

Today, I See the Real Me. I See Amisa.

“I didn’t think I could
leave. Where would
I go?”

Amisa

LSS CHOICES client

(photo has been changed to protect privacy)

LSS CHOICES

When Amisa first arrived at LSS CHOICES, she didn’t recognize herself in a mirror. “I thought, who is that person?” she recalls. “I don’t understand.”

Trauma and hardship have followed Amisa all her life. She was born and raised in Burundi during a bloody civil war that killed much of her family. At 15, she fled to a refugee camp in Tanzania, where she was brutally assaulted and gave birth to her first child. Ten years later, she immigrated to the United States. Soon, she

thought she found a loving partner. They had two children together, but she endured years of emotional abuse and neglect.

Then it got worse. She moved to Columbus and met another man, a Tanzanian who spoke her language. They married and she had another child, but seemingly overnight he turned on her. He told her she was ugly, that he was ashamed to be seen with her, and he

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A Message of Hope from Sue Villilo



"Your loyalty and sacrifice in the face of so much suffering fills my heart."

It's been a grueling 12 months since we first faced the reality of COVID-19. Since then, so many people have suffered the loss of jobs, income, health, and worse. It's been a long, dark year—and in many ways, it's still dark.

But I can't help thinking it's always darkest before the dawn. Today, we continue plodding through the shadow of Lent. But you and I both know that Easter is coming—along with its promise of hope.

I already see signs of hope today. I see it in all our staff at LSS Faith Mission, LSS CHOICES, and the LSS Food Pantries, through their devotion, dedication, and selfless commitment to serve those who need our help. As a donor, you should know how determined they are to honor your sacrificial gifts by going all out to make every one of your dollars count.

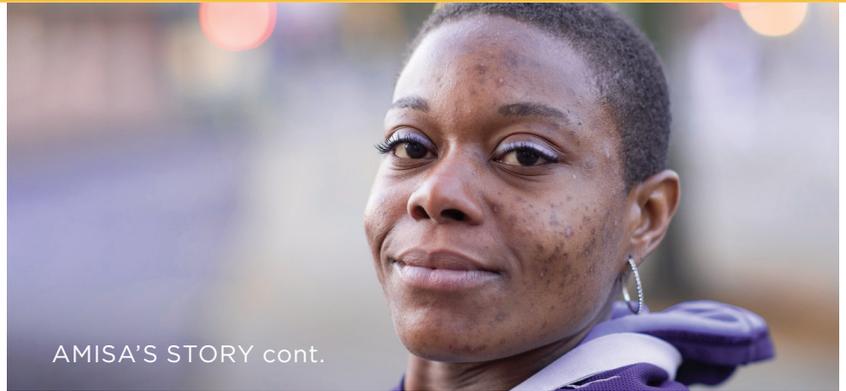
The other sign of Easter I have witnessed all year is simple: It's you. Throughout these uncertain times, friends and partners like you have stood by us. Your loyalty and sacrifice in the face of so much suffering fills my heart. You are the reason for everything that happens here—and I'm so grateful.

We may still be walking in darkness—but thanks to you, I know Easter is coming.

With gratitude,

Sue Villilo

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



wanted nothing to do with her. He moved in with another woman, and while he continued to pay Amisa's rent, she often went without food so her children could eat. He abused her so mercilessly, she wanted to die.

"But I didn't think I could leave," she says. "Where would I go? I had no job and no money."

Finally, however, she mustered the courage to come to LSS CHOICES with her three youngest children.

"All my life, men tore me down. They tore my spirit down until I didn't know who I was anymore," she says. "But LSS CHOICES helped me so much. They gave me and my kids a room. We were safe. We ate three meals every day. My kids could play and not be afraid.

"A counselor helped build my spirit back up, and I started to realize how strong I am. I began to believe I could do this," she adds. "They helped me get food stamps, get a job, and helped my family move into a new apartment. I'm happy, especially for my kids.

"I would like to tell the donors **thank you**. When I look in a mirror now, I see me. I see Amisa."

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.

*"Do everything
in love."*

—1 Corinthians 16:14

LSS FAITH MISSION

Blessed To Be at LSS Faith Mission

by Mary

I didn't know what was going on at first. Everything was fine, but all of a sudden I fell down. I tried to get back up several times, but I just kept collapsing. I called a friend of mine, and she said I sounded funny, like I was slurring my words. So she called 911 and the emergency squad took me to the hospital, where I learned I just had a full-blown stroke.

I wondered, what's going to happen to me? I spent several weeks in the hospital, praying that God would take care of me.

“It's just a matter of time before I'm on my feet again.”

Eventually, I regained my ability to walk, though my speech never fully recovered.



But then I faced another problem. While I was in the hospital, the person I shared an apartment with had to rent my share to someone else. So when I was released, I had nowhere to go. I was homeless. And even when I was able to go back to work, I couldn't afford an apartment on my own. It was scary, but I kept praying.

Then God blessed me when I found out about LSS Faith Mission's shelter for women experiencing homelessness. I'm especially grateful, because shortly after I got here, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and I got laid off from my job. But at least I had shelter

and I was safe.

Best of all, the staff was wonderful, looking after me, letting me know I didn't have to go through this alone. They even helped me get a copy of my birth certificate when I needed it. LSS Faith Mission's medical clinic was also close by, and a resource center to help me look for a place I can afford. In fact, before long, I got on a waiting list for a new place and was soon back on my feet again.

Every day, **I thank God for you** and your support for LSS Faith Mission. I don't know where I'd be without this blessing.

LSS FOOD PANTRIES

“LSS Food Pantries Make a Big Difference!”

by John

I worked hard all my life, driving trucks. I never got married or had kids, but it was a good life. I always took care of myself and paid my bills. But then a couple of years ago I had a stroke and couldn't work anymore. Living on a fixed income changed everything. Once I pay rent, there's not much left over for food. I need some help.

That's where the LSS Food Pantries came in. I've been coming every two weeks for about a year now. I do all my ordering online, which is super easy.

(photo and name have been changed to protect privacy)

Everything runs so smooth, and the staff is always friendly and respectful.

The LSS Food Pantries make a big difference! I never have to worry about where my next meal is coming from. I know I can always count on it. It makes the difference between going hungry and not going hungry.

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 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.

LSS NETWORK OF HOPE



Please Help Neighbors in Need this Spring

The past 12 months have been devastating for many of our neighbors in the greater Central Ohio area. In fact, since the pandemic, 58% of the families served by the LSS Food Pantries have never visited our pantries before, compared to 40% the previous year.

Thanks to generous people like you, however, we were able to provide food, shelter, safety, and other services to those who needed our help. We were even able to add 24 new beds to LSS CHOICES, our shelter for victims of domestic violence.

But this spring and Easter season, so many still need our help. Your gift today will help provide meals and more to 24 more people in our expanded LSS CHOICES shelter, as well as to all our hurting neighbors currently residing at LSS Faith Mission in Columbus and Lancaster.

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

Now Even MORE LSS CHOICES!

As the population of Franklin County continues to grow, so does the number of domestic violence victims. Every year, more than 50,000 women are physically or sexually assaulted by a current or former partner. In addition, as a result of quarantining during the pandemic, incidents of domestic violence continued to rise. To meet this growing challenge, LSS CHOICES is expanding the number of beds for victims of domestic violence from 120 to 144. We thank the following organizations for making this new expansion possible!

- Margaret & Robert Walter Foundation
- Osteopathic Heritage Foundation
- American Electric Power Foundation
- Cardinal Health Foundation
- Nationwide Insurance
- Wolfe Associates
- City of Columbus
- Citrine Foundation
- Crane Group

Assemble and Donate Men's Care Kits

At LSS Faith Mission and LSS CHOICES, the healing process begins the moment someone steps in the door. Although we currently have plenty of essentials for women, you can help by providing our male shelter residents with Care Kits. These items are essential to those we serve as they start down their new path. Please assemble new, full-sized items into gallon zipper seal bags. Items should include:

- Shampoo
- Body wash
- Deodorant
- Lotion
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrush



To arrange dropoff of individual items or kits at 217 N. Grant in Columbus, please contact:
Mollie Vrable
614-999-1131
mvrable@Issnetworkofhope.org

New Medical Respite Center Opens at LSS Faith Mission

Lutheran Social Services and OhioHealth are now partnering together to provide transitional, medical respite care at LSS Faith Mission, for patients who are discharged from the hospital, but don't have a home to go to. "This new medical respite is needed in our community. It is not only more cost effective, it is a safer, cleaner environment for people recovering from illness or surgery and who are also facing the additional crisis of being homeless," said Sue Villilo, LSS assistant vice president of community-based services.

Thank you to our funders



Stay connected!

