LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF WISCONSIN AND UPPER MICHIGAN

CHANGING LIVES
Dedicated to representing God’s love through programs and services that help people in need, Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan traces its origin to 1882, when Pastor E.J. Homme opened a home for orphaned children in Wittenberg, Wisconsin. Now, our services extend across Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, helping people all along the lifespan with services as essential as housing, and as life-changing as adoption.

We change lives in many different ways: with a meal for someone who hasn’t eaten lately; a course of treatment for someone struggling with addiction; or a comprehensive set of services for an individual, family or community.

Affiliated with congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America throughout Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, LSS welcomes and serves people of all faiths and backgrounds. We thank the ELCA churches that support our ministry of social service; we’re also grateful to the United Way, county and state governments, corporations, foundations and thousands of caring individuals.
We operate 263 programs at 188 sites in 115 communities throughout Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

Jessica, a client in our residential youth program, recently visited Pastor Homme’s grave and said a little prayer: “Pastor Homme, if you can hear me, I want to tell you ‘thank you.’ I don’t know what I would do without this place and the people who care about me.”

Homme is a nationally recognized residential treatment center for children and adolescents dealing with issues of sexual perpetration, delinquency, victimization, alcohol and drug abuse, cognitive behavioral issues or dual diagnosis. A temporary home to teens from all over the Midwest, the facility is located in Wittenberg, Wisconsin.
MISSION VISION VALUES

OUR MISSION
Motivated by the compassion of Christ, we help people improve the quality of their lives.

OUR VISION
Change the world – one grace-filled life at a time.

OUR VALUES

THE INFINITE WORTH OF EACH PERSON
Each person is a unique creation and child of God.

DIVERSITY
LSS seeks diversity in its staff and volunteers as well as in those it serves.

INTERDEPENDENCE
Individuals and organizations are intertwined and must rely on and support one another.

EXCELLENCE
Excellence is the standard of quality for all services and operations.

INNOVATION
Ongoing change calls for creativity in developing and providing services.
WHAT WE DO

LSS strives to provide life-changing services that meet the most urgent needs of individuals and communities throughout Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. We often work in collaboration with county agencies, state organizations and other valued partners.
LSS takes a distinctive approach to providing social services in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

First, we see every client as a one-of-a-kind individual, with a unique history and needs. We don’t assume we know what’s best. We encourage each client to engage with us, to let us know what they think they need most, and to guide us in helping them reach their goals.

Second, we combine and coordinate as many services as needed to help each client achieve their goals, removing barriers one by one until their path to a changed life emerges. We call this “wraparound services” – coordinated resources and support that surround clients with the security and confidence they need to move forward in their lives.
“I WAS IN A SCARY AND HOPELESS SITUATION.

I was a homeless, single parent dealing with a heart condition. I had to admit I needed help. Reluctantly, I met with a worker for LSS. What a life-changing choice that was. I was spoken to with understanding and compassion, and never felt like I was being judged.

My gratitude is endless. I now receive Social Security, my health is on the road to improvement, and I have a roof over my son’s head and a huge weight off my shoulders. **We have hope and stability now.**”
At 51, a New Lease on Life

Rick was the type of person people give up on: a single, homeless man addicted to drugs and alcohol. His addictions led him to the local hospital, but also to LSS. Working with LSS and our partners in Upper Michigan, Rick was able to get sober; in fact, he turned his whole life around.

At age 51, he received the keys to his first apartment, a new job and a new life. Rick now dedicates his free time to giving back. He searches dumpsters and other places for discarded clothing, electronics, household goods and more, to help people like the person he used to be. The man who was once so desperately in need of help is now the one helping.
Self-Directed Care through Connections

Our newest service is Connections: an IRIS (Include, Respect, I Self-direct) consultant agency for the state of Wisconsin to provide qualified older adults and adults who have physical or developmental disabilities with a self-directed option for long-term care. Connections IRIS consultants are working with individuals in northeastern Wisconsin counties to help them create personal care plans and locate the services and support they need. Connections helps people with disabilities fulfill their goals for daily living and stay connected with their loved ones, friends and communities.

Once Isolated, Now Active in the Community

Living in a small, rundown trailer on his own, confined to a wheelchair, Doug didn’t really want to make a change. Born with cerebral palsy and cognitive disabilities, Doug was emotionally attached to the place where he had lived with his mom until she died. Still, the trailer had become so dilapidated that other family members refused to visit him. It took six months for counselors from our Individualized Community Supports program to talk Doug into considering a move to a modern, clean apartment. It took another two years to find the right apartment for him. Once he felt comfortable there, he blossomed. Doug now attends local car shows, has fun at karaoke night, eats with friends at a local church, and even does his own banking. Doug’s brother and his aunt now come to visit; he has reconnected with his family as well as his community.
CREATING AND PRESERVING FAMILIES

The love of a family is precious and foundational to a happy life. We offer services that strive to preserve families; when that’s not possible, we work to create new families through foster care and adoption.

Opening a Loving Heart

It’s not surprising that a young girl whose mother was unable to parent her; whose five older siblings all lived in foster or adoptive homes; and who had moved from place to place for half of her 14 years had difficulty attaching herself to her latest foster family.

LSS foster care social workers created a web of care around the girl. The web included an understanding therapist, a supportive school environment, and the accepting attitude of her foster family. The family made it clear that they did not want her to move to another placement, but to stay with them. The foster parents received training in ways to attend to the needs of a child even when the child rejects them.

It took time and patience, but this child with the difficult past was able to open her loving heart and allow her foster parents to be her mom and dad. She learned that she could express her feelings and opinions, and that even when her foster parents disagreed with her, they would still love her.

“There are children in terrible situations. They’re not safe. They deserve a loving home to experience compassion, empathy and safety, which they may never have had.”

Last year, 100% of children in our foster care programs were safe in their foster homes.
SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

Case management
Community living skills and support
Day services
Residential services

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Adoption services for U.S., foreign-born and special needs children
Alternative education for grades 7-12, supported by special education-certified teachers
Birth to 3 services for children with developmental delays or disabilities
Child abuse and neglect education

Child care for children 6 weeks through 12 years
Counseling for birth parents considering adoption
Counseling to help children cope with divorce
Foster care for children in need of a safe, nurturing place to live
Parenting education and counseling
Runaway services for teens and their families
Service coordination for children with disabilities
Supervision services for juveniles, including home detention and electronic monitoring
Youth treatment center and group home

From Refugee to Employee

As a child in Bosnia, Bojana Bozic remembers the day that civil war came right to her door. Her home burned, and her family fled. After nearly 10 years of being displaced and distressed, her family came to the U.S., greeted at the airport in Milwaukee by two case workers from LSS. Bojana and her family spoke no English, but the case workers spoke Serbian, and she remembers their kindness as they helped the family with resources, benefits, and English language classes.

Several years later, Bojana graduated from college with a psychology degree. When LSS offered her a job as a service coordinator at an independent living facility, her mom reminded her of their family’s connection to LSS. Bojana has come full circle. She now works as a case manager for victims of human trafficking who relocate to Milwaukee. “What I like best is that I actually help change someone’s life every day, for the better,” she said.
“Our daughters’ birthmoms mean so much to us. We came to feel like they were family members. We will always love them for their tremendous, selfless act of love!”

Sammie Fulfills a Dream

Our domestic adoption program includes open adoption, which enables birthparents to have contact through the years with the adoptive families and their child.

That’s the path chosen by Sammie. At age 15, Sammie was pregnant, frightened and disappointed in herself. With the support of her parents, she asked LSS to help her create an adoption plan for her child.

Sammie looked through the detailed portfolios of more than 70 families who wanted to adopt; she selected Colleen and Bob Gallaher to raise her child, Mary Kate. In doing so, she fulfilled the Gallahers’ dream of being a mom and dad.

In the years ahead, Sammie will continue to share messages, photos and visits with the Gallaher family and Mary Kate as she studies to become a nurse.

Last year, our domestic and international adoption programs found forever families for 86 children from the U.S. and around the globe; we also completed 358 adoptions of Wisconsin children with special needs.
Jonalyn’s Journey

When Jonalyn was nine, her father dropped her off at the House of Refuge, a child care center/orphanage in Marikina City, Philippines. When she was 14, Jonalyn asked to become part of the LSS Ambassador Program. The program, founded in 2007, finds loving homes in the U.S. for Filipino children who are in danger of aging out of the country’s adoption system. The program is named for the volunteer “ambassadors,” organized by LSS, who travel to the Philippines every two years to get to know a new group of adoptable older children. They return to the U.S. to find forever families for the children.

For Jonalyn, that dream is coming true. She’s in the process of being adopted by the Tomski family: mom Sharon, dad Joel, and four boys, all adopted from the Philippines. Everyone is looking forward to welcoming Jonalyn to her forever family!
INNOVATING SOCIAL SERVICES DELIVERY

Providing services that help people who are homeless find not just a home, but a more stable life; wrapping services around children dealing with the devastating effects of sexual perpetration, delinquency, victimization and substance abuse; helping people isolated by physical or behavioral issues rejoin their communities — these are some of the ways LSS demonstrates innovation in the delivery of social services.

“Our family has gained so much from the LSS Welcome Home program. They helped us find and pay for a home suitable for our children and provided us with daily essentials. They brought school clothes for our son, and helped us set goals and focus on completing them. We are so grateful.”

Everyone feels more confident wearing new clothes for the start of school, but children in foster care receive just $150 for clothing for their entire time in the system: that doesn’t go far. Our Urban Threads distribution center for brand-new, stylish clothing, donated by individuals and major retailers, helps fill the gap.
A Chance at a Better Life

A young, homeless couple tells their story:

The main thing we had in common was that we both felt we were the worst people on earth. We felt we were a total disappointment to our families and had even considered suicide. Our families did not want us to be together, which eventually led to us becoming homeless. We made some very bad choices.

LSS didn't judge us for our past mistakes, they welcomed us. They helped us get part-time jobs, a place to live, counseling to help with our relationship issues, and coaching in decision-making so that we don't ever have to go back to jail again – an experience that neither of us wants to repeat.

We have a lot to learn before we get it right, but we want to stay together. With patience and help from LSS, we might have a chance at a better life and a real future.

At our new Winnebago County Shelter Care program for youth, 97% of the young people served indicated they were happy with the services they received.

97% satisfaction

SERVICES THAT DEVELOP COMMUNITIES

- Clothing distribution
- Correction, restorative and re-entry services
- Daytime resource centers
- Disaster response
- Homelessness and poverty assistance
- Peer support services
- Refugee and immigration services
- Residential services
- Vocational support

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING SERVICES

- Older adults
- Persons with chronic mental illness
- Persons with developmental disabilities
- Persons with physical disabilities
- Service coordination for subsidized housing
SERVING WITH SENSITIVITY

Traumatic experiences and mental illness must be acknowledged with sensitivity to how they shape and color our clients’ view of the world.

Creating New Memories

Donna was referred to Wellspring, our daytime drop-in center for women in downtown Green Bay. She was homeless, living in her car and cutting herself to release stress. She had lost two babies to miscarriages, and her fiancé had died six months earlier. With no place to go, she returned to her dysfunctional childhood home, a place with traumatic memories for her. She helped her mother care for her dying father. Three days after he died, her mother kicked Donna out – again.

Wellspring connected Donna with grief support, Al-Anon, counseling to help her cope with the sexual abuse she experienced as a child, housing, financial counseling and classes that would prepare her to work as a certified nursing assistant. Today, she works full time and lives in her own comfortable apartment. She still comes to Wellspring to give and receive support and share good news about her life.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Daytime resource centers
Services for co-occurring disorders
Financial counseling and debt management planning
Outpatient counseling for mental health
Outpatient counseling for substance abuse
Sexual assault victims’ services
School-based counseling
Trauma-informed programming

“My LSS counselor knows depression and knows me. The sliding scale fee allows me to get help when I need it. My life has been saved. More importantly, I want to be a mother to my children!”
Sally and the Clubhouse

Sally’s bipolar disorder cost her two important things: her work and her friends. She has a supportive family, but when her husband was at work and her children at school, she was lonely and depressed.

She found a support group, and some of the members told her about the Spring City Corner Clubhouse, our day center for individuals whose mental illness has affected their work and social lives. At the Clubhouse, Sally found counselors who care, fellow members on the path to success, and a chance to learn computer skills. Through the Transitional Employment Program, she used her new skills to land a rewarding job.

“I’ve regained my enthusiasm. I wake up and look forward to my day, and I have a new community of friends. What I had once lost, I’ve now regained, thanks to the Clubhouse.”

LIVING WITH DIGNITY

Really, no one had any idea what to do with Jerry, a mentally ill alcoholic who was homeless, suicidal and destructive when he drank. The staff at our Community Transition Center in Eau Claire was willing to take him into its daytime programs. Jerry rallied and now lives in his own apartment, where he enjoys being surrounded by neighbors. He recently spoke at a local university about his life as a homeless person. He is very proud of himself.
Our purpose is to develop gifts and legacies that support the work of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. Established in 1977, the LSS Foundation is both the fundraising arm of LSS and a repository for estate and planned gifts that provide sustaining support.

Our volunteer Board of Directors oversees the management of endowed funds and distributions that provide a stable base of ongoing support. We receive gifts and legacies from individuals, as well as annual benevolence and special gifts from congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We’re happy to work with individuals, families and congregations to designate gifts for specific ministries and programs of LSS.

For information or to make a gift, please contact:

Cynthia Halverson, President
cynthia.halverson@lsswis.org | 414-539-5401

Rev. James Holmberg, Director of Church Relations
james.holmberg@lsswis.org | 414-325-3069

The Foundation is a member of Lutheran Planned Giving of Wisconsin, a partnership of ELCA ministries serving Wisconsin. For information on making a legacy or planned gift in support of ministry through LSS, we encourage you to contact:

Rev. Larry Westfield, Regional Gift Planner
Lutheran Planned Giving of Wisconsin
larry.westfield@elca.org | 262-224-9574
THREE BROTHERS FIND A LOVING HOME

Gifts to the Foundation support a variety of LSS programs, including domestic, international and special needs adoption. Our adoption staff finds forever families for children of all ages, including older children and groups of siblings who wish to remain together. That was the case with Leo, Macai and Davey, three brothers who joined the Matiash family after having been through some difficult transitions. The trauma of broken relationships manifested in challenges with their emotional stability, academic achievement and appropriate peer relationships. With Nick and Jody Matiash and their other five children – three biological children and two adopted – the brothers found a loving, stable home. As Jody said, “God heals in amazing ways, and one way is to provide stability in a loving home.” The love of an adoptive family can truly change the life of a child; we at LSS and the LSS Foundation are blessed to be part of the experience.
Lutheran Social Services
of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.
647 W. Virginia Street
Milwaukee, WI 53204
(800) 488-5181
(414) 281-4400

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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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| Appleton       | 3003-A North Richmond Street
Appleton, WI 54911
(920) 730-1326 |              |
| Beaver Dam     | 809 Park Avenue
Beaver Dam, WI 53916
(920) 887-3172 |              |
| Eau Claire     | 1320 W. Clairemont Avenue, Suite. 200
Eau Claire, WI 54701
(715) 834-2046 |              |
| Homme – Wittenberg | W18105 Hemlock Road
Wittenberg, WI 54499
(715) 253-2116 |              |
| Janesville     | 612 North Randall Avenue
Janesville, WI 53545
(608) 752-7660 |              |
| La Crosse      | 2307 South Avenue
La Crosse, WI 54601
(608) 788-5090 |              |
| Madison        | 6314 Odana Road
Madison, WI 53719
(608) 277-0610 |              |
| Marquette, MI  | 1029 N. Third Street
Marquette, MI 49855
(906) 226-7410 |              |
| Superior       | 33 N. 25th Street East
Superior, WI 54880
(715) 394-2054 |              |
| Wausau         | 115 N. Sixth Street
Wausau, WI 54403
(715) 849-3344 |              |

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God’s work. Our hands.

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