



LUTHERAN  
SOCIAL  
SERVICES  
A Network of Hope

# FOCUS

News from  
the Network  
of Hope

LSS Faith Mission

LSS Food Pantries

LSS CHOICES

Fall 2021

## The Chance to Live Again

**“**Living on the streets isn’t living, it’s only existing.**”**

**Andrew**

LSS Faith Mission client



LSS FAITH MISSION

**I**t’s been said that every child is born with a hole inside them in the shape of their dad. And if a dad is unwilling to fill that hole, it can leave a wound that will scar a child for life.

Meet Andrew. Andrew was raised by a father who provided him with all the material things he could ever want—but never the love, affection, and affirmation he craved.

“My father was a brilliant physician,” Andrew says. “But in his eyes, I was never good enough. He always said, ‘You could have done better at this, you should have done better on that.’ I grew up believing I was a failure and that’s all I’d ever be.”

*Story continued on page 2*

## A Message of Hope from Sue Villilo



"Even in the hardest times, your commitment, prayers, and selfless sacrifices were constant."

It's been more than a year and a half since COVID-19 turned our lives upside down. For those of us committed to serving our neighbors facing hunger, homelessness, and domestic violence, the past 19 months have often felt overwhelming. But as I look back, it's not the challenges I recall. It's the gratitude I felt—and continue to feel—for friends like you.

Even in the hardest times, your commitment, prayers, and selfless sacrifices were constant. You inspired us. You gave us hope. You kept us going. You saw us through. To me, you are a hero. I hope you read the stories in this issue of *Focus* with joy, because these are just a few of the women and men you supported these past several months.

Yet, many in Central Ohio continue to struggle. In the months ahead, we expect more people to fall into hunger and homelessness. And we're already in the midst of an unprecedented crisis of domestic violence, as so many victims had no other choice but to isolate with their abusers. Now, we're seeing a tsunami of people seeking our help.

LSS Faith Mission, LSS CHOICES, and the LSS Food Pantries are committed to serving all those who need our support. With your ongoing partnership and support, we will continue to make a lasting difference in our community.

With gratitude,

Sue Villilo  
Assistant Vice President of  
Community-Based Services, LSS

### ANDREW'S STORY cont.

By age 31, he already had a long history of that failure—college, jobs, marriage, and more. "After the divorce, I just didn't care anymore," he says. "I went wild, drinking, smoking crack, losing jobs, and getting arrested. My whole life went out of control."

In time, Andrew lost everything. He's spent the past 14 years on and off the streets of Columbus, lost in depression, shame, regret, and self-loathing.

"Growing up, I had every advantage handed to me," he says. "I wasted it. Now, everywhere I look is a constant reminder of what I've done to my life."

Six months ago, however, Andrew turned to LSS Faith Mission to finally help him turn things around. He's already found a new job and is getting ready to move into his own place again. But he says what he's most grateful for is regular meetings with a counselor in the health center. "She understands what I'm dealing with and she's so supportive," he says. "She's helping me face the shame and failure I've always felt. Thanks to her, for the first time in my life, I feel like I can still make something of my life. I really believe, without LSS Faith Mission, I wouldn't be where I am today."

"I also want to thank the donors," he says. "Living on the streets isn't living, it's only existing. They're giving me the chance to live again."

### LSS FOOD PANTRIES



"The first time I came to the LSS Food Pantries, I was so ashamed, I felt like I was going to be judged. But the people here were so friendly and kind. They treated us with dignity and respect. It actually brought tears to my eyes."

—Melinda, LSS Food Pantries client

"We never have to worry about having enough food. Coming to the LSS Food Pantry means my son can eat."

—Colin, LSS Food Pantries client

Your donations and contributions enable the LSS Food Pantries to help individuals and families who are food insecure, in 12 counties around Ohio, by making nutritious food more readily available in a way that honors their dignity and offers hope.

Your gift also offers healing and hope to people in need across Ohio. That means you will ensure families struggling with hunger have access to nutritious food at th

## LSS CHOICES

# This Is My Time

by Brooke

I've been through a lot in my life. For a long time, I thought, *OK, this is who I am. This is what my life is about. This is what I deserve.*

When I was growing up, I watched my dad beat my mom every single day. Many times, he beat me, too. When my dad was around, I tried to hide in the closet or under the bed. But I could still hear him hit my mom over and over and over.

Then, when I was 16, I moved in with a guy. Almost immediately, the abuse started, and it just got worse and worse. Getting beat is painful. Getting choked is even worse. But worst of all is mental abuse. Every day, he ridiculed me and made me feel I was worthless. Bruises heal, but the mental wounds don't ever go away. You remember that stuff forever.

The final straw was when he tried to cut me off from my family. He took the phone away, the computer, everything, so I couldn't communicate with them. I was so afraid, I had to slip out in the middle of the night to escape.

But I still felt worthless. Before long, I got into another abusive relationship. All the signs were there that it was going to get really bad. Before it reached that point, I got away and called LSS CHOICES.

I've been here for six months now. Everyone here was so



**"I deserve more than what I've experienced in life, and this is my time."**

helpful and friendly, and they helped me feel safe again. They gave the time, space, encouragement, and support I needed to find my real self again. The confident, honest, funny, outgoing me started to emerge. Today, thanks to LSS CHOICES and the people who support it, I'm getting ready to move out on my own. I'm ready. I deserve more than what I've experienced in life, and this is my time.

I used to think that abuse was my story. Abuse is what defined me. But now I understand my past does not define me. I have a brand new chance at life and I'm going to take it.

## Help End the Abuse

Thanks to your support, LSS CHOICES provides victims like Brooke with the resources they need to heal and to rebuild their lives. Throughout October, which is National Domestic Violence Awareness month, we are excited to present **Choose Hope**, a fundraising campaign to support LSS CHOICES and the community we serve.

Be sure to tune in to our 30-minute Choose Hope special airing on October 21 at 7 p.m. on WBNS 10TV to understand more about intimate partner violence, hear stories from survivors, and learn about the shelter and services offered at LSS CHOICES. To donate, please visit

[Issnetworkofhope.org/choosehope](http://Issnetworkofhope.org/choosehope).

*If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, please call our Crisis Hotline at 614-224-4663 or visit [Issnetworkofhope.org/choices](http://Issnetworkofhope.org/choices).*

LSS CHOICES

**CHOOSE  
HOPE**

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TOGETHER

## LSS NETWORK OF HOPE



# Your Support Is Vital to Struggling Neighbors This Thanksgiving Season

This fall, women, men, and children who have been devastated by hunger, homelessness, and domestic violence here in Central Ohio need your help.

As we head into the Thanksgiving season, your generosity will provide them with nutritious meals and safe shelter. But even more, you will give them hope, as well as the resources they need to rebuild their lives. Thanks to you, we will be able to meet the physical and emotional needs of people who come to our doors.

Please consider giving a gift today by going online to [Issnetworkofhope.org/ThanksgivingNews](http://Issnetworkofhope.org/ThanksgivingNews) or send the enclosed reply slip with your gift.

Thank you for your generosity. You are providing care and hope to struggling neighbors all across Ohio. God bless you this Thanksgiving season!

**"Without your support, people in need of shelter, food, safety, and healing would go without those basic needs. By following God's commandment to love our neighbor, we are ensuring a brighter future and creating a better world for our neighbors in need."**

—Stacy Martin, CEO Lutheran Social Services

## Help Create a Better World Through Your Estate Plan

Rev. Nelson Meyer served as President and CEO of Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio for 22 years, before retiring in 2005. Rev. Meyer and his wife continue to financially support LSS and have created an estate plan to leave a lasting legacy after they die.

I think most people want to be remembered as someone who made a positive difference in life. My wife and I are no different. An estate plan is one way to do it. It's your final investment, your eternal statement that you want to leave to the world.

The LSS mission statement, "Creating a better world by serving people in need," is really powerful. Our estate plan is our small part to help Lutheran Social Services change the world. That's the way I want to be remembered, as someone who did his small part in creating that better world by serving folks in need.

LSS is an organization you can trust. I encourage you to consider supporting it in your planned giving. You can't do a better thing.

**For more information about setting up an Estate Plan in support of LSS, please contact Michele Cenci at [mcenci@Issnetworkofhope.org](mailto:mcenci@Issnetworkofhope.org) or 614-429-5494.**

### Thank you to our funders



Stay connected!

