Foster hope, foster love

With you by our side, we can ensure foster children feel safe and cared for during these uncertain times.

THESE ARE CHALLENGING TIMES FOR ALL OF US. And as such, our need for emotional support continues. Foster children and their birth families need us now more than ever.

May is Foster Care Awareness Month and we ask you to foster hope and love for foster children in LCFS’ care. Let’s take this time to recognize that we can contribute and enhance the lives of children who are in foster care.

We all have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. But children, like other vulnerable populations, are disproportionally affected. Before the pandemic hit, LCFS and the child welfare system as a whole were facing a shortage of foster parents. Individuals who are willing to offer children unconditional love and help them to work through the trauma of being separated from their birth parents. Individuals, who are able to assume these responsibilities as well as the joys of fostering a child and embracing his/her birth parents continue to be in short supply.

Today, foster parents are caring for children despite the new challenges facing them due to the pandemic. Many have seen their hours cut or they have been laid off. Still others are having child care issues due to being considered essential workers while schools are closed. Others are struggling to connect their foster children with virtual school learning because they don’t have a laptop. Many are helping to sustain the child’s relationship with their birth parents through video chats and FaceTime.

Across the state, LCFS workers are providing essential services helping foster families deal with these and other complicated challenges. Staff go to food pantries themselves to pick up food for foster families. They provide links to whatever resources they can track down, but there is only so much they can do.

Yet foster parents continue to provide loving care to the children in their home despite all the obstacles they face. Cindy and Dina are such foster parents.

In January 2020, Selena (not her real name), a one-year-old little girl with severe congenital medical issues was separated from her parent’s care due to neglect. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services immediately called Cindy and Dina who had previously provided in-home pediatric nursing care to Selena.

“DCFS asked if we would be willing to become Selena’s foster parents so that she didn’t have to be placed in a long-term care facility,” explained Cindy. “We immediately said yes because we knew that she wouldn’t receive the care that she needed otherwise.”

“LCFS has given us so much guidance as we took on the responsibility of fostering. Our caseworker is available day and

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night. If it wasn’t for the help we receive from LCFS, we wouldn’t be able to do this.”

Due to Selena’s extreme medical needs, Cindy and Dina have had to provide twenty-four hour loving at-home hospice care for Selena. Unfortunately, by doing so, the couple couldn’t work outside the home and are now months behind on car payments and other bills.

Despite these challenges, Cindy and Dina know they made the right decision. “Being a foster parent is definitely worth doing. It is hard work, but very rewarding. What makes it all worthwhile is seeing Selena do things that the doctors said she would never do. Seeing her smile and knowing that she’s happy.”

Not everyone can be a foster parent, but we can support those who are able to do so. Foster parents like Cindy and Dina. LCFS has set up an Emergency Fund to provide direct assistance to foster parents with critical needs due to the pandemic not typically covered by our services. You can play a part in fostering hope and love by providing financial support to the children and families in LCFS’ care by donating at www.lcfs.org/contribute/.

Thank you again, for being the power behind this important work.

About LCFS

OUR MISSION
To nurture and strengthen children and families in need.

OUR VISION
A world where all of God’s children have the opportunity for safe, healthy and meaningful lives.

OUR PURPOSE
Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois improves the well-being of people throughout the state by protecting children, strengthening families and building futures. We serve all faiths, races, orientations and ethnic backgrounds.

THANK YOU
With your partnership and support, LCFS will continue to be a place where children and families can find the help they need and hope for the future. To view our latest donor lists, visit www.lcfs.org/ThankYouDonors
PAM AND FRANK KAJI are what we call “regulars.” Part of the LCFS family, we look forward to seeing them every year at the Harvest Festival with their group of friends from First St. Paul Lutheran Church in Chicago. In fact, Pam and Frank have attended LCFS’ fall fundraiser twenty-one times since 1995.

“It’s a great way for us to enjoy an evening out that connects our faith with our values, one of which is taking care of children,” said Pam. “It’s also a great opportunity to share our good fortune, connect with like-minded people who care about others, and fellowship with close friends.”

Recently, Pam turned 70 ½ and handed LCFS a check from her IRA at the Harvest Festival.

“We aren’t wealthy people by any means, but charitable giving is important to us,” Pam said. “I used to support LCFS primarily through fundraiser event tickets and auction items. Now that I am of age, I have to take distributions from my IRA. I really like being able to give this way because it makes you sit down and plan your giving.”

During the planning process, Pam noticed a pattern to their giving.

“It’s pretty simple. In our case, we support organizations related to the Lutheran Church and charities where our friends are involved,” Pam said. “We began supporting LCFS because it checked both boxes. We were introduced to LCFS by two members of our church who were also close friends. We also saw the mission in action when one of my friends adopted her two children through the agency.”

Pam and Frank are blessed to share and happy to be in a position to support the people and organizations they care about.

“Giving through my IRA was simple,” Pam recalled. “After consulting with Frank, we called my financial manager and told him that we wanted to use my required minimum distribution to support the causes we care about. He gave me forms to fill out for each charity. Once I filled out the forms, they prepared the checks and sent them to me to mail out.”

Pam said she thinks the best way to make a difference is to try to be a good example.

“I am grateful to my grandmother who made sure that my two siblings and I went to Sunday School every Sunday even though they didn’t have a car,” Pam said. “I may not have been churched at all without her influence. When Frank and I got married 32 years ago, I shared my faith with him. My grandmother was a good example, and we strive to follow in her footsteps.”

If you are 70 ½ years old or are approaching it and would like to learn more about how to use your IRA to save on taxes while making a gift to LCFS visit www.LCFSLegacy.org or contact Marylyn Rodgers at (708) 488-5557 or Marylyn_Rodgers@lcfs.org.
Help a foster child return to school.

YOU CAN ENSURE A FOSTER CHILD is prepared to go back to school this fall by making a donation today! When students are finally able to return to school, they should be prepared with the proper tools, ready to learn. A gift of $25 provides one child in LCFS’ care with a complete set of school supplies and a backpack.

You will help a child return to school feeling confident. Donations can also be made online at lcfs.org/backtoschool. For more information, contact Leslie Lopez at 708-488-5568 or leslie_lopez@lcfs.org. Thank you for your support.

Please clip this form and return it to LCFS, One Oakbrook Terrace, Suite 501, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

Yes, I want to provide 1 or more children with back-to-school supplies this year.

☐ $25 supports 1 Child
☐ $50 supports 2 Children
☐ $125 supports 5 Children
☐ $250 supports 10 Children

I want to make my donation via

☐ Check Please make checks payable to LCFS.
☐ Credit Card
    ☐ VISA  ☐ MasterCard  ☐ Discover  ☐ Amex

License number: 012998

We welcome your feedback, questions and comments. Contact us at lcfs_info@lcfs.org.
One Oakbrook Terrace, Suite 501, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
800-363-LCFS (5237) | www.lcfs.org

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