



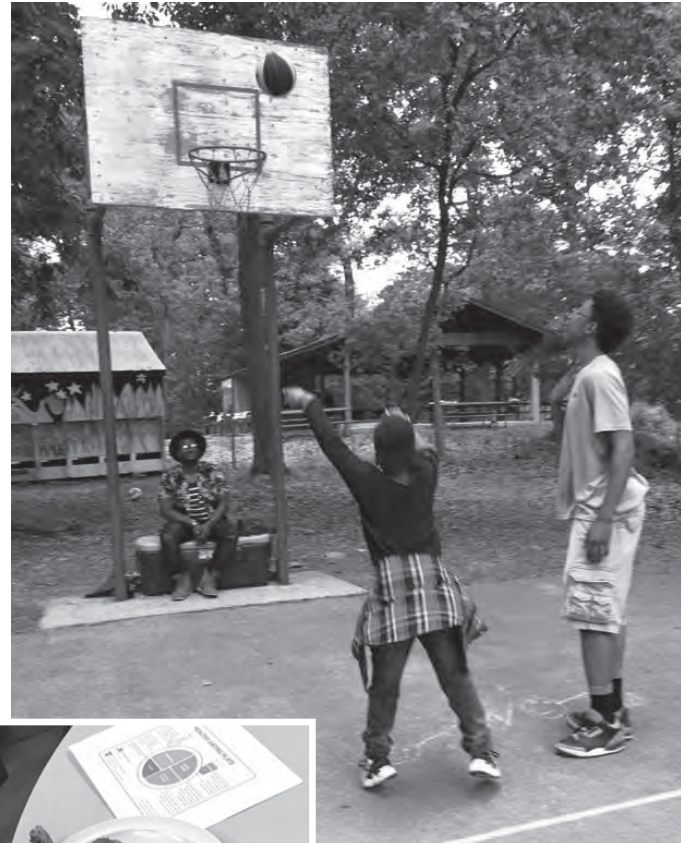
A *Fit & Fun* *Summer at* *Youth Haven*

By: Dara Yahya, Staff

Does one week at camp really make a difference? This summer's counselors and staff would yell an ecstatic, YES! The summer sparked health and wellness transformations that are sure to linger throughout the year.

Thanks to daily wellness sessions and a little prompting from the camp's Diamond Rule ("Try new things"), campers practiced making nutritionally balanced plates for their meals. They also led evening yoga and breathing exercises for their fellow campers and elevated heart rates to exercise levels in fun and challenging ways. By day three, even the camp kitchen staff took notice of the healthy choices that the campers were making: increased consumption of water and vegetables, skipping seconds of dessert, and neglect of the sugary "bug juice" option. One camper said, "I'm making a healthy choice; I'll skip dinner's dessert, I'd rather have s'mores at the campfire." Another young camper said, "I'm gonna ask for more salads at home."

Now that camp is over, Youth Haven youth and families are getting more nutrition education, fitness events, and stress management activities at home and other Youth Haven gatherings—all aimed at improving holistic health.



Above: After a couple days of practice, this camper did pretty well!



Left: Kids compare their meal choices to the "healthy plate" diagram

Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area www.lssnca.org United Way #8146 CFC #78343

REBUILDING A CAREER IN THE UNITED STATES
"THE BEST KIND OF FOSTER PARENT"
IT ONLY TAKES ONE TO RALLY MANY
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**INTERFAITH ROUNDTABLE
BREAKS BARRIERS TO SERVICE**

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Religious Dialogue Celebrates Diversity

As one of the largest refugee resettlement agencies in the Washington DC Metro Area, LSS/NCA staff and families were invited to meet with Secretary of State, John Kerry and the United Nations High Commission on Refugees Special Envoy, Angelina Jolie-Pitt.

The inter-faith meeting was held by the ADAMS (All Dulles Area

Muslim Society) in celebration of World Refugee Day and Iftar (the Muslim daily celebration of the end of fasting). The event showcased community support for refugee families and the need for religious dialogue across all faith communities to truly make a difference in the lives of those fleeing war and persecution.

Along with Refugee Services staff, two families (Syrian and Ethiopian)



Refugee families stand with Secretary Kerry and Angelina Jolie-Pitt.



resettled by LSS/NCA joined in the discussion. For them, it was an opportunity to see the depth of community support found in America despite recent media and political discourse. By bringing together all faiths in celebration of diversity, the event captured the spirit of working together for the betterment of all.

Mamadou Sy, LSS/NCA Refugee Director with Special Envoy, Angelina Jolie-Pitt.

Rebuilding a Professional Career in the United States

By: Jasmine Stocks, Staff

Imagine you are a nurse, an IT technician, or a college professor. How many years of school did you attend? How many interviews did you go on before you nabbed your perfect job? How many years did it take to get your first promotion?

When fleeing persecution and war, refugees must also leave their homes, loved ones, and careers. In the first 90 days of resettlement, the greatest priority of LSS/NCA case workers is to help refugees find a job to support themselves and their families. Highly skilled refugees must start building their career from the beginning: completing additional education, building credentials, and working

entry level jobs. Every opportunity to network, strengthen a resume, or practice for an interview bolsters a refugee's career in America.

Daniel Mekibib, LSS/NCA board member and manager of the Workforce Development Center in Alexandria, invited LSS/NCA to co-sponsor the 2016 Skilled Immigrants Workshop. Over two dozen LSS/NCA refugee clients attended the event at which they were able to join a workshop in their career field: healthcare, accounting and business, entrepreneurship, international development, teaching, engineering, or IT.



Each workshop hosted speakers and companies eager to network and share tips regarding the particulars of their professions, including potential challenges and additional education that refugees may want to acquire as they pursue their careers in the United States.

A GOOD-BYE LETTER FOR A

By: Rochelle White, Staff

Beautiful Beginning

Dear Kimora,

I enjoyed watching you grow up to be a beautiful young woman. I will miss our conversations about Scandal, Kerry Washington, relationships, books, and music. I will miss your spoken word performances, your humor, positivity, and sarcasm. You are smart and have created great values for yourself. Honey, you went from being in a shell to wearing heels in photo shoots! I'm happy and sad to end my role as your social worker. You will be great!



This past summer, my work with Kimora came to a wonderful end. Kimora entered care in 2012 with her little brother. Initially, she was placed in several different homes because of her tendency to act out in response to past life experiences. Last month the court granted legal guardianship to Ms. Bowman, a foster mother who saw Kimora's intelligence and beautiful spirit. I wrote these letters to commemorate the occasion.

Dear Ms. Bowman,

I have seen your commitment to your children and to Kimora. I love your energy and I know Kimora is the perfect match for your family. I will miss the conversations with your children in the dining room. I'm happy for your family and the many blessings that will come your way. I thank you for being a positive parent for Kimora.

"The Best Kind of Foster Parent"

By: Yolanda Palmer, Staff

Denise Greene was eager to be a foster parent and open her home and heart to a child in need. However, her husband Lee was hesitant and guarded. What type of children will be placed in my home? How will I discipline a child who is not mine? But as a dutiful husband, Mr. Greene reluctantly agreed to attend the foster care training with his wife. It was important to her and maybe he would find the answers he needed.

In the first couple of classes, Mr. Greene made it clear that he was unsure about his wife's decision, and he was not convinced that he wanted to be a foster parent. But he was funny and light hearted.

He was jovial but firm. LSS/NCA staff knew Mr. Greene would make the best kind of foster parent—a loving a respectful role model—so they encouraged the couple to continue classes.

After three weeks, Mr. Greene's heart began to soften as he heard how foster homes had changed lives and inspired dreams. He heard the statistics and understood the urgent need for foster parents in the community. He asked more questions and engaged other foster parents in class to learn more. He spent a full weekend with a friend who had adopted 3 children and he lit up in class as he talked about the strength of their family.

Mr. and Mrs. Greene have completed training and are finishing the licensing process. They are both eagerly awaiting their first placement.



Mrs. & Mrs. Green

If you are curious about opening your home to a child in need or have questions about Foster Care, please contact Patricia Britt at BrittP@LSSNCA.org or (202) 723-3000 x.254

INTERFAITH ROUNDTABLE Breaks Barriers to Service

By: Meagan Chevalier, Staff

“We honor our faiths through our service, whatever those faiths may be,”—the first statement of the LSS/NCA round table discussion on interfaith community service. When people of all faiths work together we can break down barriers in our community, stay in-tune with what people need, build networks of service, confront biases, and learn from others.

Participants from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities joined our summer round table discussion with these topics in mind. By the end of the day, participants had built new relationships and brainstormed exciting ways to better connect with people of different faiths, allowing greater opportunity to serve those in need. If you are looking to connect with people of diverse faiths and experiences in your community, here are a few ideas that resonated for the participants:

- Take initiative by organizing opportunities for people of different faiths to connect: host a meal and conversation or create a mailing list to inform others about your organization’s community activities.
- Consider designating a person/congregation member to serve as an interfaith liaison with other community groups and organizations.
- Become aware of biases and educate yourself to be able to dispel myths and teach others.
- Make an extra effort to include young people in your work—youth are wonderful resources in creating communities that are inclusive.



Interfaith Partners and participants in round table.

DC Community Partners Helping Youth Haven Families

Win

By: Dara Yahya, Staff

The stigma associated with AIDS is a powerful force that affects each family member and can hinder treatment and damage relationships. Many times, these same children and teens also have to hurdle the trauma and stigma of poverty, foster care, incarceration, or the journey of immigration. A healthy mind, fit body, and trusted relationships are some of the keys to winning the battle against stigma.

Youth Haven is committed to engaging young people and their families to become “healthy, connected, and succeeding.” Thanks to generous financial support, Youth Haven’s Program

Manager is now working full-time to steer and build year-round programming for youth to improve their health management and fitness habits, develop trusting relationships, and increase their opportunities for success.

Youth Haven isn’t doing it alone. LSS/NCA sponsored a “HIV Youth Providers’ Summit” in September to strengthen local partnerships that help youth and family members manage medical treatment and bolster techniques to cope with stress and isolation caused by stigma.

Several local supporters are making a difference in this increased

effort. A recent grant from the *Quality of Health Foundation* is helping fund year-round activities to build healthy eating habits, understand the link between nutrition and disease, and practice stress management techniques. *Mary House*, a community based organization that provides transitional housing services, shelter and support programs to homeless and struggling families, received a large donation of new bicycles and shared 12 of those bikes with Youth Haven children. In addition, *Helping Children Grow* and a number of area churches donated school supplies and backpacks for the new school year.

It Only Takes One to Rally Many

By: Kiersten Rossetto Nassar, Staff

Stacy Gilbert was ecstatic about the prospect of helping resettle refugees in the Washington, DC Metro Area. So in February, she and her fellow congregants, attended the LSS/NCA Good Neighbor orientation. Like many large committee structures, her congregation was slow to organize. But knowing the need for help was immediate and ongoing, Stacy couldn't wait.

She decided to become a Good Neighbor on her own and aimed to set up one full apartment home for an incoming family. Stacy, dedicated to her congregation and their community service, wanted to demonstrate that overthinking the process or self-doubt are barriers to success.

"There is nothing that people won't help you with as long as you ask," Stacy explained. Stacy was able to utilize local mailing lists to request volunteers and household items. Her efforts attracted more support than she expected including aid from local Girl Scout groups, family, friends, and even strangers on the street who offered to unload bulky items. Stacy recruited enough support and donations to fill an apartment, rent a U-Haul, and gather volunteers to pick up furniture and decorate the apartment.

Stacy says, "I'm not fixing the refugee crisis...but it is so rewarding, healing to me really, to be able to do this for families coming here to my own community.



Stacy standing on the border of Syria.

With all the [political] rhetoric in Maryland about not welcoming refugees, I want to be able to make a stand and affirm that we DO want them here. This is indicative of who we are as people. And it is so great!"

Editor's Note: Since May, Stacy has been able to complete two apartment set-ups with the help of her community.



Deloitte Partnership Jumps Hurdle of DC Housing Costs

By: Aerlande Wontamo, Staff

The average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Washington, DC is \$2,000 per month. The exorbitant cost of living and access to affordable housing pose particular challenges to refugee families building their lives in our community after leaving everything behind.

In early 2016, a pro bono team from Deloitte offered to partner with LSS/NCA in navigating this resettlement barrier in addition to the challenges of managing in-kind donation inventory. For several months, the Deloitte team

conducted interviews with Refugee & Immigration Services case managers as a way to access major challenges identified by staff and refugee families.

This summer, the Deloitte team presented tangible solutions. These tools included a google based inventory system that tracks real-time in-kind donation inventory so staff know exactly what is available at LSS/NCA offices and storage units. Furthermore, the tool can forecast future needs, thereby allowing the program to plan accordingly and conduct

appropriate outreach based on upcoming refugee needs.

Additionally, the team created outreach materials to recruit and educate local landlords about refugee housing challenges. As a result, a new page was created on our website to feature these resources and encourage landlords to partner with LSS/NCA, providing refugee families greater access to affordable housing. Visit LSSNCA.org and click on "Rent to a Refugee" to view these new tools.

THANK YOU DELOITTE!

4 WAYS TO GIVE This Holiday Season

Consider the families and children served by LSS/NCA as you plan your holiday giving! Mailing a financial gift or giving online is quick and easy, but here are a few additional ways to walk with those in need:

★ **AMAZON SMILE**

Amazon Smile is a simple and automatic way for you to support us every time you shop at no cost to you. When you shop Amazon online, a portion of the money you spend will go to your favorite charitable organization. Go to <https://smile.amazon.com> and choose Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area.

★ **THRIVENT CHOICE**

Are you a Thrivent Member? With Thrivent Choice®, you can recommend that a portion of the Thrivent Financial charitable outreach funds go to LSS/NCA. Since 2010, members have used this program to direct \$300 million to churches and nonprofits nationwide.

★ **UNITED WAY**

Give hope to refugee families, foster children, and those affected by HIV/AIDS through the United Way. The LSS/NCA United Way number is 8146

★ **IN-KIND DONATIONS**

Host an in-kind donation drive with your neighbors, colleagues, or congregation. You can visit our website to find our most current wish-list items. No time to shop? Consider purchasing a welcome kit for a refugee family directly through our website. Visit LSSNCA.org, click "Get Involved" and "Wish List."

What's new with Vann?

By: Vann



Summer is my favorite time of year at LSS/NCA because it means a ride to Youth Haven Summer Camp. Each year, I get to see little eyes light up as we chug up the steep mountain to Mar Lu Ridge. I hear the giggles get louder as we near the cabin. For these kids, it is the week they look forward to every year.

This summer, I was parked near a dirt road at camp where the children were practicing a mindfulness exercise. The counselors asked, "What do you love about yourself and what do you still want to work on?" Then the campers were told to walk back and forth while concentrating on their answers. One young boy, walked his line nearly screaming, "I like that I am kind! And funny! And I want to work on focusing." When asked by an older camper why he was speaking so loudly, the boy replied, "I have to say it loudly if I believe it." Through Youth Haven, you give children the greatest gift of all—belief in themselves.

Read the full story and see photos from camp on my blog at LSSNCA.org.

Planned gifts can come in many forms. Which one is right for you?

Bequests can be the simplest vehicle for making a gift that will have an impact on LSS/NCA for generations to come. Bequests can include gifts of cash, securities, real estate or other property, or a portion of the residue of one's estate.

You may also want to name LSS/NCA as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or a retirement fund. You can choose how your bequest will be used. Learn about your choices and read sample language on our website http://lssnca.org/get_involved/make_donation/gifts

We can help you plan your gift so that you support LSS/NCA's mission while making sure that you and your loved ones have the financial stability you need for your own future. We welcome the opportunity to talk with you about the best way to achieve your personal philanthropic goals. If you are considering a gift to LSS/NCA through appreciated securities, bequest, life insurance policy, or real estate and would like more information, contact Susan Haine at (703) 698-5026 x.138.





A Comment from Chris

Dear Friends:

Can you believe it is October already? The leaves have changed to red and golden hues, the pumpkins are in full force in front of every supermarket, and once again we can sleep with the windows open to enjoy the fresh crisp air. This year, October also means that LSS/NCA is preparing for the beginning of a wonderful journey— both the celebration of our centennial and charting the course towards our next 100 years of service.

Since 1917, Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area has been *Serving Boldly*. Today, hand-in-hand with community partners and with support from friends like you, we find homes for children without love or family, like Kimora (page 3); we guide refugees as they reach our shores after fleeing war or persecution; and we help create opportunities for disadvantaged youth through programs like Youth Haven's holistic health workshops (page 4).

Services like these are only possible because of you! The importance and necessity of our partners has never been more evident than in the last few months. Newly resettled refugees have strengthened their career potential through employment workshops (page 2); LSS/NCA has begun to deepen its roots of service by engaging in conversation with interfaith partners (page 5); while a dozen new landlords have contacted LSS/NCA to join our team because of resources created through pro bono volunteers at Deloitte (page 5). This is only a snapshot of the past 100 years and yet it highlights how fundamental each of you are to the hopes, dreams, and futures of families and youth across the DC/Maryland/Virginia Metropolitan region.

Starting in January, you will be invited into the fray of celebration. We will be asking for your participation at **We Gather to Serve** regional round table discussions, at both an **LSS/NCA Day of Service AND Day of Prayer**, and at exciting public fundraising events. I encourage you to join with our staff as we celebrate and recognize how far we have come, but also in looking ahead to all we have left to accomplish together.

It is an exciting time to be at Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area! I look forward to the celebration we will share together.

Blessings,

Christine P. Connell
CEO

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Religious Dialogue Celebrates Diversity

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INSIDE THIS EDITION

**A *Fit & Fun*
 Summer at
 Youth Haven**



Wellness and fitness events prompt healthy decisions from the youngest campers.

Read the story on the front cover.

**A FOSTER CARE
 GOOD-BYE**

3 FOSTER CARE

**DELOITTE PARTNERSHIP
 RECRUITS LANDLORDS**

5 COMMUNITY

**PARTNERS GIVE YOUTH
 HAVEN THE WIN**

4 CCM

**4 WAYS TO GIVE THIS
 HOLIDAY SEASON**

6 DEVELOPMENT

Save the Dates

- Oct 15 Volunteer: Help LSS/NCA Recruit Foster Parents
- Oct 15 Youth Haven Dance Party for Fitness
- Oct 18 Journey to Action Tour (MD)
- Oct 20 Foster Parent Orientation (MD)
- Oct 22 Youth Haven Dance Party for Fitness
- Oct 29 Youth Haven Dance Party for Fitness
- Nov 5 Youth Haven Dance Party for Fitness
- Nov 17 Foster Parent Orientation
- Nov 19 National Adoption Day
- Dec 15 Foster Parent Orientation

For more information & events, visit LSSNCA.org