

My Grown-Up Christmas

I wanted Christmas to be special.

I have three young kids, 13, 11, and 5. They mean everything to me. But they've never been able to spend Christmas with me. I never had my own place to bring them to. That's not the kind of dad I want to be. Last Christmas, I knew something had to change.

All my life, I've lived with shame and regret. In high school, I had a basketball scholarship to play at Bowling Green. But I drank too much, dropped out, and messed up my entire future. Feeling sorry for myself, I gave up on life in a way. I didn't have any more alcohol problems, but I had no ambition, either. I drifted from roommate to roommate, job to job, just spinning my wheels...

Then God blessed me with my three kids. I was determined to be a good father. But I just couldn't get my life together enough to give them a home to come to. Then, in February 2020, I got sick. While I was in the hospital, COVID-19 hit, and I lost my job. Last Christmas I was on the verge of homelessness and depressed. But it was kind of a gift, too. It was the wake-up call I needed to get my life straight.

The beginning of January, I came straight to LSS Faith Mission. I knew

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LSS FAITH MISSION



“ I needed something more:
I needed a helping hand to
walk through it with me. ”

Bryan

LSS Faith Mission client

A Message of Hope from Sue Villilo



“All year, you have sacrificed and supported us in ways that overwhelm me with gratitude.”

We always like to think of the holiday season as a joyful, uplifting time. But for the women, men, and children we serve, their joy and hopefulness may be tinged with sadness and regret. Their lives have not turned out the way they once hoped, and they don't know if their lives ever will.

For many, in some ways, this holiday season feels even more sad. There is so much anger, chaos, and turmoil in the world around us. People experiencing hunger, homelessness, and domestic violence often feel forgotten and helpless to do anything about it. That seems especially true this year, as the coronavirus delta variant continues to spread and people seeking domestic violence services from LSS CHOICES is at an all-time high.

Yet, despite all the challenges, Christmas is still a season of hope. LSS Faith Mission, LSS CHOICES, and the LSS Food Pantries are still here, still caring, still offering meals, shelter, safety, and still offering a helping hand—all because YOU haven't forgotten.

All year round, YOU make all these services and resources possible. No, the problems people are facing aren't going to go away soon. Indeed, the days ahead might get worse. But this holiday season, there's hope. We will be here, today and into the challenges of the new year. All thanks to you. May your holiday season be filled with love and peace.

With gratitude,

Sue Villilo

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



BRYAN'S STORY cont.

they had the resources to help me find a job and affordable housing. But I needed something more: I needed a helping hand to walk through it with me. To encourage me. Support me. Hold me accountable. I needed a counselor to help me overcome my feelings of shame and failure. LSS Faith Mission gave me all that and more.

Today, I have a new job and my own place, where I'll be able to bring my kids. We'll celebrate Christmas in my own home. It's going to happen—but I couldn't have done it without LSS Faith Mission and you. You supported me when I needed it most. Your faith in me changed my life, the best gift I ever received. Merry Christmas!



“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.”

—Philippians 2:3

Leave a Legacy.

For more information about setting up an Estate Plan in support of LSS, please contact **Michele Cenci** at Isslegacy@Issnetworkofhope.org or **614-429-5494**.

LSS CHOICES



Navigating the Trauma

Chelsey was 23 and looking for excitement. As a child, she grew up in the midst of divorce, alcoholism, co-dependency, and sexual abuse. It was time for a change. So, when her future husband showed up on his motorcycle one day, Chelsey was ready to ride.

“It was great,” she recalls. “Partying, drinking, bar hopping, road trips. It was a lot of fun. But looking back, I ignored a lot of red flags.”

They married a year later and moved to Ohio to be closer to his family. “That’s when the emotional abuse really started,” she says. “After I gave birth to my daughter, he tore up all my credit cards. Worse, he had almost nothing to do with our daughter. He started calling me fat and stupid, and telling me what I could eat and not eat. On a family trip, he punched me for not walking the stroller the way he wanted. He called me names in front of his parents. The day we got back, he kicked my dog. When I threatened to call the cops, he said he’d kill me if I did.”



That was it. The next day, Chelsey escaped with her daughter and contacted LSS CHOICES.

“They helped me find a pro bono attorney to guide me through the separation and divorce,” Chelsey says. “But it was their counseling I needed most. Over the past two years, we’ve talked regularly. They helped me work through the trauma, anxiety, and guilt I feel. They also helped me understand all the craziness I went through—and that I’m still going through, because he shares custody of our daughter. So, LSS CHOICES continues to navigate me through this whole thing.”

“I’m so grateful to the donors. Out of all the things they could donate to, they’re helping and protecting women and children like me and my daughter. I think that’s incredible.”

Photo has been changed to protect privacy.

Volunteer Spotlight: Cathy “Serving My Neighbor”



As a Christian, I know that Christ wants me to serve my neighbor. When I volunteer for LSS Faith Mission, this is my way of serving my neighbor while glorifying the Lord, and I feel like I’m doing what God intends for me to do in this world. The volunteers from our church love to come here to make a meal that will seem special to those who receive it. It feels good to know that we are providing a nutritious meal for people in need.

There’s a lot of fun involved in volunteering with a group, but an individual can enjoy serving just as much. You always leave knowing that you made a difference in someone’s life.

Cathy is a weekly volunteer from St. John Lutheran Church in Dublin, Ohio.

LSS FOOD PANTRIES

Joyce: “The LSS Food Pantry is a lifesaver.”

I retired in 2014 and thought I had a good savings built up. But three years later, I started running low. I got a part-time job to help pay the bills, but I still needed a little bit of extra help with food. I’ve been coming to the LSS Food Pantry once a month ever since. The fresh fruits and vegetables are wonderful and exactly what I want. This food pantry is a lifesaver.



I always order my food online so it’s ready when I get here. All I have to do is pick it up and go. The folks who work here are wonderful. They’re courteous and friendly, the customer service is top of the line, and they always treat me with respect—and that’s important.

I want to tell the donors, thank you, so much! This food pantry is a blessing to this community. God bless you!



LSS NETWORK OF HOPE

Give the Gift of Hope this Christmas Season

This holiday season, please remember all our neighbors who are hungry and homeless, and all those who feel hopeless as they struggle to get by. For many of them, this is the most painful time of year as they recall lost friends and families, lost opportunities, and happier memories of holidays past.

Please give today to help provide meals, shelter, and hope to women, men, and children who will spend this Christmas season at LSS Faith Mission and LSS CHOICES.

Your gift of any amount will remind our neighbors in need that people like you care. Your compassion and mercy will not only help lessen the suffering of people across Ohio, you will also give many the chance for a better life.

Thank you for your generosity, prayers, and support for neighbors who need us most—at the holiday season and throughout the year.

We are hopeful we can meet the physical and emotional needs of every single person who comes through our doors. Please consider giving a gift today by going online to Issnetworkofhope.org/HolidayNews or send the enclosed reply slip with your gift. Thank you!



Thank You for Making this a Thankful Holiday for Families

Thanks to your support, the LSS Food Pantries annually provide food to more than 50,000 hungry individuals and families in 12 Ohio counties.

This Thanksgiving, your compassionate gifts will help make this a more *Thankful* holiday season by enabling us to provide Thanksgiving meals for 3,150 families, seniors, and children in our pantry network.

Please give today to remind them of the true meaning of the holiday!

For more information about what is happening at the LSS Food Pantries, go to Issnetworkofhope.org/foodpantries

Save the Date!

104.9 The River and LSS Faith Mission Radio-thon

Tune in to 104.9 The River on November 18 and 19 to support LSS Faith Mission's annual radio-thon to help provide life-giving food and shelter to women and men experiencing homelessness.

Thursday, November 18
6:00am – 7:00pm

Friday, November 19
6:00am – 11:00am

Giving is easy!

CALL IN 1-800-609-1049

ONLINE www.Issnetworkofhope.org/faithmission/seasonofhope

TEXT soh to 50155

SHARE [Facebook.com/faithmission](https://www.facebook.com/faithmission)

TWEET @faithmissionoh

Your gift also offers healing and hope to people in need across Ohio. That means your support will help provide meals and shelter to homeless and hungry neighbors who come to LSS Faith Mission in both Franklin and Fairfield counties. You will ensure families struggling with hunger have access to nutritious food at the LSS Food Pantries. And you will bless women and men facing domestic violence with a safe, secure place to stay and heal through LSS CHOICES.

Thank you to our funders:



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