



Springing into Action

How a 12-year-old Made another Child's Dream Come True

Sara is 12 years old and will be having her Bat Mitzvah this December. As part of that process, she was encouraged to become involved with a "Mitzvah" (good deed) project. Sara chose to send a little girl in the foster care system to gymnastics for a year.

Sara has been passionate about gymnastics since the time she could walk. "Not only is it fun for her, but it makes her feel good about herself," says Andrea, Sara's mother. She wanted to help a child who may not have the same opportunities as she does to be able to feel that joy. Through the National Council for Adoption, Sara was directed to LSS/NCA, to identify a youth in care who had an interest in gymnastics.

K.V. is a 7 year old girl who came into care in spring 2012 due to domestic violence, and physical and educational neglect. She loves trying new things and is a hyper active child who benefits from structured



activities. Therefore, LSS/NCA staff thought K.V. would be the perfect child to be awarded this opportunity. K.V. was happy to be selected and is eager and enthusiastic to start working in the gym!

Sara raised more than \$850 by emailing friends and family and selling lemonade and baked goods. She researched gyms in the area where K.V. resides and coordinated her registration for the class. She also contacted GK, a leotard distributor, and asked whether they would donate a leotard for the cause, which they did!

It's people like Sara that help LSS/NCA carry out its mission to bring hope to the children and families we serve.

K.V. is so excited for the chance to try gymnastics, and Sara is equally excited to have made a dream come true.

It's people like Sara that help LSS/NCA carry out its mission to bring hope to the children and families we serve. Interested in joining this young lady and many more in acts of kindness to a youth or family in need? Call (202) 723-3000 ext. 283 to learn how you can make a difference in a child's life. ■

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

**FOSTER CARE
FAMILIES
VISIT KINGS
DOMION**



**GODS WORK,
OUR HANDS
DAY OF
SERVICE**

**LSS/NCA
AWARDED
TAPROOT
GRANT**

**NEW: REFUGEE KIDS
SUMMER PROGRAM**

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Engaging and Enabling Youth

LSS/NCA's New Refugee Kids Summer Program



Youth in Refugee Summer Program visit the United States Capitol



LSS/NCA kicked off the Refugee Kids Summer Program in July, a new initiative that targets school-aged refugee children between the ages of 5 and 18. It provides participants with different opportunities to practice their English language skills and stay active during the summer months.

The Summer Program attempts to engage children in their neighborhoods and expose them to the various resources our community has to offer. For its inaugural event, the Summer Program took a trip to Washington, D.C., where kids were treated to a tour of the United States Capitol and the Library of Congress. After the trip, each child was asked to write about their experience and/or favorite moment to encourage the use of English language skills outside of a classroom setting.

By the end of the first day Lelyan (Age 6) made two new friends and couldn't wait for camp to start again the next day.



Youth visit the County Fair to get a taste of American tradition

The Summer Program also works to engage children in cultural events and classes available throughout the area. In the beginning of August, the Program traveled to Arlington, VA, to visit the Arlington County Fair. The kids rode the Ferris Wheel, got their faces painted, and ate lots of delicious fair food. Games like "Catch the Fish," and "Hammer Swing" ensured that all the kids went home with inflatable prizes and a big smile!

From August 12-16, Summer Program children between the ages of 5 and 7 attended a week-long art camp at the Art League in Alexandria, VA. This amazing opportunity gave children the chance to express themselves and practice their English in a friendly and welcoming environment. Campers sculpted animals, created abstract watercolor paintings and most importantly had fun. By the end of the first day Lelyan (Age 6) made two new friends and couldn't wait for camp to start again the next day.

As the summer season comes to a close, the Summer Program will focus on preparing children for the upcoming school year. Parent orientations, school-supply drives and college tours are just a few of the events planned for this fall. We hope the Program will continue to grow and serve as a resource for children not only during the summer but throughout the year. ■



Lelyan (age 6) proudly displays her very own creation

Foster Care Families Culminate Summer with a Trip to Kings Dominion

Llesenia Santiago



The Foster Care and Adoption Program sponsored a fun-filled trip on July 27, 2013, to Kings Dominion Amusement Park with our foster children, foster parents and birth families. A charter bus took 50 guests to the amusement park near Richmond where all the attendants had a great time and shared in an opportunity they rarely receive—the chance to leave home for a family fun day.

There was a catered lunch that the children thoroughly enjoyed by taking advantage of the unlimited snack supply.

The children compared stories about their experience and shared how much fun they had in the water park. They were able to make friends with other foster children and spend time with their biological siblings.

The birth families enjoyed conversing with the foster parents and exchanging their experiences with the child welfare system. And foster parents who have become adoptive parents were able to encourage foster parents who have yet to begin the adoption process.

All the attendants had a great time and shared in an opportunity they rarely receive—the chance to leave home for a family fun day.

The day was full of laughter and excitement. Children made new friends while foster and biological parents enhanced their own support networks. The day was a great culmination of summer and the perfect lead into the school year. We would like to especially thank Tekisha Brandon, Foster Parent Support Specialist, for organizing the event and Patricia Britt for chaperoning and helping to make it a truly special day. ■

Anyone interested in becoming licensed as a foster parent/caregiver and join LSS/NCA in the effort of Rebuilding Lives please contact **Rachel Pierre at (202) 723-3000 x235**



5 Myths of HIV/AIDS

The stigma associated with AIDS and HIV is still very real throughout our communities. This fear and misunderstanding keeps people from seeking information and restrains those who may have the illness from pursuing treatment. Here are a few myths about HIV/AIDS:

Myth: HIV can be spread through kissing or sharing utensils

Fact: HIV may be found in saliva, but it is too small an amount to infect anyone

Myth: HIV can be spread through non-sexual physical contact such as hugging, sharing toilet seats, and from mosquito bites.

Fact: HIV cannot be spread through physical contact unless you have an open wound which comes into contact with the body fluids (semen, vaginal fluids, breast milk, blood or pre-ejaculatory fluids) of an HIV-positive person. Body fluids such as saliva, sweat, and tears cannot transmit HIV. Also, as the virus cannot survive in insects; HIV cannot be transmitted through mosquito bites.

Myth: I'm straight and don't use IV drugs – I won't become HIV-positive.

Fact: Most men do become HIV-positive through sexual contact with other men or through injection drug use. However, about 16% of men and 78% of women become HIV-positive through heterosexual contact.

Myth: I could tell if my partner was HIV-positive.

Fact: You can be HIV-positive and not have any symptoms for years. The only way for you or your partner to know if you're HIV-positive is to get tested.

Myth: I'm HIV-positive – my life is over.

Fact: Today, antiretroviral drugs allow HIV-positive people – and even those with AIDS – to live longer, normal, and productive lives.

Family Farm Day = Family Fun Day



Youth Haven families enjoyed a special outing in August hosted by the Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network to a Prince George's County farm to collect fresh produce. Our group had a chance to help sort and pack fresh food to contribute to local food pantries, learn how local farmers work together to make sure that food is shared with the needy, and then bring home a bounty to share with their own families. Afterward, the group was treated to a cooking lesson by Catering Chef Wes Biles who used ingredients they had seen on the farm. They tried some new recipes and ate lunch organized by volunteers from St. Michael's Truth Lutheran Church, Mitchellville MD.

This activity met several concerns of families living with HIV: encouraging all family members to help around the house, preparing fresh foods that support a healthy lifestyle, and taking advantage of quality time with family. Even the youngest participant at 3-years-old helped to sort cherry tomatoes, and our teens helped carry heavy boxes of corn. Everybody learned something new and had fun being part of the group.



We are grateful to the volunteers from St. Michael's Truth Church for their hospitality. They served wonderful-tasting samples and passed out copies of all their favorite recipes to take home. We can't wait to do another cooking activity with them! ■

STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

God's Work, Our Hands Day of Service



Several congregations and individuals came together on Sunday, September 8, 2013, to serve neighbors in need with Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA) in honor of the 25th anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The anniversary fell at a time of year that schools are reopening, and many families in the region struggle to prepare their children with school supplies and warm clothing.

LSS/NCA joined with area ELCA congregations for joint service activities on September 8 for "God's Work, Our Hands Day of Service."

Participating congregations organized "Back to School" donation drives to

support children and families in need. The school supplies were delivered to 3 LSS/NCA locations around the DC Metro area, and split between LSS/NCA's Foster Care program, Youth Haven Camps for kids affected by HIV/AIDS, and the Refugee and Immigrant Services program.

"A new pair of shoes, and having the supplies they need are what start the school year off on the right note."

Children touched by these LSS/NCA programs come from families that may not be able to afford school supplies.

LSS/NCA solicited backpacks and basic school supplies from congregations, as well as gift cards for basic clothing and shoes so that every child may start this school year ready to succeed. "Your contributions made a world of difference to the children we serve," said Deacon Kati Miller-Holland. "A new pair of shoes, and having the supplies they need are what start the school year off on the right note."

Volunteers at each location helped receive and organize donations, created greeting and prayer cards, and participated in a blessing of LSS/NCA offices. Special thanks to Epiphany Burtonsville and All Saints Bowie for their generous donations. ■

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SOCIETY

December 31 is deadline to Use the IRA Charitable Rollover

In January, Congress extended the IRA Charitable Rollover through Dec. 31, 2013. If you are 70.5 or older and have funds in a traditional IRA, you can transfer as much as \$100,000 each year to a ministry of your choice and have those funds count toward your annually required minimum distributions. The contribution from your IRA can go directly to LSS/NCA to support our mission to walk with those in need.

What are the benefits of giving this way?

- You can make a tax-favorable gift from an IRA without waiting until the end of life.
- You can make a year-end gift, especially if you are waiting until year-end to take your IRA required minimum distribution.
- You can give over and above the 50% Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limit without having to carry deductions forward into subsequent years.
- Distributions are not recognized as income, so they do not contribute to taxation of your Social Security benefits if your level of income subjects you to such taxes.
- You get a tax benefit even if you use the standard deduction instead of itemizing deductions.

Please check with your tax advisor to see if this is appropriate for your situation. Contact your IRA custodian for forms they may require and follow their instructions. If they do not have a specific form, contact **Summer Parrish (703) 698-5026 x.138** or visit www.LSSNCA.org/lss/downloads for a sample letter.

Special Note to LSS/NCA Supporters

In effort to conserve resources and staff time, we are slightly altering the LSS/NCA pledge and receipting process.

If you currently have a semi-annual or annual pledge, you will receive a pledge reminder every quarter, rather than each month. If you have a monthly pledge, you will continue to receive a reminder about your outstanding pledge balance each month.

In a similar effort to simplify reporting and reduce postage cost, an acknowledgement letter and receipt will be sent twice a year to those households who give on a monthly basis. These acknowledgement summaries will be sent once in July and again prior to the end of the year. It is our hope that this process will not only save LSS/NCA time and resources, but will better inform our supporters of their yearly gift totals and help us catch any errors in reporting before the end of the year.

We could not continue helping our neighbors in need without the continued support of our friends and partners, and we are continually striving to serve more effectively and efficiently. If you have any concerns about this new process or how it may affect you, please contact **Autumn Orme at OrmeA@lssnca.org or (703) 698-5026 ext. 112.** ■

LSS/NCA Awarded Communications Grant

Taproot has awarded LSS/NCA a grant to help improve and develop agency communications, branding, and outreach. Pro bono consultants will be working with organization leadership and staff to develop a more consistent and inclusive way to market LSS/NCA programs and mission. Through these consultations, LSS/NCA hopes to gain insight into how we can better reach our growing and diverse community.

By informing more people of how LSS/NCA helps individuals, families, and children throughout our region, we aim to garner new supporters and partners so we can serve more of our neighbors in need. Additionally, by improving our communication outlets and messaging we will be better able to share with you the success of our programs and the stories of our clients. ■

LEADERSHIP

Message from Melissa, CEO



Dear Friends in Service,

As another fiscal year comes to a close, I would like to thank all of the neighbors, friends, families, and congregations that continue to support LSS/NCA. Because of your help and our enduring partnerships with other community organizations, we have been able to work more effectively and serve more of our neighbors in need.

In the last few months alone we have witnessed some extraordinary developments within our programs and within the lives of those we serve. A few of these are highlighted herein.

- Foster Care/Adoption program works diligently with foster parents and community groups to provide individualized attention that ensures the best possible outcome for each child in our care (Front Cover)
- After 15 years of service to our community, Youth Haven Camps continues to reach new families and campers through partnerships and activities throughout the District of Columbia. (p. 4)
- Refugee and Immigration Services begins a new kid's summer program to provide youth with different opportunities to practice their English language skills and stay active during the summer months. (p. 2)
- ECLA churches from around the region join hands with LSS/NCA in "God's Work, Our Hands Day of Service" to collect back-to-school items for children in need. (pg. 5)
- Taproot awards LSS/NCA with a grant to improve communication efforts so we will be better able to tell the stories of transformed lives and share everything your support makes possible (pg. 6)

Over the past few months through these activities, our staff was able to encourage youth to learn new skills, provide foster parents and children with unique family outings and activities, and develop new community partnerships that provide ongoing opportunities for the people we serve. As we come to the end of the fiscal year, I thank you for helping us provide these experiences for those we serve, and I urge you to keep us in your thoughts as we journey into the new year with the determination to comfort more of our neighbors in need.

Peace,

Melissa K. Graves, CEO

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New: Refugee Kids Summer Program

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INSIDE THIS EDITION



Sara gives foster child the gift of gymnastics

Read Sara's story on the front cover

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3 Foster Care

4 Youth Haven

5 Volunteer

6 Development

Save the Dates:

October 8

Compassion in Action

October 12-14

Youth Haven Teen Retreat

November 9

Compassion in Action

November 23

National Adoption Day

December 3

Compassion in Action

December 14

Youth Haven Holiday Camp Reunion

January 7

Compassion in Action

February 8

Compassion in Action

March 5—April 20

*Lenten Days of Prayer and Sharing
for Youth Haven*

For more information, visit
www.LSSNCA.org