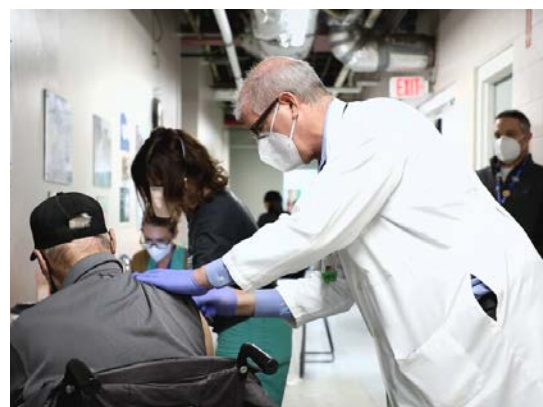


FRONTLINE HEROES



We honor the courageous frontline workers of our 300 health and human service organizations located in more than 1,400 communities across the United States. Together, the network makes a difference in the lives of one in 50 Americans every year.

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Our Frontline Heroes series, launched in March 2020, honors and amplifies our members' stories of courage and hope. In addition to this edition's honorees, [check out our past heroes and their stories.](#)

April 7, 2021 | The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society



Going Mobile: Good Samaritan Society Communities Receive On-Site COVID-19 Vaccinations

Since the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine began, independent living communities for older adults have had to become resourceful in responding to the needs of residents. Traveling to a clinic to receive the vaccine can be challenging for many people in independent living homes. With access to vaccines still limited, Lutheran Services in America member **The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society and Sanford Health** got creative in **bringing the vaccine to those who need it most.**

Sanford Health, which merged with the Good Samaritan Society in 2019, sent a mobile clinic to two Good Samaritan Society residential communities in South Dakota. The on-site vaccination service gave **a literal shot in the arm to 108 residents!**

The mobile clinic is just one example of Sanford's and the Good Samaritan Society's commitment to offering residents a full assortment of **health services that cover the whole lifespan of an individual**, from maternity care to hospice.

Bringing their services under a common roof enables Sanford to focus on providing even more wellness programs for residents while the Good Samaritan Society can expand its acute care services, such as those offered under its Medicare Advantage institutional special needs plan (I-SNP). Beneficiaries of its I-SNP, for instance, experience a **rehospitalization rate that is 30 percent lower** than the rate of unmanaged populations—a testament to the organization's focus on preventing hospitalizations and improving care management.

April 14, 2021 | Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry



LMM Elevates Fight for Health Equity for Clevelanders Experiencing Homelessness

Nearly two in five Americans have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and one-fifth have been completely vaccinated. Yet ensuring the equitable distribution of vaccines still remains challenging for one group of people in particular: Americans experiencing homelessness.

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry is doing what it can to level the playing field and guarantee that hundreds of people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland have access to the vaccine. Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry recently worked with the city of Cleveland, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, and MetroHealth System to **fully vaccinate 500 people at its Men's Shelter**, the largest homeless shelter in Ohio.

State-mandated age and health prerequisites for vaccination were waived due to the high risk associated with the congregate living setting. Lifting these requirements allowed Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry staff to coordinate with healthcare workers to **make sure as many people who received the first shot also received a second**—a task that's at times challenging when working with people facing unstable housing.

Challenging, but very much doable, and the ministry has no plans to slow down yet.

April 21, 2021 | Lutheran Services Florida

Lutheran Services Florida partnered with Agape Family Health to administer 200 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to its teachers and their families



Bringing the COVID “Vax” to Educators in JAX

Education professionals, children and parents alike are eager to return to in-person instruction more than a year after the pandemic shuttered schools and childcare centers across the country. With safety the clear priority, the push to reopen coincides with a simultaneous drive to ensure all childhood education staff receive the opportunity to get their COVID-19 vaccine.

The pandemic forced **Lutheran Services Florida** to shut down its **Duval Head Start Program** in November. Formed in 2014, the program prepares children — particularly those from underserved communities — for kindergarten with high-quality early childhood education.

More than 1,400 children from low-income households in Jacksonville are enrolled in the program.

In an effort to control the spread of the virus, LSF partnered with Agape Family Health to vaccinate the program’s teachers and their families. The health center ultimately administered **200 doses of the vaccine!** The shots undoubtedly provide a new semblance of normalcy for LSF staff and the families for which they provide services.

April 28, 2021 | Lutheran SeniorLife



Lutheran SeniorLife
nurses made house
calls to administer the
COVID-19 vaccine

Visiting Nurses Hit the Road to Provide Vaccines to the Homebound

Inadequate access to transportation remains an underlying source of inequity during the COVID-19 vaccination process across the country. This is especially true for many older adults and people with disabilities who live in rural communities where vaccination rates are reportedly at least five percentage points lower than in urban areas.

To help address this problem, **Lutheran SeniorLife** is assisting the most vulnerable in its communities by hitting the road and bringing the vaccine straight to them. The organization's **Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of Western Pennsylvania** began enabling nurses to provide a COVID-19 vaccine to anyone who is either homebound or resides in a skilled nursing facility or personal care home.

What's more, if the individual in the skilled nursing facility is due for a second dose of the vaccine but is discharged to their home, the organization's nurses will make a house call to administer the vaccine.

The organization's VNA initiative is just the latest COVID-related effort to keep its communities safe. Lutheran SeniorLife created a series of safety protocols it dubs "**WearWashWatch.**" These three W's include:

- Wearing masks
- Washing hands
- Watching your distance

Together, with its forward-thinking vaccination campaign and its safety guidelines, Lutheran SeniorLife is protecting its community and helping to ensure equal access to the vaccine for so many.

May 5, 2021 | Holy Family Ministries' Holy Family School



Where Academic Excellence and Safety Go Hand in Hand

At Holy Family Ministries' Holy Family School, the safety and wellbeing of its students is top of mind

For many Chicago residents, 2020 was a year fraught with multiple crises. As mandatory lockdowns stemming from a once-in-a-lifetime health crisis forced people to stay home as institutions closed, violent crime steadily rose to unprecedented levels, with more than 700 homicides recorded by the end of the year.

The spike in crime posed new safety concerns for many children and families who were confined to fierce gun violence in lower-income neighborhoods, particularly on Chicago's West Side. At **Holy Family Ministries'** Holy Family School, the safety and wellbeing of its students—from COVID-19 and violent crime—was top of mind during last year's closure.

The school, which teaches students from pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade, jumped at the opportunity to reopen at the start of the 2020–2021 academic year and act as both a **learning center and a place of refuge for many of its students**. Holy Family, a Christian school whose students are 98 percent Black and 2 percent Hispanic, makes it a priority to instill conflict resolution into its students by conducting “Peace Exchange” programs starting from pre-school age where children learn to avoid and resolve conflicts peacefully.

Holy Family School offers a stellar academic program that places students on a path to success after graduation. Notably, **all students who have attended Holy Family have been accepted into selective college preparatory high schools**.

May 12, 2021 | Family Health Centers at NYU Langone



Family Health Centers
at NYU Langone
surpassed many
national quality care
benchmarks in 2020

Innovative Solutions Help Close Healthcare Gaps in New York

Shortly after the first COVID-19 vaccines were approved late last year, a race swung into full gear to vaccinate the people most at risk, including older adults. While the administration of vaccines was generally a success, the campaign experienced some inequitable road bumps.

Older adults living in affordable housing units remained a key target for vaccination during the early distribution stages. For many health and human service providers, the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program became a gateway for obtaining the first doses of the vaccines.

Fortunately, Family Health Centers at NYU Langone, a federally qualified health center in New York, was able to offer the first round of the vaccine to older adults and staff at its affordable housing sites in Brooklyn by the end of January.

Despite enduring one of the most challenging periods in its history, Family Health Centers at NYU Langone maintained its high level of care over the last year. The organization **surpassed many national quality care benchmarks in 2020** and continued to provide routine healthcare services in a safe environment. One factor behind the centers' success: the creation of a new population health management alert in its electronic health record (EHR). The new EHR alert **helped close gaps in care for chronic disease treatment, prevention, and wellness**.

May 26, 2021 | Immanuel

Immanuel's The Landing community was designated the best senior living community in Lincoln, Nebraska



New Experiences Essential to Long-term Happiness

Researchers found that having new, diverse experiences on a regular basis enhances happiness. Our desire to create positive new memories is intergenerational, a universal trait spanning all ages. Forming bonds with others is part of the human experience, and as we get older, retaining existing relationships while making new ones becomes ever more important. New experiences are a key part of the journey to maintaining good health and well-being.

Immanuel in Omaha, Nebraska, is well-versed in meeting these life-changing expectations of older adults. The 134-year-old organization balances safety with the well-being of its residents, with retirement services designed to **empower older adults to live a lifestyle of freedom, dignity, independence and safety.**

Immanuel offers a complimentary [guide](#) to leading healthy lifestyles in retirement. One of Immanuel's communities recently launched a health and wellness class, "Gold 'N Beats," where residents explored their musical skills and discovered unearthed talent! Innovative programs like this earned Immanuel's The Landing community the designation of **best senior living community in Lincoln, Nebraska**, through Lincoln's Choice Awards.

As we transition toward a post-pandemic environment, the staff at Immanuel continues to support residents with check-ins, care packages and other ways to boost their experience and happiness.

June 9, 2021 | St. Luke Lutheran Community



Mind Over Matter in Canton, Ohio

The collective image of aging in the public consciousness tends to focus on the physical changes that occur over time. Yet maintaining one's wellbeing relies just as much on the emotional as it does on the physical.

St. Luke Lutheran Community in Canton, Ohio, understands this important connection and seeks to lift the spirits of local older adults on a regular basis. To keep things fun, the community plans activities around themed days throughout the year, such as National Senior Health & Fitness Day and National Hamburger Day. St. Luke even partnered with the **Raptor Hallow Sanctuary to have owls and other birds of prey stop by for a visit!** The same goes for St. Luke staff, who dressed up according to a different theme each day during National Skilled Nursing Week.

The community also incorporates days of service in which it has the opportunity to give back to others. St. Luke staff participated in the Western Reserve Hospital Senior Coalition's "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" event, where they **packed and delivered 150 baseball-themed bags to older adults** in the area.

Keeping its residents safe is still the priority for St. Luke. Despite the loosening of pandemic restrictions in the local community, St. Luke still requires all guests to wear masks when entering its facilities. In addition, the community helps to provide [resources](#) for anyone who is interested in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

June 16, 2021 | St. John's United



“At Home” brings independent older adults together in a supportive environment

Aging Together “At Home”

Nearly nine out of 10 older adults want to remain in their home as they age. Addressing the unique challenges associated with independent living as an older adult is a core part of the Lutheran Services in America network's work to support one in 50 Americans, especially older adults in low-income, rural communities.

St. John's United in Billings, Montana, created its “[At Home](#)” program to help address key social determinants of health for older adults living within its community. People living in rural communities often experience high levels of social isolation and loneliness as they age. The impact of social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the problem. “At Home” seeks to remedy this significant issue by **bringing independent older adults together in a supportive environment** designed to help residents make the most of their retirement years.

The “At Home” program is an extension of the organization's larger focus on supporting older adults with home-based care. St. John's United is part of the [Great Plains Senior Services Collaborative](#), a Lutheran Services in America initiative that expands community-based services to improve the health and quality of life for low-income seniors in rural communities across Montana, as well as North Dakota and Minnesota.

Together, St. John's United and Lutheran Services in America **support people who struggle with limited resources, isolated settings and social determinants of health** such as inadequate transportation and home maintenance.

Learn more about St. John's United in our [2020 Annual Report](#).

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July 7, 2021 | Aase Haugen Senior Services

A stress-free environment is the basis for Aase Haugen's flexible system of care.



Innovative Care for Residents, Support for Selfless Workers are Perpetual Priorities at Aase Haugen

Science shows that **embracing practices that relax the mind as well as the body has long-lasting positive effects** as we age. Integrative approaches are beneficial for promoting good health and well-being, while also making people happier in their lives.

Nurturing the mind, body and soul is the mantra for **Aase Haugen Senior Services** in Decorah, Iowa. At Aase Haugen, a stress-free environment is key to healthy living and is the basis for its flexible system of care. This continuing care retirement community prides itself on offering innovative solutions for senior living and specialized care for recovery, long-term nursing, and other areas.

Aase Haugen also maintains an eye on the well-being of its staff, especially during these challenging times. The services that skilled nursing professionals provide on a regular basis are an irreplaceable facet of the lives of many older adults. To show its gratitude, Aase Haugen and three other local nursing homes met with the Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors during “National Skilled Nursing Care Week” to advocate for support for their dedicated workers.

FRONTLINE HEROES

July 14, 2021 | Lutheran Services Carolinas



Donations made a huge difference for communities affected by Hurricane Elsa

The Neighborly Response: Providing Disaster Relief Along the Coast

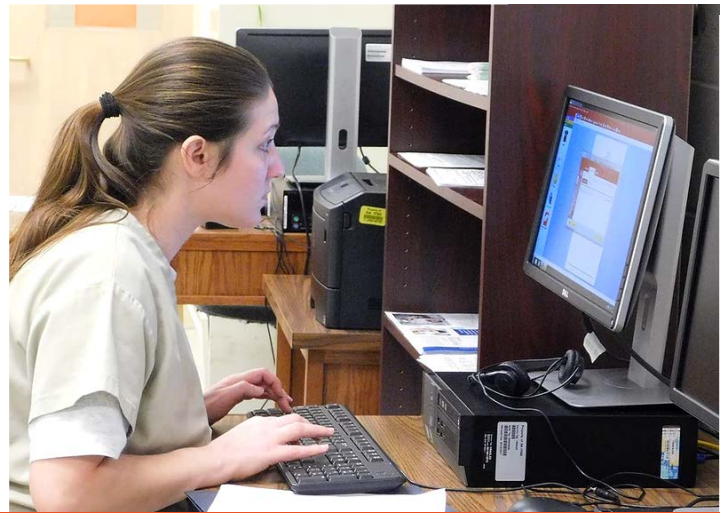
When Hurricane Elsa began developing last week, it was unclear what areas the storm would damage and who would be affected. **Lutherans in the United States have a long history of participating in disaster response** and are often the first to arrive in the wake of an emergency.

Lutheran Services Carolinas, located in Salisbury, North Carolina, is dedicated to disaster response in their region and rose to the challenge once again in the wake of Elsa.

As Hurricane Elsa approached, **Lutheran Services Carolinas took immediate action to help their friends and neighbors** who would be struck by the storm.

In partnership with NC Mission Ministries and FEMA Donation Management, Lutheran Services Carolinas Disaster Services helped load emergency supplies for distribution across the coastal areas of North and South Carolina. **These donations made a huge difference for communities affected by the storm.**

July 28, 2021 | We Raise Foundation



Boosting Investment in Human Potential, One Success Story at a Time

Every person deserves a chance to reach their full potential, an opportunity to succeed despite any mitigating circumstances in which they find themselves.

We Raise Foundation in Itasca, Illinois, is in the business of investing in human potential. The foundation is leveraging the power of generosity to make a difference in people's lives throughout its community using strategic, collaborative, and sustainable solutions. Together with its partners, We Raise is transforming Chicago neighborhoods for the better.

The foundation awarded its largest grant to date to the MAAFA Redemption Project, which provides housing—in addition to life coaching, professional training, and other services—for high-risk young men in Chicago's West Garfield Park, an area with one of the lowest life expectancies in the city. **With support from We Raise, the MAAFA Redemption Project is revitalizing a neighborhood that the project's executive director describes as long forgotten.**

Thirty-one-year-old **Quentin** is a product of MAAFA's work. Traumatized by the death of family members and incarceration of people close to him, Quentin turned to MAAFA to build back his sense of trust. After completing MAAFA's program, **he earned his high school diploma and was accepted to an associate's program at Loyola University Chicago.**

We Raise helped make an incredible second chapter possible for **Tabitha**. After completing her seventh prison sentence, Tabitha went back to school and subsequently founded the SoulFisher Ministries, which provides workforce training and educational resources for women as they re-enter society after incarceration. **With We Raise's backing, Tabitha is helping to keep formerly incarcerated women above the poverty line and out of prison.**

We Raise's belief that all people deserve to be protected from poverty, violence, and inequality is transforming lives through education, training, and many other support programs that offer a brighter future to so many.

August 11, 2021 | Lutheran Community Services Northwest

Walker's furry cuddles help give people courage to retell traumatic events



A Paw-some Hero

Sometimes the best support someone can receive after a traumatic experience comes with four legs. Mark and Walker are a pair of colleagues dedicated to sexual assault and crime victim advocacy. Walker is a certified courthouse facility dog and Mark is his handler and caregiver. Mark works at **Lutheran Community Services Northwest** in SeaTac, Washington, as a sexual assault and crime victim advocate.

In a recent interview with LCS Northwest's Louise McGrody, Mark details how he and Walker spend their time with survivors of sexual assault, providing priceless comfort while survivors report their stories to law enforcement and attorneys.

Walker's furry cuddles help soothe people and give them courage to retell traumatic events. Mark provides an example of Walker's work where in one interview, a young woman was able to calm down while with Walker to give enough information to identify another offender.

Mark and Walker also provide support to the staff in the offices at Lutheran Community Services, whether it's a tough day or stressful meeting.

Read the [full interview](#) with Mark and Walker.

August 25, 2021 | Lutheran Church Charities



Finding the Paw-sitive Amid Disaster in Surfside

The tragic building collapse in Surfside, Florida, brought heartache to the loved ones of 98 individuals. In the wake of the tragedy, **Lutheran Church Charities** in Northbrook, Illinois, deployed its team of comfort dogs to help the victims' families cope during their time of mourning.

Launched in 2008, the Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry is a national human-care ministry embracing the unique, calming nature and skills of purebred golden retrievers. LCC K-9 comfort dogs are working animals, trained to interact with people of all ages in need.

From Northeastern communities hit by Superstorm Sandy to Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, **LCC's comfort dogs are a welcome distraction for victims of the unthinkable and their loved ones.**

Following the collapse in Surfside, a local Lutheran pastor reached out to LCC and the ministry answered the call with nine golden retrievers in tow.

"Lutheran Church Charities uses only 'goldens' because they love people, they're very smart, and people like to approach them," said LCC's Cheryl Skelly in an interview with the [Beloit Daily News](#). "They're a people dog. They just want to be with people."

Along with the natural comfort the retrievers provide, LCC dog handlers handed out plush toys to rescuers to deliver to their children and an opportunity to pray for anyone interested—a multi-pronged approach to helping all those in need.

September 8, 2021 | Ascentria Care Alliance



Ascentria has successfully resettled 330 refugees from Afghanistan over the past seven years

Home Away from Home: Ascentria Welcomes Afghan Families to New England

As part of our mission to transform lives, our network is committed to honoring all with dignity and respect, recognizing the diversity of people and communities. We uphold this principle for everyone in this country, no matter their background. It should then come as no surprise that Lutheran Services in America members have been actively engaged in the humanitarian effort to resettle refugees from Afghanistan here in the United States following our nation's withdrawal.

Ascentria Care Alliance in Worcester, Massachusetts, is focused on assisting Afghan families by expanding access to housing and affordable legal assistance and providing living essentials. With the help of the local community, Ascentria aims at resettling families across Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

As part of its effort to help evacuees, Ascentria is calling on Gov. Charlie Baker and state lawmakers to make funds from the American Rescue Plan and the state's budget surplus available for allocation toward services for Afghans seeking relocation. Current funds from the federal government are not enough to completely cover the cost of resettlement in Massachusetts where affordable housing is harder to come by, said Aimee Mitchell, chief of community service for Ascentria, in an [interview](#) with NBC Boston.

Ascentria has successfully resettled 330 refugees from Afghanistan over the past seven years. We applaud the team at Ascentria for their conviction—their commitment is needed now more than ever.

September 29, 2021 | Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area

LSS has been a leader in finding new homes for Afghans around the nation's capital



Afghan Allies Welcomed with Open Arms in our Nation's Capital

The Lutheran Services in America network is working passionately to resettle Afghan allies and their families here in the United States. Following the recent takeover by the Taliban in Afghanistan, **Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area** in Washington D.C., has been a leader in finding new homes for Afghans around the nation's capital.

LSS has welcomed more than 550 individuals so far, with the goal of resettling approximately 800 over a two-month period. The organization is receiving help from across the community. LSS spokesperson Autumn Kendrick [told CBS News](#) Uber and Lyft have donated free transportation for daily tasks, such as trips to the grocery store or job interviews, and Airbnb recently donated \$70,000 for temporary bookings.

In order to accommodate the influx of refugees, the organization is continuously [reevaluating](#) how it operates. With generous [support from partners](#), LSS expects to continue to assist Afghan refugees during this critical time.

Since 1917, the Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area has been making a positive impact in their community. **Today LSS continues to foster healthy and self-sufficient livelihoods** through community services, including refugee and immigrant resettlement, workforce development, and interpretation; family and children services such as foster care for unaccompanied refugee minors and adoption services; and health and wellness services.

October 13, 2021 | Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota



“This could be the first time they’ve ever had a home”

Inspiring Hope and Changing Young Lives in Minnesota

“Practicing compassion will change the world.” The team at **Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota** lives by the promise of addressing the needs of its community with compassion for all, working to **connect people with opportunities** to live and work with dignity, safety and hope.

LSS’s passion for transforming lives and building community is evident at its **Center for Changing Lives** in Duluth, which provides **holistic care for all individuals, no matter their background**. The center offers transitional housing and supportive apartments, life skills training, counseling support and wellness education, amongst other services, to 880 young people each year.

“We’re really here to help them build the skills and connections they need to be successful in life,” Kelly Looby, LSS’s program director in youth, children and family services, said in an interview with the [Duluth News Tribune](#).

The center follows a wraparound model in which it offers comprehensive services focused on providing young people with what they need, all from a holistic standpoint that speaks to its core mission for more than 150 years of **inspiring hope while responding to the changing needs** of Minnesotans.

The Center for Changing Lives is but one significant component in a broader effort by LSS to transform the lives of young people. LSS participates in the **Lutheran Services in America Results Network**, a cohort within our Results Innovation Lab that focuses on **stabilizing families** in their communities and preventing the unnecessary placement of children into out-of-home care. Through this program, LSS is helping to **improve equitable outcomes** with the goal of making a measurable difference in the lives of 20,000 children and youth by 2024.

October 27, 2021 | Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio

There is hope for anyone who has experience with domestic violence



Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence, Together

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. At least 1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced some form of domestic violence. It is a calamity affecting people of all backgrounds that has only become more severe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is hope for anyone who has experience with domestic violence. The **Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio** organization's **CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence** program assists victims in breaking the cycle and beginning the healing process. LSS chronicles the story of Dina, a victim of abuse who sought refuge with her children at the LSS CHOICES shelter. "I have a job. I have friends. I smile a lot and even laugh with the other women," she told LSS a month after living at the shelter. "I am proud and feel confident. I am enjoying my life. This is freedom."

LSS CHOICES offers temporary emergency shelter

at an unpublished location for victims and their children who are in imminent danger and have no safe place to go. LSS also offers a 24-hour hotline staffed by people who are trained in safety planning and provide information and referrals based on a caller's individual needs. "We get about 4,500 crisis hotline calls a year," said Susan L. Villilo, assistant vice president of community-based services at Lutheran Social Services, in an [interview](#) with the Columbus Dispatch. **In 2020, LSS sheltered more than 800 people**, she said.

Last week, LSS was featured for the second time by the WBNS television special "[Choose Hope: Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence Together](#)," which explored the organization's work through the CHOICES program. The special featured two female victims who shared their experiences and their choice to turn to LSS CHOICES. Their bravery exemplifies the strength of all people who experience domestic violence.

November 17, 2021 | Lutheran Services in Iowa



Afghan families are a “really necessary component of helping Iowa thrive.”

Newly Arrived Afghan Families Find a Home in Iowa

Tens of thousands of Afghan families have come to the United States since the withdrawal of troops over the summer. From Virginia to Arizona and Minnesota to Florida, the Lutheran Services in America network is working to assist the newest generation of Americans in planting new roots.

Finding housing for newly arrived families is the priority for **Lutheran Services in Iowa**. The organization is in constant contact with landlords across Sioux City to find suitable accommodations. In addition to affordable housing, LSI connects refugees with employers in the area, including Tyson Foods.

LSI is working to resettle up to 200 refugees in the area amidst a nationwide labor crunch. The workforce shortage has led the organization to reach out for additional support from the community. “We’re looking for volunteers who can be family mentors and help transport people to appointments and English classes,” said Bethany Kohoutek, vice president of marketing and communications for LSI, in an [interview](#) with the Sioux City Journal.

Kohoutek welcomes the new arrivals as a “really necessary component of helping Iowa thrive.”

LSI is leading an effort in the community to create welcome boxes for the families, who generally arrive in the United States with minimal possessions. The welcome boxes include necessities such as dishes, bedding items and winter clothing.



Lutheran
Services
in America™

Do you have a
FRONTLINE HEROES
story to share?

Let us know!

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