

# LSA CELEBRATES FOSTER CARE MONTH

## Liberty Lutheran

## Lutheran Children and Family Service

### LCFS PROVIDES HOPE TO REFUGEE CHILDREN



Carlos is the local General Manager of a national restaurant chain. When he was 19 years old, he attended community college and graduated with his Associate's Degree in Education. In high school, he was the Vice President of the National Honor Society; he joined the Anti-Defamation League which allowed him to work on issues such as discrimination and bullying within the school.

Does Carlos sound like someone you may know, your son, grandson or even your neighbor's child?

Let me share with you from the beginning Carlos' story, a true journey of perseverance.

Born and raised in Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, Carlos was raised in humble surroundings. At 12 years old, Carlos' mother died and his father abandoned him and his younger siblings. There were 10 children in his family; some were older and already married.

Carlos' grandma took him and his younger siblings into her home. He had to quit school to help take care of his family working as a farmer. He earned \$2.00 a day. He knew that was not enough to survive on and to be able to take care of his grandmother and siblings.

He wanted a better life for himself and his family.

He heard stories and dreamed about how great it was to live in America, the land of freedom and opportunity. He was willing to risk his life to reach that dream. He has said, "You can be successful in this country. You just have to work hard."

During his journey through the desert with little food or water, he encountered rattlesnakes and other animals. He couldn't see anything during the night time hours. He lost his shoes somewhere along the way. When he reached the United States, Carlos was taken to a nearby shelter where he was given food and clothes. A volunteer lawyer was assigned to his case at the shelter.

## #LSAFosterCare

### Lutheran Children and Family Service

Lutheran Children and Family Service believes that every child deserves to be raised in a permanent, loving, safe, and nurturing home. LCFS offers foster care to local youth, promoting healthy development during transitions to prepare children to thrive in school and beyond.

LCFS also provides foster care and semi-independent living opportunities for foreign-born children (unaccompanied refugee minors/URM) who arrive in the Philadelphia region without their parents or legal guardians. Supported by the US Department of Health and Human Services, our URM program provides age-appropriate placements and support services intended to promote stability, acculturation, academic achievement and self-sufficiency.

Visit [www.lcfsinpa.org/](http://www.lcfsinpa.org/) for more information about Lutheran Children and Family Service.

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The lawyer was in contact with LCFS. Carlos became connected to a family that was willing to be foster parents to him in Pennsylvania.

Carlos was nervous on his flight to Pennsylvania but knew that this was the beginning of his life in the place he had dreamed of so often in Guatemala. His foster family waited for him at the airport with a welcome home sign and they helped Carlos settle into his new home.

He did not speak any English. His foster family helped him by giving him a dictionary to look up words to be able to communicate with them. Carlos learned English within two months and he taught his family how to speak Spanish.

Carlos came to the United States with big hopes and dreams. So big that he was willing to risk his life to make them a reality. There is no way to imagine that journey.

Carlos attributes part of his success to the LCFS social worker assigned to his case. “She took me under her wing and made sure my case was going well. She gave me the opportunity to become successful and she stays in touch with me, even now.”

Through the unaccompanied refugee minor program, the only one of its kind in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and running for over 30 years, we are able to support children like Carlos.

## Liberty Lutheran

Liberty Lutheran faithfully provides vital resources for individuals and families facing life-changing situations, from the earliest stages of life through the many stages of aging.

The Liberty Family of Services are creating communities and changing lives by offering help and support to people of all ages throughout Pennsylvania.

Services of Liberty Lutheran include: Artman, Liberty at Home, Lutheran Children and Family Service, Lutheran Congregational Services, The Hearth at Drexel (formerly Mary J. Drexel,) Paul’s Run Retirement Community and The Village at Penn State.

For more information, visit [www.libertylutheran.org/](http://www.libertylutheran.org/)

Liberty Lutheran is a member of the LSA Network, and an LSA 20-500 Fund supporter.

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