



the Advocate

Summer 2015

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

They CAN act, help out, learn...and so much more!



Dressed up and starring in production of "Cheetah-Bat Babies Get Lost!"



iCAN student working on a script.

We can never fully understand the potential when we let God take control. A perfect example of this is by looking at our iCAN program at Zion Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, IN. It's so exciting to celebrate these kids and witness what they've accomplished.

Whether it was helping out in the community, getting creative and putting on a play or learning about nutrition and health and developing wise eating habits, the students in the iCAN program at Zion participated in a life-changing education and accomplished more than any of the staff and parents could have imagined. Thanks be to God for guiding the teachers, parents and students for making this what iCAN is truly all about — an opportunity for us to reach out to communities, families and children to provide a safe, Christ-centered learning environment.

Throughout the year, the students at Zion worked from the Destination Imagination curriculum. The program taught students about different animals and their habitat while undertaking several problem-solving and cooperative learning activities. In reading groups, the teachers introduced students to Readers Theater so that they understood the basic concept of a script — including story elements such as plot, problem and resolution.

For a final project, the students wrote a play. They began by creating a new fictitious animal from two existing ones to be the main characters of their play, which is how they ended up with a play about cheetah-bats. With some direction from the teachers, they wrote the script, painted the scenery, and made masks to wear in the play. The students also made invitations to hand out and served popcorn to the family and friends who came to watch the production of "Cheetah-Bat Babies Get Lost!"

If that didn't sound like a busy enough schedule,

the students participated in an "iCAN Help" project where they adopted a local shelter for homeless women and children. With funds from a Thrivent Action

Team grant, they purchased plastic totes used by the shelter. Students and their families, church members, and the iCAN staff donated items that the students sorted and packed into the tubs. The students also wrote and decorated messages sharing God's love which were packed into each tote. The kids were excited as they packed up the tubs to be driven to the shelter.

"It taught the children, who themselves don't have a lot, that they truly have so much to give and to develop that servant's heart," said Cindy Roy, LSEM teacher/consultant at Zion.



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Check out how other iCAN students are "Building a Brighter Future!" on Page 3!

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Hoeft Named President/CEO



The Lutheran Special Education Ministries Board of Trustees announced that Stacy Hoeft accepted the Call as the next President/CEO of LSEM, effective July 1, 2015. Hoeft comes to us with a wealth of professional experience in education and executive leadership. Even more, her passion and love for serving children with specialized learning needs is evident as she responds to God's calling.

Born and raised in Detroit, MI, Hoeft completed her entire education in Lutheran schools, from first grade through college. Her commitment to Lutheran education continued when she earned her degree in Elementary Education from Concordia University Wisconsin in 1996.

Since then she has gone on to earn graduate credits in Special Education and Education Administration. She has spent the last nineteen years serving various congregations in the Michigan District - LCMS as a teacher, early childhood director, and principal. Hoeft was

Howell leaves to grow church through intentional evangelism



Over the course of 26 years Pastor Jeff Howell has served in a variety of roles within the Lutheran ministry. Most recently he was LSEM's interim CEO. Now, Howell embarks on a new calling that allows him to serve as a full-time pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church on the south side of Chicago.

It's a move that he's been excited about for some time. During the past four years he's served as a part-time pastor to a church that has grown from 25 to 50 attendees.

"I had been wondering what would happen if I was full time," said Howell.

Thanks to Life Spring and its LUKE (Lutheran Urban Kingdom Expansion) project, Howell now gets his opportunity. LUKE was established to help churches

honored as the Michigan District Principal of the Year in 2013-2014 and completed the Van Lunen Fellowship Program for executive management in education in 2014.

Hoeft currently resides in Rochester Hills, MI with her 16-year-old daughter, Emily and her 14-year-old son, Jacob.

The board members also thank Pastor Jeff Howell, who served faithfully as the interim President/CEO, Grace Lorano, the Executive Assistant who dedicated so much time to this transition, and all of the dedicated staff of LSEM who work diligently to provide services to God's precious children and their families. LSEM is truly blessed.

Please join us in welcoming Stacy Hoeft as our next President/CEO. We give thanks and praise to God for our staff, partners and friends for your support and especially your prayers that have sustained us during this process. We know that God has great plans prepared for LSEM in the days, weeks and years ahead.

grow by mentoring pastors on outreach. Pastors network with their peers once a week in order to hold each other accountable. As Howell puts it, this opportunity allows him to focus on intentional evangelism within St. Paul's school where almost all of the students are not members of the church and 70% aren't members of any church.

As for the memories, friendships and impact that LSEM has had on his life, Howell says he'll continue to be a huge supporter of the ministry even though he'll no longer physically be here.

Please join us in thanking Pastor Howell for his service at LSEM as he follows a new path that God has for him.

Stacy J. Hoeft joins LSEM as its next President/CEO



Our Savior Has Prepared The Way

It is a great honor for me to write to you for the first time as the new President/CEO of Lutheran Special Education Ministries.

I'd like to express my gratitude to the Board of Trustees for their support and confidence in me. I'd also like to thank everyone at the national office, as well as all the teachers for being so helpful and welcoming during this time of transition. Their love for our ministry is apparent as everyone strives to honor God in their various roles and responsibilities.

It is easy to see how blessed I am to be part of the outstanding team God has assembled and I am anxious to see how His plans for LSEM unfold in the near future.

Together we face many exciting opportunities and challenges, much like the students we serve. The good news is that we face the future with confidence, knowing we serve a Savior who walks with us, ahead of us — preparing the way. I pray I have the opportunity to get to know all of the good people who are a blessing to LSEM.

Until I get the chance to tell you in person, thank you for your continued love and support for our ministry!

Blessings

Stacy J. Hoeft

"The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." Proverbs 16:9

DID YOU KNOW?...

Thrivent Choice Dollars

You probably already know that Thrivent Financial is a Fortune 500 company that serves nearly 2.5 million members. But did you also know of its commitment to service and philanthropy?

In 2013, the organization and its members provided volunteer services to charitable organizations, schools, congregations and individuals in need, and contributed \$182.7 million to organizations and activities that aim to strengthen families and communities. Thrivent members volunteered more than 8.6 million volunteer hours in 2013.



LSEM is a proud recipient of Thrivent funds, from Thrivent Choice dollar donations to its new Thrivent Action Team grants, which have provided seed money to some of LSEM's new awareness-building events. Maximize your support of our ministry and select "Lutheran Special Education Ministries" as a recipient of Thrivent Choice Dollars!

LSEM Honored at LWML Biennial Convention

LSEM is blessed to be selected as one of the recipients of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League special offerings during its biennial convention, which took place June 25-28. LWML

has been a generous supporter of LSEM for many years, and grateful for its continued support of children with specialized learning needs. We are humbled by LWML's generosity and pray for God's direction to be good stewards of these gifts.

Mackinac Center Shares Mia's Story

In our last newsletter we shared the story of Mia Roe and the challenges she and her family faced as she transferred from a public school to a local Lutheran school that partnered with LSEM. The changes in Mia's approach and feelings about her education were amazing.

The Mackinac Center created a video and feature story also sharing Mia's story showcasing the need for change in school choice options. The Great Lakes Education Project, a bi-partisan, non-profit advocacy organization supporting quality choices in public education for all Michigan students also picked up and shared the story and video.

Take a look at the informative video here: www.michigancapitolconfidential.com/21524



Building a Brighter Future at iCAN in Detroit

Can you build a tower to the ceiling? That was the goal of the students at the iCAN learning center in Detroit, MI. This summer they designated Fridays as STEM days. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and math activities. Students created bridges, airplanes, boats, and towers just to name a few. This activity was to build a tower that reached the ceiling. One student, Kyliischah Sanders, almost accomplished this task. It was almost as fun watching them fall as it was building them. The highest tower? 21 cups high! Can you beat that?!

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Parents got involved as well. "One parent worked with her employer to get items that were on the supply list from the shelter," added Roy.

The Zion team also worked with the students throughout the year to teach nutrition and health. The kids learned about growing food, food groups, making healthy eating choices, and mixing up some easy and healthy snacks. There were "food tastings" where the kids were introduced to several fruits and vegetables they had never before tried. When spring came, the students planted some vegetable and flower seeds. After several weeks, they transplanted the vegetables and took them home to try their hand at container gardening over the summer.

This iCAN program is just one example of God's blessings on our ministry in providing opportunities to children who may not otherwise have witnessed His word and works.



A Soggy, But Successful LSEM Golf Outing

LSEM's 10th annual Golf Outing was held on June 12 at WestWynd Golf Course in Oakland Township, MI. Twenty-five new golfers joined the outing to make it one of LSEM's most successful! Despite a rainy morning start, spirits were soon lifted after local singer Karen Newman sent duffers off with a beautiful rendition of the American National Anthem. While soggy, the rain stopped as 84 golfers moved about the course in a scramble-style format. The dinner program commenced with golf outing chair, Tom Meissner, introducing LSEM staff and volunteers. LSEM "mascot" Mia Roe helped Tom announce the winners of our drawings, and also helped her mom, Liz Roe, provide their story about how LSEM has changed the lives of their family.

Other notable events included the premier of LSEM's new promotional video, as well as interim CEO, Rev. Jeffrey Howell, introducing new CEO, Stacy Hoeft. We raised over \$12,000 to support children with specialized learning needs, and look forward to next year's golf outing, which will be held on June 17 at WestWynd. Save the date!



Ways to Help... Donate

Donations are vital to the children we serve. There are a variety of ways to give:

- general gift
- endowment fund
- honor/memorial gifts
- matching gifts
- planned giving

To learn more, contact the Development Department at ext. 104.

To donate, use the enclosed envelope or visit online at

www.luthsped.org

THANK YOU!

Going Green, to Save Green



In order to remain good stewards of our funds, we're planning to move towards a smaller print run of The Advocate. If you would prefer to receive LSEM communication electronically, please send us your email and we'll update our records.

Honor & Memorial Gifts

Honor and Memorial cards are available in our office. Upon receiving your gift, we forward the card and your message to the individual(s) you are recognizing through your donation.

