

The Advocate

for Students with Special Learning Needs

Winter/Spring 1999

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A Message From The President

In the last issue of *The Advocate* (Fall, 1998) I shared with you my dream for the future of Lutheran Special Education Ministries which included a vision for dramatic expansion. I said LSEM needed to “think BIG, too”, just like Jesus did. Little did I know then the opportunities and challenges He would place before us. I’d like to give you some of the details.

Minnesota

We have completed an agreement with representatives of the Minnesota South District of the LC-MS and Concordia University, St. Paul, MN to provide special education services to Lutheran schools in that district. If the agreement is approved by the respective governing boards, we could begin a search for a regional director as early as this spring.

California

We are currently having

serious discussions with the Pacific Southwest District of the LC-MS, Concordia University, Irvine, CA, and the Lutheran Schools of Southern California (ELCA) to provide special education services to Lutheran schools in Southern California, Arizona and the southern tip of

schools in Baltimore through our regional office in New York.

My Prayer

Amazing opportunities! Tremendous challenges! Never before have we been faced with the possibility of starting services in several regions at the same

time. Our plate is already full. Now we need a platter. And we need you to help us carry the platter.

We have been blessed with many friends who faithfully support the work of LSEM with prayers and financial gifts.

And finally, I pray that the Holy Spirit will open the hearts of more and more people to share our vision and be our friends. To God alone be the glory. In Jesus name, Amen!



Roger DeMeyere
President and CEO

“I pray that you will continue your prayer support, especially about the decisions the Board of Directors and I will be making in the next several months. I pray that you will continue your financial support and, as you are able, will give more so that more will come to know Jesus and be prepared to live productive lives.”

Nevada. Irvine, CA could be our sixth regional office in the United States, perhaps as early as the fall of 1999.

Maryland

This month I will be meeting with representatives from the Southeastern District of the LC-MS to discuss how our services could be offered to Lutheran



“Operation SON-shine” Again Available

—Helps you Plan VBS for Kids with
Special Learning Needs

The national outreach arm of Lutheran Special Education Ministries, the Ephphatha Center, is again mounting “Operation SON-shine,” a program that helps VBS planners and teachers reach children with special learning needs (also known as learning disabilities.)

Through “Operation SON-shine,” you’ll be given a free “SON-shine Support,” a help sheet providing practical tips on how you as a volunteer VBS teacher can better teach these special children.

Act today to get your free “SON-shine Support.” Call (313)368-1220; fax (313)368-0159 or write to: Lisa Krenz, Ephphatha Center Resource Specialist c/o The Ephphatha Center; Lutheran Special Education Ministries; 6861 E. Nevada, Detroit, MI 48234.

Making Sense for Kids

Making sense for kids. That’s what your gifts help Lutheran Special Education Ministries to do . . . to help children with special learning needs make sense of their world.

And now, as an AAL or LB member, your gifts can make even more sense. Through the NEW “AAL Member Gift Matching Program” or through LB’s “Primary Partners” program, your gift amounts of \$25 to \$100 will be matched by your fraternal insurance company.

That means your gift of \$25 becomes \$50. That means more children with special learning needs will be helped - because of you.

So please call your AAL and/or LB district rep today and get the forms you need to match your gift. And thank you for helping us help more children with special learning needs.

Many employers also match gifts to charities like LSEM. Check to see if yours does; perhaps this is another way that you can help in “Making Sense for Kids.”

Editor’s note: The following are just two of our success stories. I am indebted to our teacher Jan Gill for sharing “Don” with us, and to our Ephphatha Center Resource Specialist, Lisa Krenz, for sharing “Kool Kids Jesus Klub”.

“Don”

Already by the end of 3rd grade, Don was starting to give up on school. He struggled in every area of academics, but especially in language arts (reading, spelling, writing.)

Concerned about his situation, Don’s mom came to Lutheran Special Education Ministries for help.

We, too, were concerned about Don and knew we needed to assess his learning abilities as quickly as possible, since he had been struggling for so long. During this time we also began making changes in his curriculum. For example, Don began a remedial program to help him read longer words and he also began a revised spelling curriculum. In addition, when needed, Don received resource instruction in writing and help with classroom writing assignments.

With the cooperation of Don’s mom, his classroom teacher and Lutheran Special Education Ministries’ resource program, Don no longer wants to quit school. He may never do grade level work but he can be successful in his Christian school.

“Kool Kids Jesus Klub”

For three years now Sunday school teacher Barb Wingard at Trinity Lutheran Church in Johnstown, PA has conducted a Confirmation class for students who have Downs Syndrome or are otherwise mentally-impaired.

Called “Kool Kids Jesus Klub,” Barb has used materials provided by LSEM. She began “Kool Kids” because “I work with mentally-challenged kids in the summer. I felt that this group got lost in our church.”

Not only do her students learn about Christ’s love for them and what it means to be a Christian, but they also take an active part in Sunday worship.

Her proudest moment came when one of her students made his first Communion. “He said, ‘I can’t do this. Me scared,’” says Barb. “But I took him by his hand and we went up together. After he returned to his pew and the service ended, Pastor Janssen handed him his certificate. I explained to him what the certificate meant. Then he loudly replied, ‘I did it!’ The whole congregation heard.”

Barb’s class now has six students and, God-willing, her three original students will be confirmed this May.

LSEM’s First Annual Christmas Card Contest a Success

This past Christmas, LSEM staged its first annual Christmas card contest; a total of 23 students from Michigan and Illinois entered.



Front (L-R): Sherry Reichenbach, Bradley’s LSEM teacher; Diana Grunewald, Bradley’s mom; Bradley Back: Roger DeMeyere, President/CEO of LSEM, Todd Behmlander Principal, St. Peter’s, Eastpointe

Fifth grader Bradley R. Grunewald from St. Peter Lutheran School in Eastpointe, MI, was the grand winner. Articles about him appeared in *The Detroit News* and *The Detroit Free Press* newspapers.

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Around the Ministry

edges into soft rolling turns. It is beautiful.

Many children with special learning needs are like that snow, frustrating and difficult to get through to. But they are also beautiful creations of God. Our teachers work hard to help these children find their God-given talents and understand their God-given beauty.

Through this, we enable each child to receive a Christian education and we give each child comfort and hope for a better future.

New York

*by Paula Rosen, Director
New York Programs*

Only 10 years ago many of the children we now serve did not have access to a Christian education. Today, however, nine schools in the New York area have programs for students from first to twelfth grades. We will graduate our first two high school resource room students in May, two more success stories.

We are nearing our goal of placing a computer in each resource room, thanks to several grants. Aid Association for Lutherans provided the funding for computers at the high school. Now our students can improve their writing skills, hone their math skills and learn basic word-processing skills.

We welcome a new teacher, **Dawn Zinkowski**. Dawn is teaching at Holy Trinity Community school in the morning and at Martin Luther High School in the afternoon.

Michigan

*by Kathy Krause, Director
Michigan Programs*

It's 1999! Wasn't it just last year when John Glenn circled the earth for the first time? Or last month

when John Kennedy was shot? Or last week when the Berlin Wall came down? Or just yesterday when we celebrated the 125th anniversary of the ministry? Time has a way of flying by.

So, too, has this school year, now at its midpoint. Our teachers are helping more students than ever before. We give thanks for the progress of each and every child . . . some huge leaps and some small steps. While the Lord gifts us all differently, we, in turn, must help parents and children remember that progress should neither be measured against oneself nor against an arbitrary standard.

Although the days and weeks fly by, we are always assured that our Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Ephphatha Center

*by Kathy Krause, Director
Ephphatha Center*

Requests for assisting children with special learning needs in congregations continue to come in from people around the country. Please allow me to share with you some thoughts and comments from one such person.

Sherie Kruse is the Education Ministry Assistant for Our Savior's Lutheran Church in West Bend, WI and called for assistance in developing a mentoring program for children with special needs. Ephphatha Resource Specialist **Lisa Krenz** sent materials and spent time on the phone giving suggestions and encouragement.

Sherie writes, "Your words of encouragement were enlightening and brought new found energies into my heart. Sometimes it can be so discouraging because it feels like you are constantly running up against barriers that prevent programs that you know are essential, life-transforming programs from being developed."

Indiana

*by Valerie Hughes, Director
Indiana Programs*

The New Year brings a flurry of activity to our Indiana programs. We're establishing new partnership sites; former partnership sites are seeking contracts and current sites are renewing contracts. Through their articles in school newsletters and by their speaking at meetings, LSEM teachers helped explain why special education programs are important to these schools. I commend them for their efforts.

On February 8th, LSEM hosted its first parent meeting at Concordia Theological Seminary. We showed a video and representatives from both local chapters of Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD) and the Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) helped parents locate resources and support groups.

God has richly blessed Indiana with six dedicated, gifted and serving teachers. My thanks to **Nancy, Jenny, Deb, Dana, Sandy** and **Teri** for making my job easy.

Illinois

*by Jim Krone, Director
Illinois Programs*

As I sit in the office looking out the window, and shaking off the snow and frustrations of my 2 1/2 hour commute by car, and two-block walk to Addison Hall at Concordia University where my office is, I see the beauty of the snow, majestically falling, blowing and dancing in the wind. All the streets and houses are white, clean and bright. The snow has changed all the harsh angles and broken

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Providing for the Needs of Your Children

by Gregg Braun
Development Director

As Christian parents, you provide for the needs of your children in many ways, the best you are able. You provide clothing, shelter, education and, most important, opportunities for them to grow in their faith in Christ.

But what should happen to them if you are called to your heavenly home and are no longer able to do all those things?

Would you allow the courts to decide who should watch over your minor children and provide for their needs?

Of course you wouldn't. But it will happen if you haven't made specific, legal provisions for their care.

Selecting Christian Guardians

If you should die and you have not legally established who would care for your minor children, then it would be up to the courts to name your child's guardians. The main concern of the courts would be the financial and physical well-being of your minor children, not their spiritual welfare. Therefore, the courts may very well choose a guardian for your minor children who would not care for their spiritual needs. This would have eternal consequences.

To eliminate this possibility, you need to name Christian guardians, either in your will or by establishing a trust for your minor children.

Establishing a Trust

By your creating a minor's trust for your children, you will continue your Christian stewardship long after your death.

Here's how it can work.

Usually created as part of your will or trust, a minor's trust will manage the money and property to the benefit of your minor children; distribute the trust's principal according to your estate plan when your children reach the age you specify and direct some or all of the trust to your favorite ministries.

All this is possible because you can name a person whom you trust to serve as the trustee of the minor's trust you've established. This helps ensure that your children will be cared for in the way you wish them to be cared for and that your wishes regarding the distribution of your estate will be carried out.

In addition, you are also ensured that your gifts to ministries like Lutheran Special Education Ministries will continue, that the work you've supported all your life will continue to be funded.

The Trustee

The trustee can be an individual or a corporation, like a bank or investment company. There are advantages and disadvantages to both; you need to

consult your attorney or tax advisor to reach a decision that best meets your particular circumstance.

Funding the Trust

As for funding the trust, many people use part of their estate by including a provision in their will or trust.

Others use insurance to fund the minor's trust by naming the minor's trust as the policy beneficiary. For example, a wife can designate her husband as the primary beneficiary if he survives her. The minor's trust then becomes the secondary beneficiary if he does not.

Additional Considerations

If you would like a general brochure about establishing a minor's trust, please call LSEM at (313) 368-1220 and ask for the Development Department or write to: LSEM, Att: Development Dept., 6861 E. Nevada, Detroit, MI 48234.

Then, if you need more personalized information, consult your attorney, tax advisor or planned giving professional. She or he will make sure that you create a minor's trust that will be right for you in your circumstance.

I pray that the Lord guide you in these important deliberations. And may He continue to bless you in this new year.