This Easter season, please help our neighbors in need

This spring and Easter season, hundreds of women and men in central Ohio will have no place to call home. Others will experience the devastation of abuse. And too many families, including children, will go to bed hungry.

Yet there’s hope. Thanks to your compassionate generosity, LSS Faith Mission in Franklin and Fairfield counties, LSS CHOICES, and the LSS Food Pantries offer a helping hand to all those who are experiencing abuse, hunger, and homelessness in our community. Every gift you send to the LSS Network of Hope offers new hope to those who have lost it—hope for a better life.

At the LSS Network of Hope, we are committed to meeting the physical and emotional needs of every single person who comes through our doors.

Please consider giving a gift today by going online to lssnetworkofhope.org/EasterNews or send the enclosed reply slip with your gift. Thank you!

Leave a legacy of support for years to come

Many people who love supporting Lutheran Social Services are learning that they can leave a legacy of support for years to come by including LSS in their estate plan or through a planned gift. You have many planned giving options, including charitable gift annuities, donor advised funds, trusts, gifts of securities, and much more.

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"LSS is an organization our family feels close to, and we’ve seen firsthand how committed they are to helping so many people. We want to help ensure LSS services are strong and readily available for people who need them—now and into the future."

—Russell and Joanne

Church Spotlight: Atonement Lutheran Church

For more than 20 years, Atonement Lutheran Church in Columbus has served and supported the LSS Food Pantries as volunteers, as well as through food and financial donations. Throughout the pandemic, they continued to send their volunteers to help. They are big supporters of our annual Souper Bowl fundraising event, and in 2021, they volunteered for the first time at our ThankFULL Holiday food distribution!

“We’re very concerned about food insecurity in our community,” says Mary Ludlum at Atonement Lutheran Church. “Supporting the LSS Food Pantries is an easy and effective way to address that concern. But more important, we support the Food Pantries because of the love of Jesus, and our desire to be His hands and feet.”

Thank you, Atonement Lutheran Church for your faithful, compassionate partnership with the LSS Food Pantries!

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:

Nicole
LSS CHOICES client

Looking back, LSS CHOICES was better than anything I could have hoped for.

As a child, Nicole’s mother was the victim of domestic violence. Nicole remembers trying to break up the fights and the helplessness she felt when she couldn’t stop it. She was determined it would never happen to her.

She was 21 when she met her partner. “The first year was great. Everything was always happy between us,” she recalls.


“Then he started putting his hands on me,” she says. “We had kids by then, and I didn’t feel like I could just leave.

Story continued on page 2

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Stay connected!

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A Message of Hope
from Stacy Martin

"You are the real hero in every story you read here."

As the new president and CEO of Lutheran Social Services, I want to welcome you to your spring issue of the LSS Focus. I am so honored to lead such a remarkable organization that impacts so many lives—lives just like those you’ll read about in this newsletter. But even more, I’m so grateful to partner with people like you, who make these kinds of stories possible.

Dedicated supporters like you are saving—and transforming—lives through your support of the LSS Network of Hope. Every person we shelter, every victim we help from domestic violence, every family we help feed, is all because someone like you cared. In fact, none of the stories you read in this newsletter would be possible without people like you. You are the real hero in every story you read here.

Every gift you send makes an immediate, life-changing difference in the lives of all the men, women, and children we serve. And when they learn there are people like you who believe in them, people who are willing to invest in them and their future, it’s empowering.

So, it is with deep and abiding gratitude that I thank you for your commitment to making the world a better place through your support of the LSS Network of Hope.

With gratitude,

Stacy Martin
President and CEO

A Past Full of Pain, a Future Full of Hope

As a child, Rebecca experienced extreme poverty in Kentucky. “Growing up like that affected me,” she says. “But I was determined to do better with my life.”

By the age of 19, Rebecca had a good job, working for the state of Ohio. She also got married and started a family. For several years, it looked like she had escaped her past. But, at 35, she started suffering a degenerative spinal disorder, leaving her in debilitating pain. She was forced to retire and go on permanent disability.

Soon after, her husband abandoned her and took her children. As she fell back into a life of poverty, her stress and trauma grew worse—and so did her health: fibromyalgia, mental health issues, kidney failure, and she started experiencing seizures, sometimes three or four a day. Then the medical bills started piling up.

“I never dreamed I would end up like that,” she says. “It really opened my eyes as to what life can throw at you.”

Last year, however, whatever she had left crashed down around her. She ended up in the hospital because of the seizures. While in the hospital, someone wrecked her car, she found out she was losing her health insurance, and she was evicted from her apartment. She was homeless.

“When the hospital released me, I still needed medical support,” Rebecca says. “But I didn’t have anywhere to go. So, they brought me to LSS Faith Mission’s medical respite center. Since I’ve been here, they’re making sure I get the medical attention I need. They’re also helping me figure out how I can manage my life and live independently again when I leave.

“There are so many people who have showed me how much they care about me, from staff to the donors,” she adds. “That’s the best feeling in the world.”

DeJuan: “The LSS Food Pantries has been a Lifesaver”

I worked hard all my life, until a couple of years ago. Then, almost all at once, I had several ulcers burst in my stomach, a stroke, and I lost my job. I’ve got my health back, but I’ve been unemployed ever since. My unemployment doesn’t go far, especially when it comes to food.

I grew up on the streets, eating out of dumpsters, so I know what hunger is. Food and eating healthy are important to me. So, finding the LSS Food Pantries has been a lifesaver, that’s the bottom line. I come once a month for the staples—beans, vegetables, meat, canned goods, stuff like that. Then I come a couple of times a month for more perishable items, like milk and bread.

The people here make me feel like a human being. They treat me with kindness and respect. I don’t look at this as a lifestyle—they’re giving me a helping hand until I can get back on my feet and working.

I want to thank donors for showing us so much compassion. Without people like you, we’re lost as a society. Thank you.

NICOLE’S STORY cont.

“One time, he hit me so hard on my legs it left huge knots. Another time, he choked me until I passed out. I was afraid he was going to kill me.”

The next day, with her partner out, she quickly gathered her four kids and escaped. She came to LSS CHOICES.

“I was scared,” she says. “I didn’t know if I could actually handle life by myself, without him. Looking back, LSS CHOICES was better than anything I could have hoped for. It wasn’t just the meals and shelter. It was the resources to find housing. It was the encouragement and the counseling. It only took me about two and a half months before we got our own place.”

She still can’t believe how much her life has already changed. “When I moved out, that’s when my life really started,” she says. “I’m on my own. There’s no more abuser. I’m at peace, and my kids can sleep at night without worrying.”

“I want to thank the donors, because I don’t know where we’d be if LSS CHOICES wasn’t here. You believe in this place so much, you made it possible for me and my kids to be safe. Thank you!”

“Our shelter residents
A Message of Hope from Stacy Martin

Support Our Shelter Residents

At LSS Faith Mission and LSS CHOICES, the healing process begins the moment someone steps in our door. You can help by providing our shelter residents with the following items:

- New men’s athletic style shorts all sizes
- New men’s/women’s/kids’ flip-flops (all sizes)
- Shelf-stable juice boxes or large bottles

Donations can be dropped off at 217 N. Grant Ave. at the McKee Alley door (south side of building) Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. For questions, please visit our website at Issnetworkofhope.org/get-involved/giveitems/
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LSS FAITH MISSION

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LSS CHOICES

NICOLE'S STORY cont.

“One time, he hit me so hard on my legs it left huge knots. Another time, he choked me until I passed out. We were together for 11 years, so I went through a lot. But the last time was the worst. He started punching my head. I lost a tooth, my kids were screaming and crying, and eventually I blacked out. I was afraid he was going to kill me.”

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LSS FOOD PANTRIES

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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.

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Nicole
LSS CHOICES client

Story continued on page 2

Starting Life Over

As a child, Nicole’s mother was the victim of domestic violence. Nicole remembers trying to break up the fights and the helplessness she felt when she couldn’t stop it. She was determined it would never happen to her.

She was 21 when she met her partner. “The first year was great. Everything was always happy between us,” she recalls. Slowly, things changed. The verbal abuse. Ridicule. Control. Yelling in her face. Friends and family warned her to get out. But she stayed.

“Then he started putting his hands on me,” she says. “We had kids by then, and I didn’t feel like I could just leave.

Story continued on page 2