

“To God be the glory”

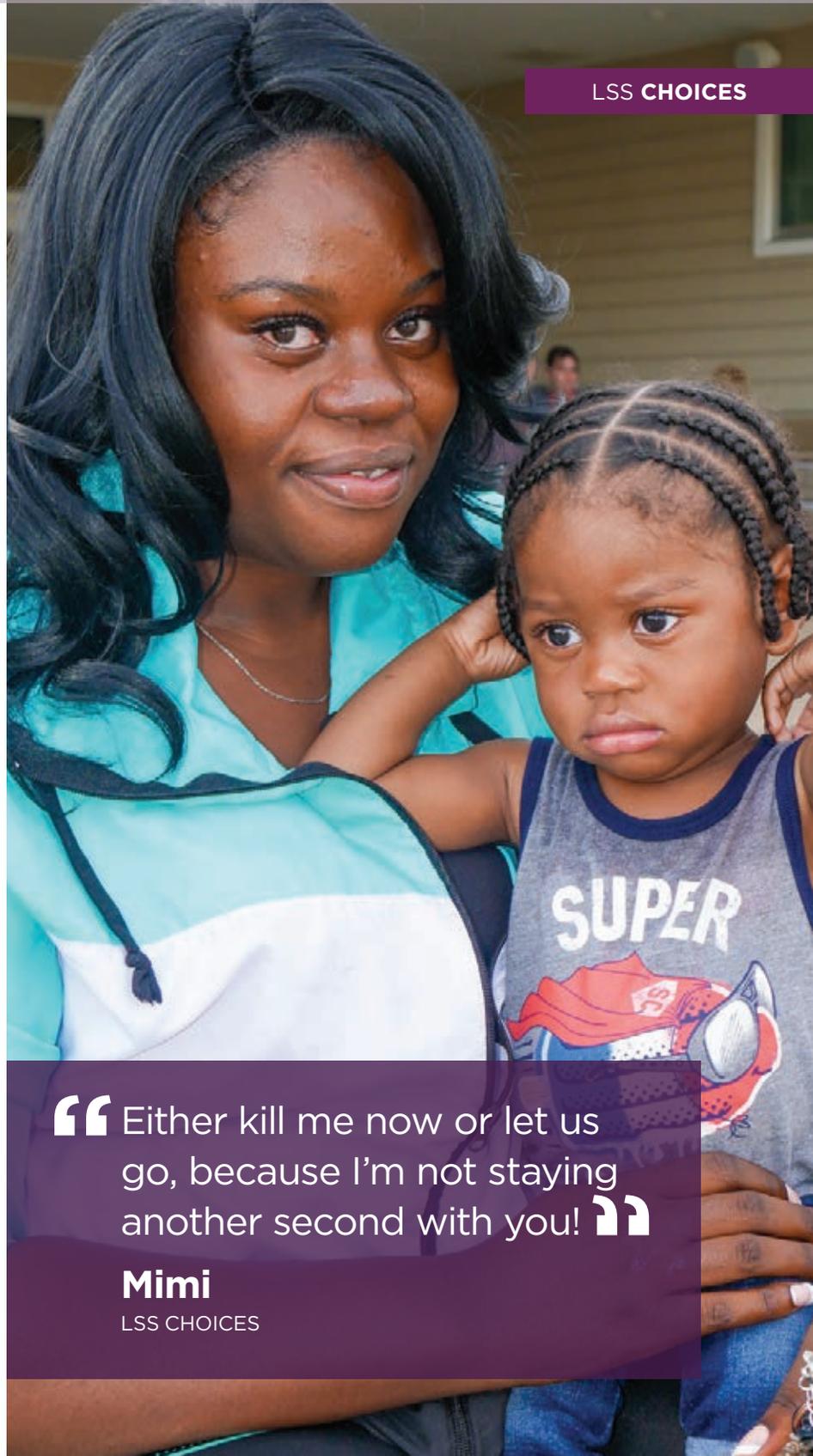
Mimi felt frightened and trapped in the hotel room where she and her two young children were spending the night. The man who had beaten and choked her repeatedly for nearly three years kept a close eye on her at all times. But when he finally fell asleep drunk, she saw her chance.

“I grabbed my kids and said, ‘OK, guys, we gotta go. Now!’” Mimi recalls. “But when I tried to unbolt the door, he woke up and started choking me. I screamed, ‘Either kill me now or let us go, because I’m not staying another second with you!’ I don’t know why, but this time, he finally let us go.”

Mimi and her two kids escaped and that night they came to LSS CHOICES, our shelter for victims of domestic violence and their kids.

Like many women, Mimi thought it could never happen to her. “I was raised by strong, Christian women who taught me to be strong,” she says. “As an adult, I never took any mess from any guy. But then life happened...”

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LSS CHOICES

“Either kill me now or let us go, because I’m not staying another second with you!”

Mimi

LSS CHOICES

A Message of Hope from Sue Villilo



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

As we head into the holidays, it all feels so different this year. Instead of the usual parties and time spent with friends and family, it will be a season of caution and social distancing, and a reminder of all those who lost jobs and income, their health, and perhaps even their homes. This Christmas season, I expect many are experiencing hunger and homelessness for the first time.

Yet, it's in times like these that I'm most grateful for serving at LSS Faith Mission, LSS CHOICES, and LSS Food Pantries. We are committed, every day, to offer comfort, hope, and healing to all those who need it most, never questioning anyone's worth or the reasons that led them here. We simply open our arms and say, “Here we are. Let us help.”

It's certainly been a year of challenges. Yet, it's also been a year of extraordinary inspiration, as I've witnessed how our clients and staff have courageously responded to our many challenges. They have reminded me that we're truly all in this together. There is no us and them, there is only *us*.

You have inspired me, as well. All year, you have sacrificed and supported us in ways that overwhelm me with gratitude—and like the Star of Bethlehem, you have been a bright light in a very dark time. This holiday season, may you experience peace on earth and Christmas joy. Thank you!

With gratitude,

Sue Villilo

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



MIMI'S STORY cont.

“...I started dating this guy and I got pregnant. That's when the beatings and choking started. I tried to get away several times, but I kept going back. I don't know why. It's like, I got to a place where I didn't think I could make life work and take care of two kids on my own. Somehow, I thought I needed him.”

At LSS CHOICES, however, Mimi found another way. When she arrived, Mimi and her kids had nothing but the clothes on their backs. LSS CHOICES helped her regain all her essential papers, and helped provide her with clothing and other necessities for her two children, ages one and two. They also helped Mimi experience much-needed emotional healing, and before long, she found employment and even housing, where she lives independently once more.

“More than anything, LSS CHOICES taught me that I could do this on my own,” she says. “To God be the glory, I found my way back. To all the donors, I want to say thank you. Without you, me and my kids would not be where we're at.”

If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, please call our Crisis Hotline at 614-224-4663 or visit lssnetworkofhope.org/choices.

We're Grateful for You!

In this challenging year of COVID-19, we especially want to thank:

- The many volunteers who have continued to support our LSS Food Pantries sites.
- All those who have donated almost 1,000 care kits to LSS Faith Mission.
- The volunteers and groups who are providing needed meals to LSS Faith Mission and LSS CHOICES.
- The many donors and community partners who have provided masks to keep clients, volunteers, and staff safe.



LSS FAITH MISSION

Coming Home for the Holidays

Like most families, the holiday season was always a special time for Jon and his wife—a time for good food and spending time with friends and family.

For almost 20 years, life was completely normal for Jon and his wife. They worked hard and raised a family in Gahanna. But then health issues made their lives more difficult.

“My wife had to go on disability when she was 40,” Jon says. “Then I developed neuropathy in my legs. I worked about another five years, but the pain finally got so bad, I had to stop working, too.”

Living only on their disability, Jon and his wife could barely make ends meet. They eventually lost their savings, cars, and more. But as long as they could hold on to their home, life could still feel somewhat normal—and the Christmas season could still be special.



“Somehow, we held on for about 10 years,” Jon says, “but we finally lost our home this year and we couldn’t afford an apartment. We were homeless for the first time. So we had to come to LSS Faith Mission to get the help we needed.”

LSS Faith Mission provided Jon and his wife with shelter and three meals a day. But more importantly, it offered them the support they needed to find an apartment they could afford and also accommodate their disabilities.

“There’s no way my wife and I could have survived on the streets. LSS Faith Mission was there for us when we needed it. This Christmas season we’ll be able to celebrate in our home again. That will be pretty special.”

LSS FOOD PANTRIES

LSS Food Pantries “Keeps Me Alive”

As a type-1 diabetic, Jennifer depends on a steady diet of healthy food to stay alive. Yet that can be difficult for someone living on a limited income.

“Because of my diabetes, I have difficulty working a typical job,” Jennifer says. “So, I don’t make a lot of money right now. But if I don’t eat right, I won’t make it. When I found the LSS Food Pantries, it was a real lifesaver. The fresh produce I get here is especially important. I’m able to get all the healthy salads, greens, and whole grains that I need to eat.”

Jennifer orders her food online once a month, then returns every week to make sure she gets the freshest produce. “I love the online shopping,” she says. “It’s so convenient, and it’s ready for me to take home as soon as I get there.

“On my income, I wouldn’t be able to afford this right now. The LSS Food Pantries literally keeps me alive. I love coming here.”



Life is short. Make it count.

Moments after take-off from La Guardia Airport, a flight collided with a flock of geese. Both engines lost power forcing Captain Chesley Burnett Sullenberger III to make an emergency landing in the Hudson River. Everyone survived and Sullenberger became a hero. (Story reported by History.com)

Life can change on a dime. *But this thought shouldn’t strike fear in our hearts—it should move us to action.*

Here are two ways to make your life count today:

- 1. Serve others rather than self.** Every human is born egocentric, but as we grow we learn that our actions have great impact on others. God honors our sacrifices. Hebrews 6:10a says, “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown...”
 - 2. Focus on giving rather than getting.** Americans are consumed with acquiring—but a legacy of generosity demonstrates love. Would you consider a gift in your will to Lutheran Social Services? This could be a powerful way to give even after you die.
- For the full version of this article, request a FREE copy of “3 Ways to Make Your Life Count Today” by contacting Michele B. Cenci at **(614) 429-5494** or **mcenci@Issnetworkofhope.org**—or visit **Isslegacy.org** today to bless your family with a will.



LSS NETWORK OF HOPE

Give a Gift That Could Change a Life This Christmas Season

With Christmas just around the corner, please remember all our neighbors devastated by hunger and homelessness. While most of us will enjoy the comfort of good food, brightly colored packages, and the love of family—for our struggling neighbors the holidays are often the most painful time of the year.

Your gift today will help provide meals and shelter this Christmas season for neighbors who come to LSS Faith Mission, LSS Food Pantries, and LSS CHOICES from throughout central Ohio.

Our struggling neighbors desperately need to know that people like you care—and that God still loves them. In the spirit of this holy season of giving, please give a donation of any amount to help lessen the suffering and pain of all those in need across Ohio.

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

At LSS, 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!



Help Make the Holidays Special for Families in Need

Each year, friends like you make our Deck the Halls event truly special for all those we serve at LSS Faith Mission and LSS CHOICES. The gifts you help wrap and offer to these precious women, children, and men are a beautiful reminder they are not forgotten—and they are deeply loved.

This year, because of the COVID-19 restrictions, we will be unable to host volunteers to help, but you still have a vital role to play. Please consider donating gifts by December 11th, 2020 to show those we serve how much you truly care this holiday season. **For some gift ideas, visit Issnetworkofhope.org/get-involved/wishlists.**

For more information, please contact Mollie Vrable at mvrable@Issnetworkofhope.org or call her at 614-224-6617, ext. 2196.

Church Spotlight: The Privilege of Serving

The motto at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Westerville is “*Make Disciples. Live Faithfully. Serve Others.*” One of the most important ways we practice living faithfully and serving others is through our support of LSS Faith Mission and the LSS Food Pantries.

Four times a year, volunteers from St. Paul prepare meals for clients at LSS Faith Mission, while others help serve the meals (except this year because of COVID-19 restrictions). We also have a group of volunteers who help with the mobile food pantry at Westerville Estates every month.

It’s such a privilege to serve our neighbors in need in such a simple way. It’s impossible to not be affected when you see how good food can make such a big difference in someone’s life.

I hope other churches like ours will get involved. No amount of time or donations is too little, and the payback is ten-fold!

Lisa Michaels
Inreach/Outreach
Committee Chair
St. Paul Lutheran Church

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:



Stay connected!

