



Pictured: Rita Bernardin with her son, James, Breyanna Smith with her son, Javious, and Savannah Coonrod with her daughter, Sofia. With the help of LSSI's ECHO case managers, these three girls graduated in May 2018 along with 11 other ECHO students.

Happy Birthday, ECHO!

Celebrating 20 years of reaching teen parents with education, hope, and opportunity

Twenty years ago LSSI responded to a community need — high school students, then and now, who discover they are pregnant can often face a difficult future. Those without family support have few places to turn for help. Nationally, less than 40% of teen parents graduate from high school. Without a diploma, these parents' options are very limited. Many are destined to repeat a cycle of poverty for themselves — and their children.

Many teen parents in Allen County face brighter prospects today, thanks in part to LSSI's ECHO (Education Creates Hope and Opportunity) program. Through ECHO, case managers work with teen moms and dads to remove barriers that would otherwise prevent them from achieving their high school diplomas.

The results speak for themselves. Over 96% of eligible ECHO participants obtain a high school diploma or HSE (High School Equivalency). ECHO is achieving results, such as the graduation rate, well over the national average of pregnant and parenting teens.

According to Libby Martin, LSSI Director of Case Management, the secret to ECHO's success goes far beyond help with homework or childcare. Case managers teach valuable life skills through one-on-one, encouraging mentor relationships. "Some of our ECHO clients don't have a positive adult role model in their lives," says Libby. "Their parents might be working long hours or facing financial hardship themselves. In fact, many of our clients are the first in their families to graduate from high school."

Libby believes the key to breaking that cycle of poverty and government assistance is not the program itself, but the people who implement it. "What we find most meaningful to our clients," says Libby, "is the fact that they form a positive relationship with a trusted adult. My favorite thing about the program is the enrichment we offer through those relationships. Our case managers support the whole person, exploring students' interests and identifying areas for growth. We set high expectations and help them build the skills they need to meet their goals."

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Let's keep in touch

Interested in being kept in the loop? Sign up for our mailing list and you'll have access to regular updates on happenings at LSSI. Sign up at www.lssin.org.

Please indicate if you prefer to receive updates via email or in your mailbox.



A Time to Celebrate

A letter from Angela Moellering, President and CEO

I am excited to announce that we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of our ECHO program (Education Creates Hope and Opportunity). LSSI has helped change the trajectory for so many young families through ECHO services!

ECHO is successful because we walk alongside teen parents for two or three years, helping them achieve long-term success and financial stability. The practical assistance ECHO provides allows 96% of eligible ECHO participants to obtain a high school diploma or HSE (High School Equivalency). Your generous giving supports our staff as they help teen parents overcome difficulties and discover new opportunities.

To learn more about the impact LSSI is making in our community, please join us at our third annual Party at the Market. We will feature LSSI Works (a workforce initiative of LSSI) and share more stories of lives being transformed. This fun-filled evening is a great way to gather downtown with friends and enjoy great food, local brew, and live music.

You won't want to miss our Party at the Market on Thursday, October 4, 2018. Please come and invite your friends! Call **Rachel** today at **(260) 426-3347** for tickets to this wonderful event. For more event details, please visit our website at **LSSIN.org**. I hope to see you there!

JOIN US FOR

LSSI WORKS

PARTY

AT THE MARKET

LOCAL FOOD. LOCAL BREW. LOCAL IMPACT.

Tickets are available now for our annual fall downtown celebration, the LSSI Works Party at the Market. This year, the event will be held on Thursday, October 4th, rain or shine at the Barr Street Market (302 E. Berry Street).

This night is a celebration of the local downtown culture, as well as the positive impact LSSI (Lasting Stability and Success for Individuals) Works is making in our community.

Live music will be provided by Farmland Jazz Band along with food and drinks by Proximo and Hoppy Gnome. The event will also feature a silent auction with items that celebrate Northeast Indiana. All proceeds will support the LSSI Works program, which helps those that are unemployed or underemployed find sustainable employment!

Join us for a beautiful fall evening of fun with a purpose. Tickets for this popular event go fast! Purchase online or in person at the Lutheran Social Services office, 333 E. Lewis Street.

LSSI Party at the Market

October 4, 2018

5:30-7:30 PM

Barr Street Market – 302 E. Berry Street

www.lssin.org/events/party-at-the-market

For more information about sponsoring the LSSI Works Party at the Market, please contact **Rachel (260)426-3347**.



**You can donate online with a credit card at www.lssin.org.
Just hit the donate button at the top of the page!**

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Some of those skills include time management, communication, parenting, nutrition, decision-making, and money management. "If the teens hold unhealthy views of themselves," says Libby, "we also work on building resiliency skills and helping teens create protective factors. We want our students to catch a vision that fosters growth, one that opens doors for a positive future — not just for themselves, but also for their children."

ECHO receives referrals from outside sources, such as teachers or school guidance counselors, but many of today's clients are self-referrals. They have heard about the success of the program and want to experience it for themselves. "To me," says Libby, "that speaks to the passion of our staff. They are dedicated individuals who really care about these teens and want to give them these skills. I can't over-emphasize the power of a relationship with a caring adult. It's critical to begin the growth process toward a new and brighter future."

Part of that vision includes reaching teen moms and dads. "We pride ourselves on being able to serve the fathers," says Libby. "We know that father engagement is important to children, and we want to champion those healthy relationships. Every one of the young men we have served wants to learn about his child's developmental milestones and develop a positive relationship long term."

That desire is true for the mothers as well. "All the teens we serve want the best for their children," says Libby. "That motivation is a powerful drive that helps them overcome obstacles so they can reach their goals."

"I can't over-emphasize the power of a relationship with a caring adult. It's critical to begin the growth process toward a new and brighter future."

— Libby Martin, LSSI Director of Case Management

Case managers help the students address barriers that are unique to each teen. Some face childcare issues, while others need help with income or lack support from their families. Libby states, "What they all have in common is the fact that they have to get their homework done and show up for school while also dealing with very adult issues. They have to live the life of a teen, yet still have the responsibilities of an adult."

These teen parents are persistent because they know the power of an education. 65% of ECHO clients enroll in post-secondary education. Of these students, more than half stay with LSSI while they seek a college degree. "Through ECHO," says Angie Moellering, president and CEO, "we are doing more than helping teen parents get an education. We are changing the culture of families. That is not a quick fix, but it is definitely worth it."

Libby agrees. "What we really hope is to break the cycle of poverty," says Libby. Changing the trajectory for the teens in ECHO and their children is only possible because of individual donors and grant support. Your giving allows LSSI to meet this community need and give hope to the teen parent and their child. ■

E.C.H.O. Education Creates Hope & Opportunity



Creating Hope and Opportunity for the Next Generation



Meet Brittany. Brittany is a 17-year-old junior in high school **working toward her high school diploma and raising her one-year-old daughter.**

Brittany works a part-time job after school and relies on **government subsidized programs**, such as childcare vouchers, healthcare and WIC, which totals \$3,445 per month.



Brittany **enrolls in the ECHO program** and begins meeting weekly one-on-one with a case manager, where they **begin to identify strengths, goals, and additional resources** in the community to break down personal barriers that prevent her from obtaining her diploma.



With two years of support from her case manager, Brittany **graduates high school** enrolls in college for the fall. With scholarships and financial aid, Brittany will be able to receive a **higher paying job** to support her family without government assistance in the future.



Brittany works 40 years until her retirement at age 65 and continues to pay taxes. Over the course of her career, Brittany's employment **creates a \$1,011,977** positive change to our community's economy.

LSSI ECHO case managers help 17 teen moms and dads, like Brittany, graduate that year. They remain employed and move beyond government assistance. In their 40-year careers, they together have created a **\$17.2 Million positive financial impact in our community!**



ECHO, Education Creates Hope and Opportunities by Lutheran Social Services of Indiana, seeks to support pregnant and parenting moms and dads complete their education and develop skills to break the cycle of teen pregnancy. **A gift to support ECHO impacts Brittany and our community!**

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of *Perspective*, please contact Rachel Hardesty at rhardesty@lssin.org or (260) 426-3347.

Mission

Lutheran Social Services of Indiana expresses the love of Jesus Christ for all people through services that empower individuals and families to move toward social, emotional, and spiritual wholeness.



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In Their Own Words

Here's What People Are Saying About LSSI

In the last issue of our newsletter, we introduced this "In Their Own Words" column. It's our way of showcasing our amazing volunteers, staff, and clients by letting them tell about their accomplishments and experiences with LSSI—in their own words. In this issue, we feature quotes from individuals who have completed one year of career-path employment through LSSI Works, a workforce initiative of LSSI.

"Laugh at yourself, ignore the haters, let the loudest voice in your head be your own and don't waste your energy on things you can't control." – Melissa Ormsby (September 2017)

"With belief in one's self, and keeping faith and love in your heart, the possibilities are endless. Use every tool at your disposal and open the door to your future." – Danny Snow, Jr. (September 2017)

"Life is too short to let your past ruin your future. Once you know who you truly are, your dreams will become a reality!" – Steven Tretter (January 2018)

"I shouldn't have kept looking back because as soon as I turned around I saw my goals and opportunities!" – Clarissa Dunnigan (February 2018)

"It's not the circumstances in your life that make you who you are, it's the way you deal with them that define you. Always wake up with a smile on your face and a song in your heart." – Dave Ward (March 2018)

"No matter the age, with faith and perseverance, you can and will succeed." – Veronica Wells (March 2018)