

# Tidings

Protecting Children | Strengthening Families | Building Futures

WINTER 2019

## LCFS has a Dream

*With you by our side, we can work to ensure that all youth in care, regardless of race, are able to have safe, healthy and productive lives.*



**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HAD A DREAM** that people would “not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois shares this dream and to that end is strongly committed to the elimination of institutional racism and disparate outcomes for children, youth and families of color.

Of the 16,000 youth in Illinois’ foster care system, 60% are youth of color according to the Children’s Bureau Outcomes Reports. Nationwide, numerous studies have shown that youth of color stay in foster care longer and are less likely to achieve permanency. LCFS finds this unacceptable and is taking steps within our own agency to bring about change.

LCFS was recently chosen as one of eight member organizations to participate in Lutheran Services in America’s Results Innovation Lab. Through the agency’s participation in the Innovation Lab, it intends by the end of September 2019

to decrease the length of time in care and increase the achievement of permanency for youth of color by at least 5%.

Ultimately, LCFS hopes to eliminate disparate outcomes for the youth of color it directly serves, then share its learnings and model to assist other agencies in Illinois and nationwide. “Because if nothing is done, youth of color will likely stay in foster care longer and fewer of them will have loving forever families,” explains LCFS VP and Chief Operating Officer Beverly Jones.

For this reason, LCFS has made an unwavering commitment to address and dismantle agency institutional racism and eliminate disparate outcomes for youth and families of color, so that the lives of all are enhanced and strengthened. Youth like Jack (not his real name) who, if not for the commitment of LCFS, could have easily been another statistic.

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Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois

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## REFLECTIONS FROM THE CEO

# We Are ...



**WE ARE LUTHERAN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF ILLINOIS**, and together with you we bring about change. We are a social ministry organization that is in the business of supporting struggling families, so that they can become stable and thrive. We work with children and families that many others have given up on. Your support allows us to do all of this and to not shy away from tough issues.

We designed the first community-based program for teens involved in both the child welfare and criminal justice systems, called Regenerations. The theme of our Annual Meeting this year was “Stop the Cycle: Creating a better future for Illinois’ youth,” which gave us the opportunity to highlight that no child, youth or family is beyond help if given the right supports. The event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to immerse ourselves in this topic and discuss how together we can bring about change.

We are taking a hard look at the inequities that exist in our world. LCFS leadership recognize that societal racism effects our agency and our families. Youth of color have worse outcomes than Caucasian youth. You will read more about how this disparity is not acceptable to us, and what we are doing about it.

LCFS is constantly utilizing our expertise, coupled with our deep rooted Christian Values and your support, to develop solutions and help children and families in need. Together we will be successful!

Blessings to you and your families in 2019,



## LCFS has a Dream

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Jack came to LCFS as part of the Regenerations program, which serves youth who are involved with both DCFS and the justice system. He was resistant to the program when he first entered, and continued his delinquent behavior of gang and drug involvement.

Some people would have written Jack off as a lost cause, but not LCFS and its staff. As a faith-based agency, LCFS believes that everyone has worth and value. Kimberly, Jack’s child welfare worker, saw something in him and believed that with support he could turn his life around. Over time, she was able to build trust with Jack and get him to think about the future he wanted for himself.



LCFS also helped reconnect Jack with his extended family, providing them all with services, so that he would have a continued support system when he left the Regenerations program. Today, Jack is in his second year of college pursuing a degree in the medical field. He is keeping up good grades, while working two jobs. He now sees a brighter future for himself.

Jack’s story was possible because LCFS refused to give up on him. LCFS is committed to doing the important work of addressing institutional racism and eliminating disparate outcomes so that no child falls through the cracks.

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

## About LCFS

### OUR MISSION

In response to God’s love, Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois engages with youth, adults, families, communities and other stakeholders to improve the well-being of those we are called to serve.

### 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](http://www.lcfs.org/ThankYouDonors)

# New and Notable

## STOP THE CYCLE: BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR ILLINOIS' YOUTH

IN JANUARY, LCFS HELD ITS ANNUAL MEETING and brought together social service agencies, DCFS leadership, board members, donors, church leaders and staff to discuss how together we can build a better future for Illinois' youth.



**Keynote speaker Michelle Mbekeani**, Policy Advisor—*Juvenile Justice, Cook County State's Attorney's Office spoke about providing youth with the tools necessary to thrive within our society because youth are our future.*

For LCFS this is an important and vital topic, as too many young people are slipping through the cracks of our systems. It is our responsibility to support children and families in Illinois, so that they can reach their full potential.

The event's keynote speaker, Michelle Mbekeani, Policy Advisor—Juvenile Justice, Cook County State's Attorney's Office talked about how "it is our moral obligation to provide for every child in need regardless of the mistakes that child may have made in their past, because often the mistakes have resulted from an unmet need."

Attendees also learned about LCFS' innovative Regenerations program, which is the leading

model for working with youth in both the foster care and juvenile justice system. It has shown success in getting youth out of detention faster, and being able to successfully serve them in a family setting instead of residential treatment.

LCFS President and CEO, Mike Bertrand explained that, "our youth want to be with family, and we help make that happen because they need a long-term support system. A greater percentage of Regenerations served youth are released to a family setting than those in a comparison group (78% versus 26%)."

The Regenerations Program is a strengths-based program that requires outside the box thinking and practices for serving youth. "Our work is about building and maintaining relationships with the youth and their families, being advocates on their behalf, and being available when and how they need us to be," shared Mike. "We never give up on them."

**If you are interested in learning more about LCFS' Regenerations program or other ways that you can partner with LCFS to help children and families in need, such as volunteer opportunities, See the Change tours or attending other events, contact Director of Development Marylyn Rodgers at [Marylyn\\_Rodgers@lcfs.org](mailto:Marylyn_Rodgers@lcfs.org) or 708-488-5557.**

## Making a Difference — Seeing the Impact

**RON AND SANDY HANSON** have been dedicated supporters of LCFS for more than a decade. Their primary reasons for supporting the agency are its work with kids and the religious values that drive that work. "For me, meeting human needs within the Christian context is what I find so special about LCFS," shared Ron.

When Ron was in law school, he and Sandy signed up with the Cook County juvenile court system to serve as volunteer mentors to youth on probation. They spent a lot of time with one particular 13-year-old youth. Ron and his wife introduced the young man to a world that was very different from the one he had grown up in.

"Kids need to see that there are other ways of living than what they are dealing with every day," explained Ron. "Because you can't have hope and you can't have an objective for something better, if you don't know what that something better is. That's one of the primary things that LCFS does. They show kids something better."

Ron and Sandy also appreciate LCFS' ability to show them how their financial gifts are changing lives. Recently, Ron and Sandy made a generous leadership gift to LCFS' upcoming Be the Change Fundraising Breakfast.

"When I go to one of these breakfasts, and I see people get up and tell how LCFS has helped change their lives, I understand where my contributions are going, what they are doing, and the difference I am making as a donor," said Ron. "I would encourage anybody who ever wonders, 'what is my money really being used for,' to attend a Be the Change breakfast."

**If you are interested in making a difference and attending LCFS' Be the Change Fundraising Breakfast on Saturday, May 4th from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. at The Hyatt Lodge in Oak Brook, contact Leslie Lopez at (708) 488-5568 or [Leslie\\_Lopez@lcfs.org](mailto:Leslie_Lopez@lcfs.org).**



# Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois

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We welcome your feedback, questions and comments. Contact us at [lcfs\\_info@lcfs.org](mailto:lcfs_info@lcfs.org).

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# Thrivent Choice ... Choose LCFS

## Are you an eligible Thrivent Financial member with Choice Dollars® to direct?

Without opening your wallet, you can help protect children, strengthen families and build futures for those who have experienced trauma.

Members of Thrivent Financial have the opportunity to direct Thrivent's charitable outreach funds to organizations they choose. **By directing Choice Dollars to Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois, you can help ...**

- > **children who've experienced trauma begin to heal**
- > **struggling families become strong and develop a new normal to pass on to their kids**
- > **children in need of forever families find a home through adoption**

Eligible members are notified of the amount of Thrivent Choice Dollars they can direct. **The deadline for choosing organizations for funds from 2018 is March 31, 2019.**

We hope that you'll remember LCFS in your designation. To direct Choice Dollars, go to [Thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://Thrivent.com/thriventchoice) or call 800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice" after the prompt.

## Thank you!

