



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES National Capital Area

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

Issue No. 2 2015

Foster Care, Refugee, and Youth Haven Teens Explore the Future

By: Kati Miller-Holland

Youth Haven, refugee, and foster care youth explored careers and higher education options this spring at our first-ever combined-program retreat. LSS/NCA youth, ages 15-20, were invited to explore various career and educational opportunities while building new friendships. Retreat attendees included DC-born youth and immigrants from around the world. Bringing together young people from diverse cultures provided the opportunity to learn, laugh, and recognize common hopes and dreams for the future.

Staff and volunteers from Youth Haven took the lead in transforming the program's annual spring break college sampler retreat into a weekend that many more LSS/NCA youth could benefit from. Partnering with social workers and staff from Foster Care and Refugee Services, everyone worked together to make the retreat a productive adventure for our youth.

"My favorite parts of the retreat were warming ourselves at the fire, asking questions and getting answers."

The retreat stayed close to home, partnering with the Hard Bargain Farm retreat center in Accokeek, Maryland, and the University of the District of Columbia. Participants got hands-on exposure to a spectrum of careers in energy, agriculture, and law. At the farm, youth bonded over learning to milk a cow



Retreat youth tour the construction site for a net-zero energy building, meeting engineers and landscapers.

and sharing favorite music before bedtime. On campus, teens got a chance to talk with student leaders, sit in on a lecture, and learn about the college application process.

LSS/NCA's work helping youth transition to higher education and self-sufficient adulthood doesn't stop with one retreat. This is the first project in a joint program among Refugee/Immigrant Services, Foster Care, and Youth Haven providing job readiness and employment support for our young adults, called Youth Employment Services "YES." Stay tuned for more updates! ■

"I'm so glad I came. Thanks to whoever came up with this idea!"

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

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OF ABUNDANCE
INSPIRATIONAL SUCCESS**

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Local Corporate Partners Seek to Employ Refugees

By: Nizama Tikvina

The Northern VA refugee services program coordinated a career fair for refugee clients enrolled in our employment program.

More than 100 refugee neighbors attended the event held at Tysons-Pimmit Regional library this past winter. Many were looking for their first job in America or seeking additional training to help

them improve and succeed in their current position. Attendees were able to collect information on each organization, network, and practice their interview skills. Each refugee was also provided with general job-readiness information including: resume and cover letter templates, tax-return information, and job postings from various employers across the region. ■



More than 17 community employers, training providers, and educational institutes came to meet our refugees and recruit new employee candidates. Some of the participants included:

**Columbia College | Fairfax Skills Source Center | Gate Gourmet
Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) Careers Services | NVCC Financial Aid
NVCC Adult Career Pathway (ACP) | MJ Morgan Group**

Summer Months Give Refugee Children Opportunity to Explore America

By: Melissa Mahfouz



This summer will be an exciting season for the Refugee Kids Summer Program in Northern Virginia! With the end of the school year quickly approaching, the summer program will continue to engage school-aged children in activities that



enhance self-expression, parental involvement, and cultural discovery. Upcoming summer activities include art therapy sessions for recently arrived refugee children, college trips to local campuses for high-schoolers, and trips to Smithsonian Institution Museums in Washington, DC. Additionally, the summer program will include the creation of a parent association for refugee parents and their school-aged children that will focus on the short- and long-term goals of the youth in our refugee program. ■

Last summer's program included field trips to the US Capitol building and the National Zoo.

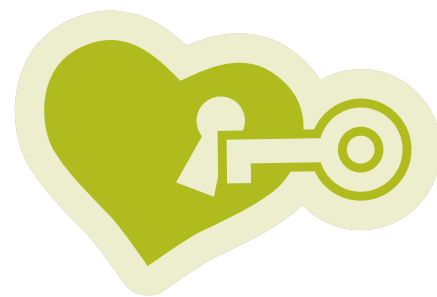
Breaking the Seal

By: Llesenia Santiago

Ms. H contacted LSS/NCA; she was nervous but excited about starting the search for her birth parents. Dozens of years had passed since her adoption through LSS/NCA. After a court order was secured and Ms. H felt comfortable to begin, our staff could legally begin to investigate her adoption.

of paper files that must be explored. Even when a file is found, there is no guarantee that a child's mother left her name, a father's name, or contact information.

Luckily, Ms. H's record was located and identified both parents. An internet search yielded current



had married Ms. H's birth father and had three additional children following the adoption. She felt guilty but joyful about the possibility of meeting her first daughter. LSS/NCA prepared both the birth mother and Ms. H for their reunion.

Ms. H and her birth family reunited at a local park in Virginia. Along with her birth parents, she met siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. Ms. H's adoptive family also attended the event for added support. Today, Ms. H continues to have a relationship with her birth family and enjoys being a new aunt. ■

"The day was overwhelming but cheerful. I hope others can have the same positive experience in finding their own families."

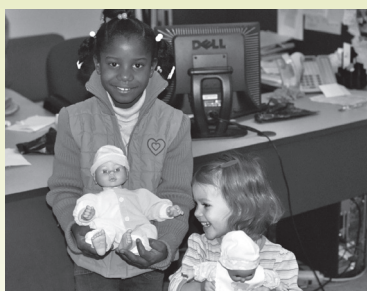
—Ms. H

The search for a birth family is not easy. LSS/NCA's adoption program began more than 60 years ago. While every adoption and foster care case has a record, there is no simple Google search or card catalog system to find birth families. There are only drawers and decades

contact information, and letters were sent to both birth parents right away. Within a week, LSS/NCA received a response from Ms. H's birth mother. She was very excited, yet frightened about reconnecting with her daughter. She shared that she

These are the families and the children your support has created over the years.

We are recruiting foster parents to ensure more children find loving, stable, and safe homes. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about opening their home to a child in need, contact Patricia Britt at BrittP@lssnca.org or **202-723-3000 ext. 254**.



Summer is Heating Up...Get Ready

By: Kati Miller-Holland

Thanks to the families of Trinity Lutheran, North Bethesda, and to resident volunteers of the Village at Rockville, for particularly creative donation drives for Youth Haven campers this spring! Many other faithful donors have been quietly stocking our shelves to be able to serve 90 children, teens, and parent campers this August.

Now that the summer season is busy with retreats and camp activities, watch for photos on the LSS/NCA Facebook page. It's not too late to show your support, last-minute items are always needed. Call the Youth Haven office if you would like to help purchase last minute supplies or to donate gift cards. ■



Ladies from Village at Rockville crafted beautiful camp supplies to welcome local children to camp this summer.

YOUTH HAVEN 202.723.3000 ext. 261

Call to start your own in-kind drive for camp.

Support U ... We Could Use U

By: Kati Miller-Holland

So far this year, more than 90 caregivers have received training through the Support U program, strengthening them for the important work of caring for an aging or ill loved-one. Special thanks to our volunteer trainers, who have shared their expertise and compassion: Dorrie Aldrich (Mt. Olivet Lutheran), Gail Kropf (St. Andrew Lutheran), Ruth Manchester (Saint Luke Lutheran), and Karen White (St. Stephen Lutheran).

Congregations or workplace groups wishing to host a Support U workshop or series of classes this fall or winter should contact LSS/NCA right away to make arrangements. If you feel a calling to help teach and support family caregivers, a leader training session is coming up on September 19 and we could use your help.

For more information, call 202-723-3000 ext. 199 or email: ccministry@Lssnca.org. ■



RECAP *Expressions of Abundance*

Guests at our annual Expressions of Abundance Benefit Breakfast were inspired by a young lady named Samaria. Now a counselor at Youth Haven Camp, Samaria was once a young camper herself. She courageously shared her story of growing up with HIV/AIDS and her gratitude for the love and guidance she found at Youth Haven.

Youth Group Creates PLAYROOM WONDER WORLD for Foster Kids

Two young girls arrive at the LSS/NCA Main Office in DC on Monday morning. They know this place well. These Mondays are very special because the girls get to visit and play with their mother. They know she is working hard to find a job and an apartment so they can all be together again.

On this particular Monday, the girls walked into the visitation room with a new sense of wonder. The sun bounced off the bright yellows and deep purples; new puzzles and games lined the shelves; a small kitchenette stood against the wall next to a wooden rocking horse. The length of one wall hosted a

chalkboard where other children had drawn family portraits, houses, and flowers. "Look we can draw on the wall!" the younger exclaimed.

Only one day earlier, the youth group from Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Bethesda had spent Sunday cleaning and repainting the tattered play room. After a month-long collection, Emmanuel was able to donate dozens of new toys and games and fund the renovation. Since then, dozens of children and families have enjoyed the new visitation space. Thank you to Emmanuel for creating the opportunity for our families to build wonderful new memories together. ■



We raised more than \$160,000 to sustain our programs and serve more families and children. Because of your support through the benefit breakfast:



- 80 refugee families will find housing and security when they arrive in America, helping to rebuild their lives and find self-sufficiency.
- 20 congregations will be able to enroll their community caregivers in Support U classes where they will find resources and networks to help care for their loved ones and themselves.
- Almost 30 children either affected or infected by HIV/AIDS will be able to attend Youth Haven summer camp, build friendships, and find medical and emotional support.
- 20 refugee families will be able to buy groceries and cover transportation costs to doctor appointments and job interviews during their first month in America; AND
- Dozens of children will find homes and love through the recruitment of new foster parents.

Because of your support to LSS/NCA, Samaria, along with thousands of others are rebuilding their lives and chasing their dreams. If you were unable to attend but still want to help, visit our website at LssNca.org.

What's new with Vann?

By: Vann



About a month from now, I will be headed to Mar Lu Ridge for Youth Haven Kids Camp. Dozens of children

will be loaded on board and together we will head up north, sharing stories, trading jokes, and talking about what we want to do most when we get there: hiking, swimming, roasting marshmallows!

Last year was so much fun. But there is one thing that sticks out most—a young camper named Anna. She was so outgoing. Anna convinced all of us that Spiderman was better than Batman. She was brilliant and had ambitions to become a lawyer. That's why we were all shocked when, one day at camp, she told us that if she could change one thing about herself, she would change her face. Her reason shocked us all and I learned one very important lesson that day.

To read more about Anna and find out what happened at camp, visit <http://bit.ly/CampSuperhero>

Bank of America Awards LSS/NCA \$15,000 Workforce Development Grant to Support Refugees

The Bank of America Foundation awarded LSS/NCA's Refugee and Immigrant Services (RIS) program \$15,000 to help the refugees we serve become more economically independent through employment and workforce development. The one-year grant will support RIS's employment services throughout the region, which historically has helped more than 1,100 refugees gain self-sufficiency through job placement, resume assistance, and networking workshops.

CRAT, CRUT, What?!! Don't Be Scared Off By the Jargon... You Too Can Leave a Legacy Gift

Have you heard people talk about being a member of their University legacy society or planned giving society? Or maybe you've heard about the possibility of earning money while making a philanthropic gift. Don't shy away from your financial and philanthropic goals. You can make both happen.

Charlotte W. is a retired nurse grateful to LSS/NCA for the adoption of her two children through the organization. She is careful about managing her budget, however, and didn't think she'd be able to consider a major gift to LSS/NCA. She had \$100,000 in CDs that were producing a 2% annual return for her. The Development Office showed her how she, at age 75, could use that same asset to fund a gift annuity at LSS/NCA for which she would immediately receive annual payments of \$5,800, part of which would be tax-free. Charlotte was delighted to realize that she could actually count on more income by giving her money away!

We'll work with you and your family to explain your planned gift options in simple, easy-to-understand language and help you reach your goals. If you are interested in learning more, fill out the slip below and mail it to the listed address.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ST: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ ☐ Home ☐ Work ☐ Other

☐ I want to learn more about the 1917 Society and planned giving options.

☐ Bequest ☐ Annuity/ Income Gifts ☐ Real Estate ☐ Other _____

☐ I have already made arrangements for LSS/NCA in my estate.

Summer Parrish | LSS/NCA Office of Development | 7401 Leesburg Pike | Falls Church, Virginia 22043
(703) 698-5026 ext. 138 | ParrishS@lssnca.org

Message from Melissa, CEO

Dear Friends in Service,

"The road to compassion starts with you!" was the theme for this year's Expressions of Abundance Benefit Breakfast, and it stood as a reminder that each of us has the capacity to see a need, take action, and make a difference. More than 160 people attended the event and made the decision to walk with our neighbors in need. Together we raised more than \$160,000 to sustain our programs. (Page 6)

Expressions of Abundance was an inspirational morning and a testament to the community's support of our mission, particularly the children we serve and their futures. But there is so much more that needs to be done. With an influx of youth immigrating to the US and medical treatment of AIDS improving and prolonging the lives of youth infected with the disease, LSS/NCA is serving more young people who have big hopes and dreams. Accordingly to the Bureau of Labor statistics and the *Washington Post*, nearly 40% of low-income youth between ages 16-24 in our community are neither employed nor enrolled in school—this is one of the worst rates in America. Our kids believe in themselves and they deserve better. Our new YES program (front cover) is in its infancy, but our goal is to help each of our young clients become self-sufficient adults and attain their goals.

In addition to this project, LSS/NCA continues to offer unique experiences that enhance the services that each neighbor receives. Job fairs, career exploration workshops, and youth camps provide essential opportunities to network, learn about job options, explore our community, and ultimately attain individual goals and self-sufficiency. (Pages 2, 4)

Thank you for your continued support and please help us seek opportunities to do more for our neighbors by sharing our mission with others.

In Peace,



Melissa K. Graves, CEO



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Youth Group Creates **PLAYROOM WONDER WORLD**



**See our renovated foster care
visitation space on page 5**

INSIDE THIS EDITION



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program collaboration
on the front cover*

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CALLING CAREGIVER LEADERS

5 CCM

LEAVE A LEGACY

6 Development

Save the Dates

June 20	Compassion in Action (MD)
June 20	World Refugee Day (Baltimore)
June 25	Compassion in Action (VA)
June 26-28	Youth Haven Adventure Teen Retreat
July 18	Compassion in Action (MD)
July 23	Compassion in Action (VA)
Aug 4-9	Youth Haven Kids Camp
Aug 15	Compassion in Action (MD)
Aug 27	Compassion in Action (VA)
Sept 12	Youth Haven Family Day "Back to School"
Sept 19	Support U Leader Training (MD)
Oct 9-11	Youth Haven Career Exploration Teen Retreat

For more information & events, visit

LSSNCA.org