



# the Advocate

Winter 2013

A Christ-centered resource that supports children with learning needs.


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Sharing God's love with children who have learning needs since 1873.

## It's All About the Kids

Sometimes it's what seems to be the smallest gesture that turns out having the largest and most lasting impact.



Sometimes our teachers and staff don't have the opportunity to be present in a school or work with a child on a regular basis. In these situations it's amazing to see how God works through our team to help these children.

Take for instance a situation that occurred last Fall after one parent, who's daughter has Cerebral Palsy and is being home-schooled, found a copy of this newsletter at her church. Both her and her daughter were growing more and more frustrated in her inability to teach her how to keep her letters in line on the sheet of paper. Her daughter was having difficulty organizing her letters on the page which prohibited her from forming her words and sentences. She picked up the phone not knowing what to expect when she contacted someone from Lutheran Special Education Ministries (LSEM).

Kara Bratton answered. What happened after that phone call changed a young girl's life and the trajectory of her spelling and writing almost immediately. Kara, who is LSEM's Resource Center Assistant Director, had made a few recommendations, but one had an immediate impact — a \$6 product called Learn to Letter with Raised Ruling.

Kara reflects on an email she received from the mother shortly after taking her advice. "When I read her email, I started crying. I don't even know her daughter. It's so heartwarming to know that sometimes something so simple can make such big difference. It sustains you that you are touching the lives of kids."

Here's an excerpt from that email: "I had to fight back my tears. She was able to write in the lines. Not perfect, of course, but she followed the line across the page and filled it up with her name. I can not believe it. I have been watching her plunk her letters all over the page for the past year, and now something so simple

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# From The President



The Lord has certainly blessed us with many talents and allowed us to serve children with learning needs. This is our calling and we are passionate in our pursuit. It doesn't matter in what context or in what environment we serve them, the children are why we are here. Whether it's in a traditional classroom setting or via an email conversation between a teacher and parent (as you'll read about in our feature article this issue), the ways in which we can serve are becoming more diverse everyday.

New tools, new technologies, new experiences, new expectations and new people entering the lives of these children — it's all very exhilarating and exhausting as we embark on the future of our ministry. We're up for the challenge and we pray that we remain open to where God is leading us.

Just before Christmas we launched a new appeal called 180/180/180 that we are extremely excited about. You can read more about it on these pages and on our website, but the idea around the campaign is that everyone at some point in their lives is faced with making a significant change — a "180" if you will. At LSEM we've helped children make 180s in their learning that have changed the path of their education in ways only God truly comprehends. Those are wonderful stories and testimonials to the work that our staff and teachers do on a daily basis. But for every 180 that a child makes within a 180-day school year we need the help and support from our donor families. It takes approximately \$180 per child to bridge the gap each year. Every child is unique in both their talents and their obstacles, but we believe that through Christ we can help these children overcome any challenge that they face.

It certainly isn't your typical appeal. In this day we can no longer do things that are typical. We're excited about the future of our ministry and most importantly the future of the children we serve.

Dance with Jesus



# 180/180/180

Dollars

Degrees

Days

## Helping Children do a "180" in Their Lives



Have you ever done a 180 in your life? Perhaps it was during a time when you were struggling in your career or even stumbling in your walk with Jesus. Maybe there was someone who helped you change course, move in a new direction or walk a better path.

As a Christ-centered resource that supports children with learning needs, the children that we serve at LSEM are faced with a couple of 180s, if you will. For approximately 180 days during the school year, our caring teachers work to make that 180 in these children's lives. Some children make a 180 academically when they begin to experience success in the classroom and grow in their learning, and some children make a 180 spiritually when they understand how God has created them with unique abilities for His purpose.

We ask that you consider making a pledge on behalf of the nearly 3,000 children who benefit from our ministry

by making your own "180" and help support a child by pledging an annual gift. Your contribution helps children with learning needs receive individualized and small group instruction in Christian schools across the country. In this setting, LSEM teachers can help children with the academic and social challenges they face while also helping them to understand that they are part of God's kingdom too.

This year we need \$180 for each of the 3,000 children we serve in order to reach our current budget short-fall. By giving an annual gift you are providing an opportunity for a child to know Jesus and to lead a fulfilling life. We thank you for your support of LSEM and pray God's blessings for you throughout the year.

For more information visit our website at: <https://luthsped.org/help/fundraising/180>

## 8th Annual Golf Outing

It's cold outside, but it's not too early to start thinking about LSEM's annual golf outing. This year's event is held at Greystone Golf Club on June 14. Get more information and register your team today at <https://luthsped.org/event/25>





Last Summer LSEM partnered with Charity Lutheran Church in Detroit, MI to form the I CAN Learning Center — a program designed to partner with churches in large city communities where children tend to come from lower-income families.

The program grew to about 20 children over two months during Summer vacation.

Since it was such a success, LSEM and Charity decided to kick off an after-school program in January that runs concurrently with the public school calendar.

The three-hour, five-day program opens with chapel and closes with prayer and provides 30-36 neighborhood youth with supplemental instruction in a Christ-centered setting. In addition to Christian growth, I CAN helps children in all areas of academics including math, literacy, homework completion and fine arts.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 69% of grade 4 students attending Detroit Public Schools were performing below basic reading levels. By supporting these children and encouraging a personal relationship with Jesus, LSEM and Charity are striving to help them attain an adequate yearly progress over the course of a school year.

And you can help make this program a continued success! Please keep us in your prayers and consider making a donation to the I CAN Learning Center. Your support will go towards hiring site coordinators and teachers, school materials, software and computers.



## New I CAN Program Launches

After school program helps at-risk youth



## Ways to Help...

### Volunteer

Office tasks, bundling Campbell Soup labels or helping out in the classroom, there are so many ways in which you can volunteer.

Our volunteer needs are changing every day. Please contact us if you are interested or have a gift or talent that would help the children we serve.

### Donate

We hope you consider supporting LSEM and our efforts to serve children with learning needs through a financial gift.

There are a variety of donations that are given through planned giving, matching gifts, honor and memorial gifts and pledges like our current 180/180/180 campaign.

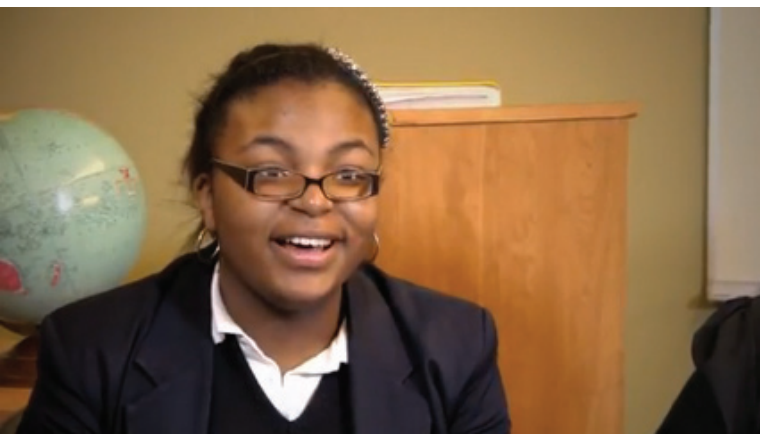
### Pray

Prayer is vital to our mission in serving children with learning needs.

When you pray for our ministry please ask God for His grace and love as He works through our teachers, staff, families and children. If you have a prayer request, please call us and we'll include your request in our daily prayers.

### Fundraising

Spreading the message of LSEM is important. Fundraising has been an excellent tool in sharing our mission. Our annual golf outing is one of our more popular events. Another is our participation in the Campbell's Labels for Education Program. This has provided our classrooms with equipment and supplies over the years.



## Sharing Our Stories

We recently completed our first video in what we plan to be a series of stories that show the amazing progress that our students are making in the classroom. In our first episode (<https://luthsped.org/about>), we hear from a couple of parents and students who share their experiences with LSEM. God is working everyday in our teachers, staff, parents and especially these children!

"I was elated the entire day. I was so happy that I knew she had it!"



# It's All About the Kids

produced this??? When I tried to guide her, like I have been doing in the past (point to where she should put the letter), she said, 'No mama, I can do this myself.'"

Receiving that email and feedback had a profound effect on Kara, who's been taking these kinds of referrals and consultations for the past couple of years.

"We try to get as much background information as possible through email or over the phone," says Kara. "From there we give them quite a few things to try. It just so happens that this particular tool worked immediately. Other things we try may take longer to see results."

In another situation, Kara worked with a young boy, his family, and school teachers in preparing him for second grade. He was struggling with his reading and as a result had

a difficult time fitting in with his classmates. According to Kara, this boy was so defeated and his attitude continued to worsen because he didn't want everyone in class seeing him struggle.

The school was struggling as well. This particular Lutheran school didn't have an LSEM teacher and the staff didn't know which way to turn in respect to this particular boy's education.

His family enrolled him in LSEM's Summer program and Kara and Tim Winterstein, LSEM's Programs & Services Director, arranged a meeting with his school principal and teachers. They set him up in a free reading program and his parents and teachers were thrilled with the results.

"You just hope and pray that you're making a difference, but sometimes you just

don't know," added Kara.

This type of free advice and consultation is offered to families like this who don't have the opportunity to take full advantage of the resources in their school setting.

It's amazing what can be done to help a child by offering some brief consultation and recommendations. Sometimes the knowledge and experiences that our teachers have goes unnoticed or is under appreciated. It's this feedback and gratitude that keeps our staff motivated and excited to help in any way possible.



## New Home. New Look.

Last year we moved into a new location in Farmington Hills, Michigan. In 2013, more changes are on the horizon. As you will surely notice with the publishing of this newsletter, things are looking a little different around here.

We're constantly looking at how we can better position our ministry in an ever-changing educational environment. Exciting things are planned as we prepare to grow our ministry to serve even more of God's children.

