

# The Advocate

*"Enabling children with special learning needs to receive a Christian education since 1873."*

Fall 2002

*Lutheran Special Education Ministries*

Volume 71, Number 3

## Looking Ahead to a New School Year

There is a sacred mandate to serve children. Jesus said: "Let the little children come to Me, do not hinder them." This includes all children – even those who struggle to learn.

As the 2002-03 school year begins, we thank God for granting Lutheran Special Education Ministries many blessings, among them growth. This year, we established a sixth region that will

begin programs in Texas during the next year.

"Our ministry is a servant organization," says Lutheran Special Education Ministries President and Chief Executive Officer Roger DeMeyere. "Lutheran and other Christian schools provide a choice for parents who want their children to receive a Christ-centered education. Our dedicated, Christian teachers serve schools that want to provide help for children with special learning needs as well as a Christian education."

On this page are the names and faces of the Christian people who work directly with students, parents and schools. "As we begin another school year I am reminded of their love of children, their love of teaching, their love of Jesus and their dedication to all three," DeMeyere said.

### Midwest Region



Northern Illinois: (front row) Jennifer Green, Marilyn Heppner, Jocelyn Jones, and Michelle Bauer; (second row) Susan Lewis, Elease Adams and Carolyn Mahal; (third row) Janice Miller, Camille Gilbert and Cheryl Saiki; (fourth row) Lisa Kube, Joselito Seldera, Gretchen Musa and Sue Berka; (fifth row) Nancy Sadek, Susan Coffey, Arlene Lapsansky and Jennifer Bower; (back row) Bob Sprague, Sue Gardner, Jessie Dawson and Lynn Luetgert.



Central Illinois (from left): Rosalyn Bone, Nicole Piper and Marilyn Winter.

### Southwest Region



From left: Laura Sauer, Ashley Steele, Heather Schultz and Garry Unger.

### Northcentral Region



Back row (from left): Dennis Senne, Donna Stole, Michelle Melde and Linda Kalk. Front row (from left) Linda Guidera and Kathy Meier. Missing from photo: Julia Buuck.

### Great Lakes Region



Michigan: (back row, from left): Kay Ramsey, Johanna Hilpert, Lori Newton, Joy Meyer, Kathleen Schroeder, Cathy Huebner, Cindy Lincoln, Gail Valbusch, Jenny Maitland, Shanna Davis, Judith Enders, Jill Lubbers, Lynn Standfest, Linda Schrupp, Judy Hawkins, Carolyn Frazier, Patti Kuppe, Deanna Powers and Nancy Burgeson; (center row, from left) Jennifer Bilbrey, Noel Gregory, Jim Pagels and Karyn Anspach; (front row, from left) Jan Schneider, Kathy Krause and Shari Hohnstadt. Missing from photo: Marlene Herzog and Loren Sheppard.



Indiana: (back row, from left) Mindy English, Deb Koehlinger, Jenny Holloway, Valerie Hughes, Cindy Roy and Amy Meyer; (front row, from left) Kara Frincke, Marta Morris, Angi Goldey and Susanne Koehlinger.

### Northeast Region



From left: Jen Petzold, Elizabeth Munz, Beth Blair, Tiffany Penta, Mimi Blanco, Nicole Dupre', Rose Marie Sheridan, Suzanne D'Ambrosio and Lois Dierlam.



# One Graduate's Advice: Don't Give Up



Kristin Anderson's proud parents, Kathy and Mark, celebrate with her as she graduates from Grand Valley State University. To honor her parents for never giving up on her, Kristin wore a special message on her cap.

**Editor's Note:** Our students are our greatest ambassadors. In an effort to show how Lutheran Special Education Ministries programs touch the lives of our students, we often share their success stories. In this issue Kristin Anderson Haight shares her story. She was enrolled in our program from second through eighth grades. Today she is a newlywed; a proud "graduate" of the Lutheran Special Education Ministries programs; and a master's of education student at Grand Valley State University. Here, in her words, is Kristin's story.

One of my favorite special education teachers told me the story of the bumblebee. She said that scientifically, a bumblebee should not be able to fly. But the bumblebee hangs in there and just does it – it flies. It's the same with learning difficulties. Just because you learn differently doesn't mean you can't learn. You just have to hang in there and do it.

If I could make everyone understand one thing, it would be that everyone learns differently. Whether the student has a 4.0 or a 1.0 grade point average, everyone learns differently. I've even encountered some teachers who don't understand that.

When I was in the first grade I was diagnosed with a learning disability. In second grade I just knew I was in a lower reading group and I went to a separate room for part of the day. That's when my parents enrolled me in the Lutheran Special Education Ministries resource program at my school.

I also understood that I had a problem with math. The teacher told us to stop counting on our fingers and start figuring out problems in our heads. I couldn't think it through in my head. I was capable of coming up with the correct answer, but not in the same way that other students could.

There were times as I got older that I was the only one in the class who had to spend part of the day with other kids in a separate classroom. It was hard for me. Sometimes peers who don't understand learning differences label students dumb or stupid because they need special help. That was a major frustration for me. I struggled. But this was the time when I also began to understand that the way I learned was the problem – not my intelligence.

I thank God that my parents placed me in Christian schools where the values they taught me at home were reinforced and Christian teachers worked with me. Even though I got angry sometimes because learning was a struggle, I also knew that I was a child of God. I learned that God made me – learning difficulties and all. I am what He made me. He also gave me support.

My parents were always there. They fought for me to make certain I was getting the help I needed. They found schools with Lutheran Special Education Ministries programs, where teachers cared about me. I know that having Christian parents and Christian teachers in my life made a difference. My teachers reminded me that I am a child of God; I am what I am because God created me that way; and I learn differently. Knowing that sustained me.

I thank God that my parents and my Christian elementary school teachers prepared me for attending a public high school. They helped build my confidence and made me understand what I needed to do to succeed.

In high school, resource rooms were for students with more severe disabilities, so there wasn't a lot of help available for me. When I told high school counselors that I'd wanted to be a teacher ever since kindergarten, I was advised to consider other options that didn't include college. They didn't believe I could do it. I knew differently. After earning my bachelor's degree, at Grand Valley State University last April, I decided to go on for my master's degree in education.

I know in my heart that if it hadn't been for my parents and the wonderful Lutheran Special Education Ministries teachers in my life, I may not have come this far.

My advice to students who have special learning needs? Don't give up. God has a purpose for you, and it's up to you to find out what that purpose is. You can do it.



Kristin and Levi Haight on their wedding day in May. Both of them began graduate school at Grand Valley State University this fall.



# Around the Ministry

## Great Lakes Region

**By Kathy Krause, Director**

The geographic Great Lakes region offers an abundance of opportunities for family fun. The Great Lakes Region of Lutheran Special Education Ministries has an abundance of excellent teachers who teach through fun activities, as they serve children with special learning needs. This year we welcome two new teachers and two new locations.

In Indiana Marta Morris has joined our staff. She was a faithful substitute in the past and is teaching at St. John Lutheran, Monroeville, as well as writing articles about our ministry for area publications. In Michigan Deanna Powers is teaching at St. Peter's Lutheran in Richmond. She formerly taught third grade at St. Peter's, so all she needed to do was change classrooms. These ladies possess real love for children and their families.

Our new locations are in Michigan: St. Michael Lutheran in Richville has Lori Newron teaching three afternoons a week. Living Word Lutheran in Rochester will share Loren Sheppard with its partnership school St. John (north campus).

Our Great Lakes Region, both geographically and ministry-wide, boasts many opportunities to give thanks to God for His beauty and splendor ... and the uniqueness of each child.

## Midwest Region

**By Susan Lewis, Director**

As another school year begins, we welcome Sue Berka, Rosalyn Bone, and Lynn Luetgert to our teaching staff. Our teachers working in Chicago Lutheran schools recently attended workshop sessions at the CLEF Networking Conference in Melrose Park, Ill. We also presented two sectionals at the conference. Looking

ahead, our teachers are not only busy in their classrooms this fall, they also are planning three sectionals to be presented at the Northern Illinois District (NID) Teachers' Conference in November.

Recently we received \$3,000 as two-for-one matching funds from the Wrigley Foundation for a donation we received. Matching funds made by our donors' employers is another great way donations can be maximized for our ministry.



We also were awarded a \$4,500 grant from the NID Endowment Fund and a \$5,000 grant from the NID Urban Ministry Endowment Fund. These monies will be used to train volunteers to work with at-risk learners in NID Lutheran schools.

## Northcentral Region

**By Dennis Senne, Director**

All four of our partnership schools from last year are continuing their programs, plus we are providing services for two new schools: Lutheran High School, Mayer, Minn., and Fairbault Lutheran School, Fairbault, Minn. We truly are blessed to have excellent teachers for each of our partnership schools.

We had the opportunity to share the news about Lutheran Special Education Ministries with our display at the North Minnesota Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) Conference in St. Cloud. It also was set up at the Lutheran Volunteer Education

Network Conference at Faith Lutheran Church in Glencoe.

The LWML Minnesota South District voted to support the ministry with a grant of \$10,000 over the next two years.

First contact with 40 South Dakota educators was made through an in-service in Pierre at their fall retreat.

The Regional Support Council enjoyed a successful beginning in August with four council members attending. We appreciate the support of Board of Trustees Chairman Paul Quitmeyer who joined us at this meeting.

## Northeast Region

**By Lois Dierlam, Director**

This summer was extremely busy. We've moved into a beautiful new regional office located at Chapel of the Redeemer School in Hollis Hills, Queens, N.Y. New Regional Director Lois Dierlam reports that she begins this new journey God has put before her with great enthusiasm.

The school year began with eight partnership schools and three new teachers. Mimi Blanco serves The Chapel School in Bronxville, N.Y., as a teacher consultant. This is the school's first year with a Lutheran Special Education Ministries program. Suzanne D'Ambrosio is the resource room teacher at Lutheran School of Flushing and Bayside. Tiffany Penta will be the teacher for our new inclusion program at Holy Trinity Community School.

Retired regional director Paula Rosen and teacher Elizabeth Munz accompanied our display to the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church national convention in Philadelphia.

We look forward to a successful school year of sharing the word of Jesus with our students.



## Around the Ministry

Continued from page 3

### Southwest Region

By Laura Sauer, Director

As we begin our third year of ministry here in the Southwest, we pause and give thanks to God for His blessings. The 2002-03 school year finds us working with 10 partnership schools. The schools are located within a 60-mile radius of Los Angeles, Calif., and in Scottsdale, Ariz.

We are very blessed to have the services of three highly qualified teachers: Heather Schulz, Ashley Steele and Garry Unger. They have the gift of teaching children with special needs as well as a real love for the Lord. What a tremendous combination.

We are looking for two part-time teachers to round out the staff.

Our staff presented seven in-services before school started to various teaching staffs. The subjects included: identifying learning disabilities; how people process information; and strategies for working with all children. What a privilege to collaborate with teachers so they can better serve their students. To quote our CEO Roger DeMeyere and Romans 11:36, "To the Lord be glory forever."

## Two Appointments are Announced

Lutheran Special Education Ministries has announced the appointments of two new directors.

Kathleen Schroeder has been hired as director of the ministry's national Resource Center. She succeeds Jim Krone, who recently was promoted to vice president of programs and services.



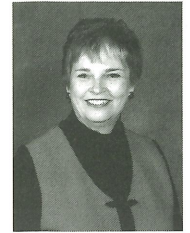
Schroeder holds a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education from Gordon College, Wenham, Mass., and a master's degree in curriculum development and instructional technology from the State University of New York at Albany.

She previously taught special education at the Landmark School North Campus in Manchester, Mass., The Hartland School in Albany, N.Y., and, most recently, for the Leominster Public Schools in Leominster, Mass.

Schroeder is based in Detroit at the Lutheran Special Education Ministries National Office, and her duties include special projects involving curriculum and best practices for teachers as well as developing resources for schools, churches, volunteers and teachers.

Gayle Grotjan has been hired as the director of the newly established Southcentral Region.

In this position, she will establish and administer programs in the region's first areas of concentration, the Texas communities of Austin, Dallas and Fort Worth.



Grotjan earned a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education from the University of Missouri - Columbia. She attended graduate school at the University of Missouri - Kansas City and the University of Houston before receiving her master's degree in education with an emphasis in learning disabilities from the University of South Dakota. She earned her doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of South Dakota.

After teaching for 14 years in a variety of special education settings, Grotjan also taught at the University of South Dakota and served as director of the special education program at Concordia University at Seward, Neb. Most recently she was dean of the School of Education at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Mich.

## Building Better Schools One Label At A Time!

You can help Lutheran Special Education Ministries "purchase" classroom materials by saving labels from Campbell's soup and related products. Over the years, our ministry has traded thousands of Campbell's product labels in exchange for instructional books, tapes, and reference materials.

Individuals, organizations, churches and schools can be part of this project by collecting labels and proofs of purchase

and sending them to the Lutheran Special Education Ministries National Office. Among the eligible Campbell's products are: Campbell's Soups; Franco-American products; Prego sauces; Swanson broths and poultry; V8 products; and Peppridge Farms products. For a complete list of eligible products and what to save from each package, please contact our national office or visit the Campbell's web site at [www.labelsforeducation.com](http://www.labelsforeducation.com).

Send your labels to the Lutheran Special Education Ministries National Office at the address in the box below.

### *The Advocate*

is published three times a year by

### *Lutheran Special Education Ministries*

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