheelchair, which was quite expensive. Hearing about Arif's situation, LSS Mission Champion Kyle Weatherly vowed to help make it happen.

After months of red tape, Arif received his wheelchair. He and his extended family are living in an LSS residential community, and Arif is working as a translator with the LSS Refugee Resettlement team!



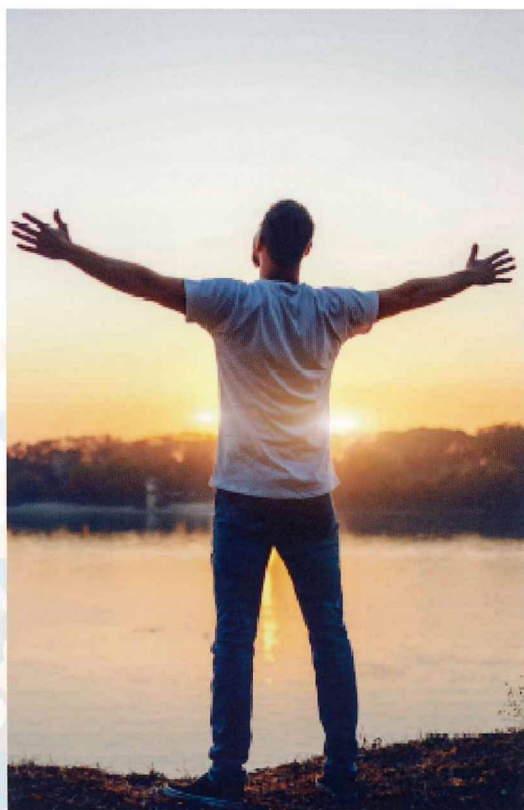
Mitch\*, an Upper Peninsula high school student, was living in a tent for two months, and missed his graduation. His temper and behavior were holding him back in gaining employment. LSS counselors found stable housing for Mitch, guided him to obtain his GED, and connected him to a community resource that assessed his job readiness and provided soft skill training. Mitch is now feeling less anxious, more confident and is in a much better place to navigate his path to adulthood.

*\*Name changed to protect client confidentiality.*



Your welcoming embrace of the families and individuals evacuated from Afghanistan eased their transition to life in the United States.

- In other parts of the country, some Afghans spent one to four months in a hotel, waiting for housing. Because of your generosity, every Afghan served by LSS had an apartment within one week of their arrival.
- Each household received a Chromebook to facilitate job searches and online courses in driver's education and English as a Second Language.
- Each household received two cell phones: one that can be taken to work, and one for the home in case of emergency.
- Many Afghan evacuees arrived with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Gift cards for new arrivals allowed recipients to shop for themselves, conferring dignity and respect.
- Rental assistance, dental care, baby formula, diapers and more – your support filled (and continues to fill) gaps related to bureaucratic wait times, the pandemic, and other unforeseen circumstances.



Jason\* had nowhere to live ... no family ... no one to rely on. He had recently been diagnosed with cancer. He was lonely and feeling desperate. Then he found LSS Gaining Ground.

"They've helped me get approved for housing and get bus passes to keep on track with doctor's appointments. I have been able to keep a positive outlook on life. This has come from having the support of LSS Gaining Ground. Having someone that genuinely cares makes a world of difference."

*\*Name changed to protect client confidentiality.*



# Your Love IMPACTS POSITIVE CHANGE

Every incredible story in these pages happened because of YOU! Each was the result of strong partnerships with donors, congregations, corporations and volunteers who believed in the infinite worth of every person and were committed to helping them to use their God-given gifts to serve. We thank our Boards of Directors, Partners Circle companies, and churches from the ELCA and other denominations which all gave generously of time, talents, treasure and ties to make miracles happen for so many in 2022. Truly, this could not have happened without you!

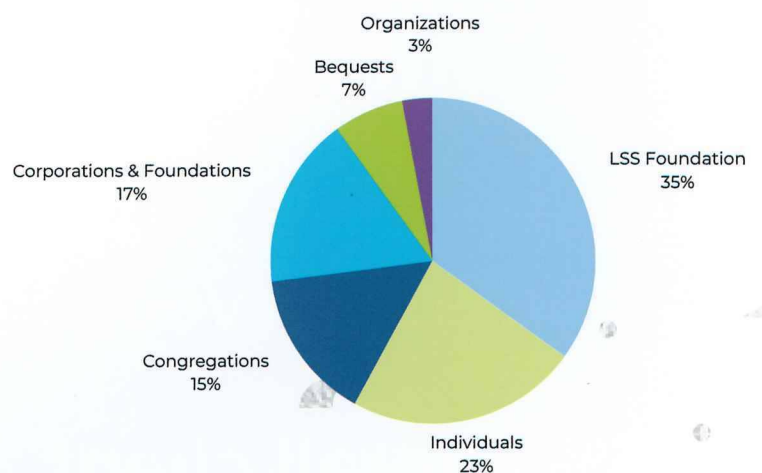


# 2022 FINANCIALS

Revenue	
Federal, State, Local Service	\$47,057,902
Client Fees, Insurance or Contracts	8,167,182
Bequests & Contributions	2,029,442
Other Income	2,360,314
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$59,614,840</b>

Contributions	
Individuals	\$799,207
Congregations	527,958
Corporations & Foundations	610,781
Organizations	100,543
Bequests	237,237
LSS Foundation	1,251,760
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>\$3,527,486</b>

Expenses*	
Program Services	\$49,833,799
Administrative & General	8,519,212
Fundraising	817,638
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$59,170,649</b>



*\*NOTE: This state of financial position is prior to audit completion*





**LSS Lutheran Social Services**  
of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.

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West Allis, WI 53214

Phone: 414-246-2300

Fax: 414-246-2524



*Your love grows healthy communities  
Thank you for being a trusted partner in ministry!*

**774 employees**

**Nearly 30,000  
clients served**

**96% overall client  
satisfaction**

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MARCH 2023

# Ignite



**LSS** Lutheran Social Services  
of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.

## Students Build Resilience, Self-Reliance and Community Because You Care

Through your compassion and generosity, you are inspiring students and their families to improve behavioral challenges while learning to respect themselves and others, and achieve their goals.

Toxic stress and trauma can significantly inhibit a person's ability to fully participate in and experience life. Children that carry the weight of adult-size pressures (homelessness, food insecurity, violence) also have trouble focusing on their schoolwork and can act out and disrupt learning for others.

In partnership with several community groups including Milwaukee Public Schools and the Marquette University Center for Peacemaking, LSS serves students at the Success Center in grades 4-12 who need help addressing significant barriers to success, happiness, and well-being at school and at home.

Members of the LSS School-Centered Mental Health team are embedded at the Success Center and provide therapy and coaching for students and their families and serve as a resource for teachers as well as others within the school community. Students receive customized supports for up to 12 weeks. They participate in activities, interventions, and curriculums to enhance social, emotional, and academic progress.

Students are referred to the Success Center by their school counselors and upon graduating from the program, return to their schools of origin better prepared to thrive, live an authentic life, and reach their full potential. At graduation, students are asked to leave a message to those who come after them in the Legacy Book. One of those powerful messages is reprinted inside.



## Playing the Game of Life - By an 8<sup>th</sup> Grader

(See Page 1 for context)

Some people, like my friends at school, really didn't believe that I was coming here to learn new skills and make different choices. I am happy to say that I have changed – being more openminded to people and the environment, learning to be calm, generous, open and helpful to both myself and others. One of the things that happened along the way is we created a community at the Success Center through basketball.

If you think about it, basketball is like life. It takes Skill, Teamwork, Sportsmanship and Practice to overcome obstacles, challenges and to work together to win.



- **Skill** – dribbling, shooting, defense, playmaking and finishing are just like life. You are finding a way to meet the goal and to see it through.
- **Teamwork** – passing, playmaking, giving a pat on the shoulder, a handshake, building confidence in your teammates is like a family planning for their success. Real love combined with working towards a goal as a team.
- **Sportsmanship** – cheering for all, following the rules and playing clean is a lot like going to school and being a good student. Showing up, keeping things respectful and encouraging one another.
- **Practice** – in basketball there are challenges and obstacles like scoring and stamina and communication. It requires practice and grind to success and patience as well.

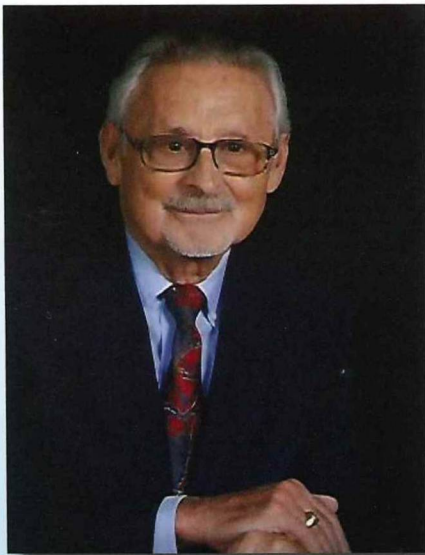
Finally, you need a good coach, someone who plays with you, who shows understanding and is a good communicator. Someone who encourages teamwork.

Basketball is like playing the game of life. It turns out, if you keep showing up, you are more likely to succeed.

## Bela Maroti: Life of a Servant Leader

On December 13 LSS lost a trusted advisor, a tireless advocate and a beloved Mission Champion with the passing of Bela Maroti. Bela was a pioneer in the treatment of substance use disorder. He led with grace and vision. We are indebted to Bela for recognizing the need for long-term financial support of human services programs as he established The LSS Foundation.

If you would like to learn more about Bela's life and legacy, or if you would like to make a donation to honor his memory, visit [lssfoundation.org](http://lssfoundation.org)





## When We Come Together As One, Lives Are Transformed

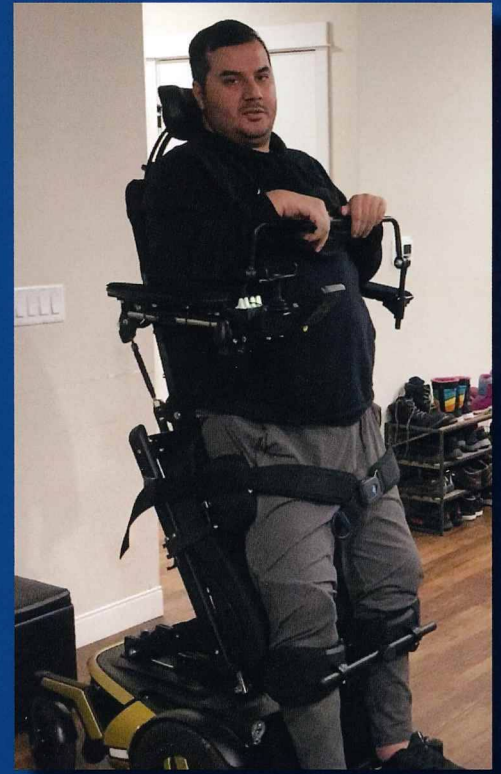
Your continued outpouring of support for LSS Refugee Resettlement services is humbling. We are so grateful. You are truly a beacon of hope and healing as refugees from around the globe begin a new life.

Arif and his family arrived in the US last year as Afghanistan was evacuated. Arif, a quadriplegic, was in very ill health and experiencing severe bedsores. His extended family was doing their best to care for him, but immediate medical care was needed.

The medical team determined that Arif would greatly benefit from an expensive, specialized wheelchair. Hearing about Arif's situation touched the heart of LSS Mission Champion Kyle who vowed to make Arif's wheelchair a reality.

After months of paperwork and red tape, Arif received his wheelchair toward the end of last year. He and his extended family are living at one of the LSS residential communities. Arif has also found a job. He is working as a translator with the LSS Refugee Resettlement team!

Your welcoming embrace of all refugees is easing their transition to life in the States. Thank you!



## Caregiver Hero Award Recognizes The Lutheran Home

We capped off our 140th Anniversary Year with the annual festive gathering of the LSS Partners Circle, an impressive group of corporate donors represented by their C-Suite executives. The Partners Circle is committed to creating positive, sustainable impact on the people in our community.

This year's event featured the presentation of the inaugural Caregiver Hero Award in honor of Marty Schreiber. The 2022 award recipient is The Lutheran Home, recognized for their 115 years of compassionate care. The Caregiver Hero Award recognizes one or more caregivers of persons living with chronic disease or persistent cognitive or physical illness. Award recipients demonstrate one or more of the LSS values of Compassion, Courage, Co-Creation and Change.



LSS co-creates with Lutheran Planned Giving of Wisconsin (LPGW) to help develop financial and estate-planning goals that achieve our donor's unique situations and passions. There is no cost or obligation – it is our ministry to be of service.

For more information, please contact:

Jackie Harcourt, VP Fundraising, LSS at 262-305-5952 or [jackie.harcourt@lsswis.org](mailto:jackie.harcourt@lsswis.org)

Cynthia (Cindy) Halverson, Regional Gift Planner, LPGW at 414-544-2008 or [cynthia.halverson@elca.org](mailto:cynthia.halverson@elca.org).





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Suite #2275  
West Allis, WI 53214

**Act compassionately.  
Serve humbly.  
Lead courageously.**



For more information or to make a gift, please visit our website, [lsswis.org](http://lsswis.org), or contact:  
Corrine Anshus | 414-246-2319  
[corrine.anshus@lsswis.org](mailto:corrine.anshus@lsswis.org)

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**LSS thanks our Partners  
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mission champion!**



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