LSSI Pivots Quickly to Support Families During COVID-19

Like many of our supporters and stakeholders, the Lutheran Social Services team is responding to the coronavirus pandemic with creativity, resiliency, and problem solving. LSSI staff have been working diligently to continue to express the love of Jesus Christ in response to our neighbors’ needs during COVID-19.

Over the past month, our organization has rapidly adapted programming to assist clients, while protecting the health of our community and staff. This transition has included moving visits to virtual platforms. Programs that were once thought could only be delivered in person have been adapted to meet safety needs while continuing important work. For example, LSSI Works continues to deliver personal and professional development classes daily via WebEx. Balance Works, Recovery Care, Financial Stability and Community partners have all moved to HIPAA compliant, 1:1 video conferencing tools.

Some of these platforms, such as telehealth for Balance Works, have been planned for some time, but were fast-tracked in a matter of days. A project that originally was anticipated to take 6+ months to implement was completed quickly due to the diligence and hard work of (Balance Works staff) our team. These changes have allowed us to care for our clients during a turbulent time. During these times of stress or trauma our mental health services are essential.

“LSSI has been able to adjust quickly to remain connected to our clients and ensure a smooth intake for new clients because of the investments in our overall organizational leadership over the past several years,” says Shawna Squibb, CFO. “We are small enough as an organization (70 employees strong) to pivot quickly as we make educated, informed decisions about direction, yet large enough to provide the technology and administrative support needed by our programs to migrate to virtual platforms needed in this environment.”

LSSI is also providing up-to-date online resources for families facing food shortages, transportation issues, and health concerns. Through LSSI’s website, individuals can access information on mental health, community resources, parenting, and educational help. You can find this information at lssin.org/covid19.

“We’re constantly adapting and changing in meaningful ways. If we see a need, we’ll shift our programs to adapt to those needs within the scope of our impact statement.” – Gillian Frazier, LSSI Dev. Coordinator

continued on page 3
An Opportunity to Demonstrate Our Faith
A letter from Angela Moellering, President and CEO

At Lutheran Social Services, we’ve focused on serving our families while adapting to meet critical needs in uncertain times. During this unprecedented moment, we’re continuing to ensure that families are supported and their needs are met. We’ve maintained quality services and made our transition to new technologies as seamless as possible.

When COVID-19 hit in March, we quickly adjusted so the programs we provide would not be interrupted. We offered telehealth services for Balance Works, video conference visits for Case Management Services, and online personal and professional development classes for LSSI Works. We’re continuing to express the love of Christ during turbulent times, while providing a safe, effective work environment so the LSSI staff can serve the community well in the midst of these changes.

In the coming months, we anticipate a growing demand for our services. Many families, already facing huge obstacles, will find their circumstances have become more uncertain during this time. They are dealing with the stress of having children at home and possible furloughs or layoffs. They may not be able to pay their bills, deferring them until later, so they snowball into overwhelming debt.

LSSI is addressing the immediate need and preparing for the long term needs of those we serve over the next six months to a year. Your financial support and prayers are needed now more than ever as help families regain and maintain stability.

If you’ve made a monthly pledge of support, thank you! Your gifts ensure we will be there for the individuals and families who need us. If you have not yet become a monthly donor, would you consider consistently supporting our work in this critical time?

Even in uncertain times, we recognize that God is in control and that none of this surprises Him. We have an opportunity to demonstrate our faith to the community. While we adapt our programs in response to our neighbors’ needs, our faith and hope remain steadfast. We’ll continue to care for the vulnerable and turn our faith into action. With your help, we will empower our community, become more resilient, and help our families return to a place of stability.

2020 Annual Celebration Highlights

Thank you to those who attended our 2020 Annual Celebration, Unfinished. Held March 5, 2020 at Ceruti’s, the theme celebrated what we have learned from Philippians 1:6, “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

There were 219 guests, 44 of which were delegates from their respective congregations, who met with staff representatives from several programs. Programming for the night included an introduction to EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) as a part of Balance Works, a mental health initiative of LSSI.

Guests also enjoyed a night of entertainment from the Fort Wayne Children’s Choir with a selection of songs by their highest level group, the FWCC Chamber Chorale.

Funds donated in response to our Annual Celebration will support the on-going work of LSSI. Thank you!
LSSI Provides Online Community

Early in the COVID-19 crisis, staff expressed a need to have a reliable resource for our clients, beyond the noise of social media. Out of this conversation came www.lssin.org/COVID19. This webpage includes the latest information on utility assistance, resources for parents and children, food pantries and free lunches for kids, internet access for low income families, mental health resources, transportation, unemployment, and foreclosure prevention. Resources for behavior health, addiction recovery, and stress reduction during COVID-19 are also on the page.

In addition to community resources, parents can find resources to explain COVID-19 to children, as well as articles on how to help children process their changing circumstances and why they need to wash their hands and stay home from school. For families who want to provide educational resources, there is a list of children’s websites, including virtual trips to museums, parks, and zoos.

“The really great thing about this website is that it has become a resource for our entire area. We are being recognized as a resource for basic needs support and education. We are seeing our guide shared by partner organizations, churches, and schools all over our community,” said Gillian Frazier, LSSI Development Coordinator.

Because the environment is ever-changing, the guide is also changing. Updates are being made to the website and the PDF resource guides linked on the site almost daily. Some of these resources are sourced by LSSI staff, but others are shared with staff by partner organizations, or individuals that have recognized a community need.

“It has been a pretty amazing project between several staff and community members to put this all together. It shows our care and resilience, not just as LSSI, but as part of Northern Indiana.” Frazier explained.

Other important website links are also included such as the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control, the Indiana Department of Health, and the Allen County Department of Health.

The COVID-19 resource page can be accessed through our website at lssin.org/covid19.

Save the Date!

October 1, 2020 | 5:30-7:30 p.m. | Promenade Park Foundation Pavilion

We are looking forward to a night of celebrating LSSI Works and its impact in our community with our annual fall celebration, the LSSI Works Party at the Park!

COVID-19 ...Continued from page 1

Because of the current unknown nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, LSSI is not just responding to immediate need, but are also making plans for the long-term needs of our community. The school closures and economic slowdown that started at the end of March will likely create a significant need for services in the coming months.

Our supporters play a vital role in helping us meet the growing demand for our programs. This increase of those in need of service requires an increase in resources to provide for those clients. LSSI is working alongside community partners to ensure families and individuals are receiving the care they need. The ability for LSSI to pivot rapidly and network with community agencies is essential as we continue to support vulnerable families affected by COVID-19.

“While none of us have had all the answers through this, we have made the best decisions we could at the time with what we knew to be true,” added Shawna Squibb. “We also have held strong to our faith that God provides and all things are possible through Him.”

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of Perspective, please contact Gillian Frazier at gfrazier@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.

Thank you to our Annual Celebration Sponsors!