



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES National Capital Area

"Everything that is done in the world is done by hope." M. Luther

Issue No. 2 2016

THE RED EYE FLIGHT "HOME"



By: Chloe Shiras, Staff

When the plane pulled up to the terminal at Washington Reagan Airport, the February sun had long set on a relatively warm winter day. Nancy and her daughter Linny were the last to step off the red eye flight. It had been an exhausting trip from Honduras, not to mention the emotional distress of the last few years. The walk through the airport was draining. How much farther would her journey take her?

Suddenly the air got lighter and her eyelids were no longer heavy. There, holding a welcome sign was her father, sister, and a few aunts and uncles. Nancy and her family had been separated for 20 years.

When Nancy was born, her father moved to the United States, unaware of when they would see each other again. Nancy had remained in Honduras with her mother; but being a single mother in a gang-driven, impoverished country took its toll and she left. Caring for Nancy and herself was seemingly impossible. At this time, Nancy's grandmother became her fulltime caregiver. She loved and protected Nancy as best she could until she passed away last year. Nancy and little Linny had no family to turn to, no resources, no safe place to live. Nancy became even more susceptible to gang recruitment, rape, and violence.

Luckily, Nancy's father had been working with LSS/NCA's Central American Minor Program (CAM). CAM was established in 2014 by the Obama Administration to help reunify families torn apart by violence in South America. Families who reside legally in the United States can apply



through CAM to have their children join them safely and legally. Many children are living in fear, trauma, and hardship as they face the difficult decision to join a gang or be killed. The CAM program helps minors, like Nancy, that are in immediate need of safety. Gang members often target children who have family overseas assuming their families have more money to pay in ransom fees.

Nancy's case was reviewed and accepted at a crucial time. Minors who are not accepted through CAM or do not take the treacherous journey across the border are left to face horrific realities. LSS/NCA has submitted 188 CAM applications to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Nancy and Linny are the first accepted case in our community. The process for her application to be submitted, reviewed, and determined took roughly a year. We are thrilled to have them here. Nancy and her family are adjusting well to life in Maryland. Nancy has already secured a part time job at Burger King. Her English skills have improved dramatically, and she is as likely to communicate with her caseworker in English as much as in Spanish. Linny has learned a lot of English too and likes to say hi when she stops by to visit or plays with her cousins.

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

"MY PARENTS SELECTED ME"

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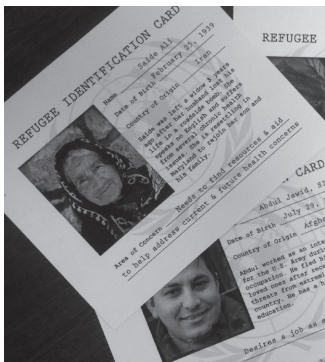
**MARYLAND RESETTLEMENT
OFFICE HOSTS OPEN HOUSE**

Learn more page 2

The Maryland Refugee Resettlement Office Opened *Doors and Minds*



In celebration of a new LSS/NCA Refugee Resettlement Office in Hyattsville, MD, staff held an open house in early May. Visitors were invited to take the "journey of a refugee" by experiencing a refugee's perspective of the first 90 days of resettlement.



Each open house attendee was given a unique refugee identification card that detailed the life of a refugee who recently made the journey to America.



Guests walked through three steps of resettlement as the person featured on their ID card. These steps included cultural orientation, case management, and employment services.



From learning our community's transportation system and cultural norms to finding housing and a job, the open house educated community members about the challenges and achievements refugees experience during resettlement.

Temple Rodef Shalom Recognizes LSS/NCA's Dedication to Social Justice

During this spring's Shabbat at Temple Rodef Shalom in Falls Church, Va., LSS/NCA was awarded the prestigious 2016 Rabbi Richard Sternberger Social Justice Award for "dedication to issues of social justice in our community."

For the past 20 years, Temple Rodef Shalom has been honoring local organizations and individuals whose work epitomizes the ideals of one of their beloved leaders Richard

Sternberger who served as Navy Chaplain to the Marines during the Korean War and was deeply involved with the southern civil rights movement in the 1960s.

LSS/NCA was represented at the highest level by its CEO, Christine Connell and Dr. Mamadou Sy, Director of the Refugee and Immigrant Services. The acceptance of this award highlights the endless possibilities when we work



Rabbi Saxe presents Sternberger Social Justice Award to Mamadou Sy.

together. Temple Rodef Shalom is exploring a partnership with LSS/NCA to resettle a refugee family in the near future.

“My Parents Selected Me”

A STORY OF ADOPTION

In the winter of 1965, my mother and father decided to adopt a child. My mom was in her mid-30s and had been unable to bear children. While my dad spent his days committed to the U.S. Navy, my mom was dedicated to caring for their home, and she longed for a child to fill it with laughter.

Fifty years ago the adoption process was very different than it is today. In March of that year, my parents contacted an adoption agency and a quick 18 days later they were handed a newborn baby girl. I grew up always knowing that I was adopted. I have early memories of my parents telling me that I was “special,” that I was “chosen.” I even remember bragging about my adoption in elementary school. “My parents selected me”, I would say proudly. “Your parents just had you.”



Lori's adoption day.

*My parents selected me,
I would say proudly.
Your parents just had you.*

Today I have three children of my own. I met my husband in high school, and we share a wonderful life together. Despite all of the blessings and love in my life, a consistent curiosity about my birth parents motivated me to contact LSS/NCA and petition to have my adoption file re-opened. My husband and my adoptive parents were hesitant about what I may find, but they were supportive of my decision and supported me every step of the way.

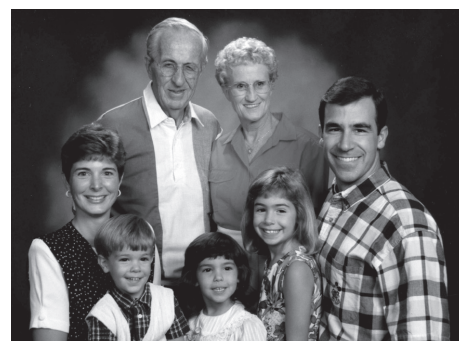
I heard from my LSS/NCA case worker often during the search for my biological parents, until I received the phone call I was waiting for... “We found them, but they are hesitant to meet you.” I was ecstatic! I had so many questions about our family's history. As we gave my biological family time to decide their next steps, I gradually learned little pieces of information about them. They married the year after I was born and had 2 more children a few years later. *I had siblings!* They lived a mere mile from my home in Bowie, Maryland. *I must have passed them hundreds of times without ever knowing!*

One night during dinner, the phone rang; a hesitant voice said hello. My biological parents had decided to reach out to me. After speaking for an hour and a half that evening, we decided to meet in person. I will never forget the moment I met my father. He gave me the longest and deepest hug I can remember and he whispered, “I never got to hold you.”



Lori (left) with adoptive mother.

Since that memorable reunion, my biological father has passed away. My biological sister had a hard time accepting my relationship within the family, and my biological mother hesitated to acknowledge her decision to let me go because it caused her grief and guilt. As a result I haven't retained a connection to my biological family, especially since I never wanted to intrude. I only wanted to know about them, and I am forever grateful that I had the opportunity to meet them. God has had his hand on me from the moment of conception. My loving parents and the work of LSS/NCA are a testament to this.



Lori's husband and children with Lori's adoptive parents.

Editor's Note: Lori's adoptive parents passed away last year. In their honor and memory, she asked that friends and family donate to LSS/NCA in recognition and thanks for creating their family. Lori's request and the gifts that followed were a wonderful blessing to our current children still waiting for permanent and loving homes.

Stephen Ministers Increase their Support of Caregivers

The LSS/NCA "Support U" class enjoyed a unique opportunity to train 15 Stephen Ministers from Trinity Lutheran Church in North Bethesda, Md., on family caregiving issues. Stephen Ministry equips and empowers lay caregivers to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting. (<http://www.stephenministries.org>).

As part of the group's continuing education, they attended LSS/NCA's "crash course" version of the 6-topic Support U curriculum. "The audience was a little different than our typical class groups, but we learned two important things,"

said LSS/NCA's Caregiver Support program manager, Deacon Kati Miller-Holland. "Caregiving has many layers and expressions, and people like Stephen Ministers who give spiritual care to an individual also have families and caregiving challenges of their own."

Support U classes are being scheduled for Fall and Winter 2016-17 at sites in the DC Metro region. To host classes for family caregivers or pastoral care ministers' continuing education, contact LSS/NCA at: ccministry@LSSNCA.org or call (202) 723-3000 ext. 199.



Karen White leads session on caregiving for persons with dementia and other chronic illnesses.

"I found that the Support U seminar provided a tremendous amount of practical and relevant information. It was information that I will be able to take with me and use as a Stephen Minister."

—Stephen Trinity Minister

Greetings from College!

By: Dara Yah'Ya, Staff

Youth Haven journeyed with 17 teens during Spring Break to explore all three campuses of Montgomery College. We found many unique and interesting discoveries: a blossoming greenhouse with carnivorous plants; a Landscape Technology laboratory complete with iPads to capture microscopic images; and online options for almost any course. The highlight of the weekend was personalized time with engaged

faculty, welcoming deans, helpful administration, and individual conversations with students.

The weekend camp at the rustic Lathrop E. Smith Center (Derwood, Md.) also included workshops focused on goal-setting and emotional wellness: "9 Ways to Stay Motivated with Your Goals,"

stress relief with crafts: Macramé & journal design, fitness with African dance, practicing mindfulness, and sexual health sessions about consent. The weekend's team building activities and self-discovery inspired hearts and encouraged dreams for the future. Hear what the campers had to say:



"College is a basic foundation in maximizing my potential."

"I can get the same if not a better education at a community college like MC at a cheaper price."

"I don't have to be perfect to go to college."

Students Address Health Needs for Refugees and HIV-Affected Families

By: Kiersten Rossetto Nassar & Rosita Ebadat, Staff

Two teams of American University students partnered with Youth Haven and Refugee & Immigrant Services for their senior capstone project to analyze the impact of public health programs on refugees and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

The student group working with our refugee program specifically focused on navigating healthcare in Northern Virginia as a newcomer. Through this research, the students worked with staff to create informational materials to help refugees transition to a western medical system and address the

treatment of common medical conditions. These materials addressed common hygiene and preventive wellness steps, as well as affordable over-the-counter drugs to treat other conditions.

The second student group concentrated on learning about the children of HIV-positive parents in the DC region and how Youth Haven can best serve them. They conducted a literature review and community survey to identify the

needs of affected children, creating a "case statement" for Youth Haven to use in grant proposals. Their report findings have provided updated contact information for referring partner organizations and adapted teen workshops to address risky behaviors linked to depression.



Deloitte Consulting

One of the greatest challenges of resettling refugees in the Washington DC community is the scarce availability of affordable housing. In recognition of this limitation, Deloitte has dedicated over 100 hours of pro bono consulting to investigate this issue and propose effective solutions. Our fall newsletter will feature an update on their research as LSS/NCA prepares to welcome an increased number of refugee families in 2017.

Stay tuned!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

By: Meagan Chevalier, Staff



Paul Darnauer is a champion for the Development and Communications Department. His passion for the mission of LSS/NCA is rooted in years of service to his community. While Paul is now retired, he spent 30 years in the U.S. Army where he trained as a social worker and earned his Ph.D. During his service, he offered hope and guidance to soldiers recovering from the trauma of the Vietnam War and to those struggling with addiction. He has since lived and worked all over the world, including Japan and the

Middle East. His continued dedication to those who need help along with his upbringing as a son to a Lutheran pastor in Iowa, catapulted his desire to work hand-in-hand with LSS/NCA staff.

Paul was able to turn his life-long stamp collection into gold by donating thousands of stamps to LSS/NCA. He joins us in the office once a month to stamp new envelopes, saving us many trips to the post office. Have you received any mail from us with assorted fun and interesting stamps? ...

That's Paul! *Thank you Paul for all of your support.*

Expressions of Abundance 2016:

Because You CARE, We can GROW

Thank you to all those who attended the Expressions of Abundance Breakfast in May. With your help we raised over \$130,000 for families and children in need. Because of those gifts:

- **100 refugee families** will find housing and security when they arrive in America, helping to rebuild their lives and find self-sufficiency;
- **15 Congregations** will be able to enroll community caregivers in Support U classes where they will find resources and networks to help care for their loved ones and themselves;
- **25 families affected by HIV/AIDS** will be able to attend Youth Haven family camp for the first time, providing peer support and guidance on how to best disclose their condition to other family members; and
- **38 unaccompanied refugee minors** will experience a year of career immersion and retreat opportunities like visits to college campuses that will help prepare them for their bright future in our community.



What's new with Vann?

By: Vann



Just a short time ago, I experienced a very memorable ride. The social worker and I were taking little Trevor to visit his biological grandmother. Because of the trauma and heartache Trevor experienced, he was having difficulty learning to speak and walk despite hours in physical and speech therapy. However, on this particular ride, the social worker decided to play a Jackson 5 CD to break the silence. Suddenly, I felt Trevor dancing and clapping in his seat. I had never seen him so alive.

Three weeks later, I picked up Trevor for another visit. I couldn't believe it! He was singing along to the entire CD and when he jumped out to greet his grandmother, he immediately showed her his new dance moves. Read Trevor's entire story on our blog at <http://bit.ly/Musicfostercare>.



Planned giving provides many flexible ways for donors not only to help fulfill the mission of Lutheran Social Services/National Capital Area, but also achieve financial goals.

For example, life-income gifts can be the perfect way to make a significant contribution to LSS/NCA while creating an income stream for yourself or someone close to you. Low-yielding CDs or stocks paying low dividends are ideal vehicles for life-income gifts, but many other assets may be used as well.

A life-income gift can provide income for life or for a fixed amount of time, after which it would be used to support LSS/NCA's mission or the program most important to you. As with other charitable gifts, life-income gifts provide several advantages:

- You receive a substantial charitable tax deduction in the year you make your gift.
- You avoid or reduce all capital gains tax on appreciated assets.
- You may actually increase your annual income.
- You have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping strengthen LSS/NCA.

Life-income gifts are win-win gifts: You continue to receive income for life while you help LSS/NCA build a stronger future.

We welcome the opportunity to talk with you about the best way to achieve your philanthropic goals. For more information about life-income gifts, please contact Summer Parrish, Director of Development, at ParrishS@LSSNCA.org or (703) 698-5026 x138. We thank you for considering such a meaningful way to help LSS/NCA walk with those in need.



A Comment from Chris

Dear Friends:

Five months ago, I was privileged to join Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area as the Chief Executive Officer. Already, I have been humbled by the courage and faith of those we serve, inspired by the dedicated staff and board leadership, and encouraged by your unwavering commitment to those in need.

Together, we choose not to accept the status quo, but rather move forward, dedicating ourselves to serving those who are often forgotten or disregarded. Because of you, LSS/NCA has been able to journey forward for almost 100 years, walking with those in need each step of the way. Through your support, you have strengthened families by providing children, like Lori, the loving home and family they deserve (page 3). You have inspired hope by offering new beginnings in America to young men and women who, like Nancy, have been persecuted or harmed because of how they look or what they believe (cover). AND you have encouraged dreams by giving our youth the opportunity to explore college campuses and career options (page 5).

Without your generosity and volunteerism, those highlighted herein and many others would have stood on a discouraging crossroad without resources or support to move forward. You are the true hero of these tales. By linking arms and walking side by side, we will continue the great work of this organization for another century.

Blessings,

Christine P. Connell
CEO

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Students Address Health Needs for Refugees and HIV-Affected Families

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Save the Dates

June 21	Journey to Action, MD
June 24-26	Youth Haven Teen Adventure Retreat
July 9	World Refugee Day Celebration, MD
July 19	Journey to Action, MD
Aug. 2	Journey to Action, MD
Aug. 2-7	Youth Haven Kids' Camp
Aug. 16	Refugee Co-Sponsor Workshop
Aug. 16	Journey to Action, MD
Aug. 30	Journey to Action, MD
Sept. 10-11	Youth Haven Family Mini-Camp
Sept. 13	Journey to Action, MD
Sept. 17	Support U Leader Appreciation and Training, DC

For more information & events, visit
LSSNCA.org