



# BEING

# THERE



## Family Finds a Way Forward

**“LSS helped our family communicate more effectively and helped me get to know my children better. I learned more things about them and our relationship improved. Now, I feel capable of dealing with everyday life as a mom.”**

Estela  
and  
Andrea

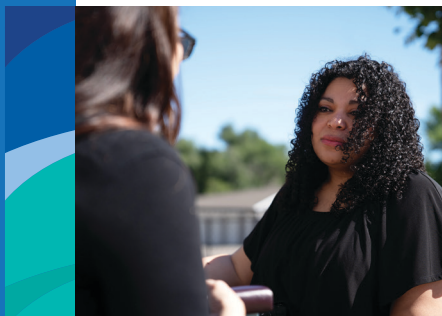
When Andrea received the call that her daughter had been picked up by law enforcement and brought to the LSS Arise Reception Center, she was devastated.

**Arise** is designed as an alternative to juvenile detention with goals of providing supports that keep youth out of locked detention centers and decreasing their likelihood of justice involvement later in life.

At the time, Andrea was transitioning out of an emotionally abusive situation. The weight of her circumstances and its effects on her family were daunting as her relationship with her children grew more strained.

Luckily for this struggling family of four and unbeknownst to them, the journey to a stronger, more stable family was only just getting started. They soon found comfort in LSS’ continuum of care and connected with services through the Center for New Americans and CARES Wraparound.

Although the journey took work, Andrea never felt alone. Her family’s case manager, Estela, never left her side – helping her work through requirements to gain legal identification, finding a place to live, enrolling in parenting classes and starting family stabilization planning through CARES Wraparound.



Andrea and her children built a deeper connection, greater mutual respect, and open communication through work with their family partner in CARES Wraparound Services. Preventative planning with the Wraparound team helped Andrea gain clarity and confidence to help her family heal and move forward.

Andrea’s son is no longer missing school, her daughter is receiving necessary treatment and neither child has been in trouble with law enforcement in more than a year.

LSS’ whole-person and whole-family approach to care helps maximize individual success, strengthens family bonds and gives families an active role in goal-setting and problem solving.



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT/CEO

# TOGETHER WE CAN STRENGTHEN FAMILIES AT THE CORE

At LSS, our vision is that all people in South Dakota will be healthy, safe and accepted. We've developed a four-year strategic plan that guides our work toward making the greatest contributions to reaching our vision.

Two of our strategic priorities include seeking program opportunities that strengthen families and implementing programming that works to keep children and youth in their homes and communities.

We know that when individuals are part of a strong, stable family—whether that's the traditional family or more unstructured natural supports—they are more likely to be successful in life.

Through strategic, evidence-based programming focused on strengthening families at the core, we are better able to address strengths, challenges and needs within our communities. We look forward to continuing to implement

strategies that lead to success for individuals and families that come to LSS for help.

Thank you for your continued support.

**Rebecca Kiesow-Knudsen**  
President/CEO

## Elevating Youth & Family Voice

**Take a moment to close your eyes and imagine the three most important things in your life.**

**Now, open your eyes and write them down.**



**Let's say you can't have all three. Cross one item off.**



**One more time.**



**What is left on your list?**



For many people, family—or something directly related to family—is the last item standing.

At LSS, we prioritize the family role in an individual's success. By elevating youth and family voice, we not only work alongside individuals seeking services, but we address needs within their family, while lifting up the strengths and challenges identified by families.

Last spring, Vincent Madera and David Collins with Children's Village of New York inspired and challenged our leadership and staff to reflect on how we can ease disparities for families by elevating the voice of those we serve.

Madera and Collins spent a week with LSS leadership and

staff engaging conversation surrounding two of our agency's strategic priorities:

- Seek program opportunities that strengthen families.
- Ensure that LSS is a welcoming and inclusive organization for staff and clients while working toward equitable outcomes for those we serve.

Elevating youth and family voice means listening, reflecting and creating a plan with families.

It means that we honor the families' experiences, history, culture and goals.

It means that we listen to individuals and families about their strengths, challenges and what they need to succeed, and we work together to find the right resources.

"The elevation of the client's voice will show up differently in each service area," says Rebecca Kiesow-Knudsen, LSS President and CEO. "We have the unique opportunity, unlike any others, to take a whole-person and whole-family approach to care."



# Families become lifelong friends through open adoption

Beth Boyens  
with  
Megan Gronewoller

## For Beth and Scott Boyens, starting their family took a long time.

"We tried to get pregnant [with our second child] and had a miscarriage," recalled Beth, "so we went to fertility treatment and the doctor said, 'You're never gonna get pregnant.'"

The couple decided to explore adoption. They went to LSS to learn more and get started on the process.

"We spent a couple of days in Chamberlain with some other families just learning about adoption—particularly open adoption—and got to hear from other adoptive families about how they had navigated the process," said Beth.

And while the Boyenses waited for their opportunity, Megan Gronewoller, a nursing student working to build her future, received some unexpected news.

"I went through this moment of, 'Oh my gosh, I'm having two babies.' And it felt like my own life hadn't even begun," said Megan.

Through LSS Pregnancy Counseling Services, Megan was able to move forward. She felt confident that open adoption was the right choice, and with the help of her parents and birth parent counselor, she started looking at potential families for her two babies.

"It was the biggest decision of my life. How would I know if I was making the right choice?" Megan said, still recalling the feelings so vividly. "You have a lot of 'what ifs,' but really, you just have to trust the process."

"We finally got the call," said Beth. "'We have a birth mother who is interested in meeting you, and she has twins,' they told us."

Despite an initial reservation about adopting multiples, the couple knew they had to meet Megan.



"When I shook [Beth's] hand, it just felt right," Megan said.

Everything felt certain.

"Megan called me the next morning and said, 'I want you to be our adoptive parents.'" laughed Beth. "And then a week later I found out I was pregnant."

The Boyenses grew from one child to four in less than a year. It was a lot, but having an open adoption allowed Beth and Scott to share some of the twins' important moments alongside Megan.

"And there's never been any doubt for them that Megan loves them, and that she is one of their biggest fans and supporters," said Beth.

Ethan and Emma are now in college. Megan is married to Luke, who's been a huge support throughout the journey, and together they have two children—twins, if you can believe it.



# EMBRACING COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Community collaboration makes our work possible. At LSS, we connect people with the resources to help them be their best selves. That means we work with community partners to help meet client needs and ensure our whole person family-centered approach is carried out successfully.

“Community collaborations are extremely important because our clients’ challenges were not created in a vacuum and they don’t exist in a vacuum,” says Shannalee Mask with LSS CARES Wraparound Services.

CARES Wraparound provides preventative planning support to stabilize families. They work closely with more than 50 organizations and agencies to address the challenges of families in South Dakota communities.

“There are multiple layers and approaches to acknowledge and address a family’s challenges, not just the symptoms of those challenges,” continues Mask. “It may take the collaboration of services with unique skillsets to achieve long-lasting success. The ultimate goal is for the family to learn the necessary skills to sustain positive changes and be independent of services.”

CARES Wraparound is one service area that embraces community collaboration. However, the breadth and depth of community partnerships and positive relationships are present throughout LSS and with local and state organizations as well as government agencies throughout South Dakota.

LSS Canyon Hills and Summit Oaks Centers are residential treatment facilities serving youth experiencing mental health, emotional or behavioral issues.

Canyon Hills Center in Spearfish works closely with Matthew’s Opera House to involve youth with theater and Lutherans Outdoors for day and overnight trips at Outlaw Ranch.

Summit Oaks Center in Sioux Falls partners with the Sioux Falls Chamber Music Collective to bring music, writing and art to the youth in care.

With youth and family voice at the forefront of our services, LSS Children & Youth Services staff are active in youth advocacy with the South Dakota Association of Youth Care Providers, the Juvenile Justice Oversight Council and the Behavioral Health Advisory Council. The SD Association of Youth Care Providers also serves as a resource for benchmarks and best practices as well as opportunities to identify and address gaps in services.

“We are grateful for all of our community partners, public support, corporate relationships and their willingness to take an active role in making our vision a reality. All South Dakotans will be healthy, safe and accepted,” says Rebecca Kiesow-Knudsen.



## Ensuring Stability & Success For Future Generations

Have you thought about how you can give your life’s work meaning beyond your lifetime? There are many ways to make a philanthropic impact for tomorrow without burdening you and your loved ones today.

Including LSS in your will, trust or estate plan ensures stability and success for future generations. Designating LSS as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy or retirement, investment or bank account is another way to create a lasting legacy and ensure that the future of South Dakota families are strong and supported through LSS services, resources and advocacy.





# MENTORSHIP EXPANDING: ABERDEEN



Elementary students in six Aberdeen public schools will enjoy spending one-on-one time with a mentor starting this fall thanks to the vision and efforts of Leadership Aberdeen, a comprehensive leadership training program of the Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce.

"We are excited about the collaboration between Leadership Aberdeen and LSS to bring mentoring into the Aberdeen School District and implement the Hub City Heroes Mentoring Program," says Curry Kuehl, Dacotah Bank, Aberdeen. "The Leadership Aberdeen team was greeted with excitement from the Aberdeen School District and its counselors when this idea was originally brought forth."

Having both heard and seen examples of success stories in the Sioux Falls area, the Leadership Aberdeen team is eager to help get this program up and running. "We feel this is a great resource to aid in the success and overall well-being of the youth in our community," continues Kuehl. "This upcoming school year will be the first year implementing the program, and we hope that getting the program established will help grow the mentor base as we move forward so we can have an even bigger impact."

"We have solid programming, and it's exciting to see it expand to other parts of the state," says Michelle Madsen, LSS Senior Director. "The impact mentoring has on students is extraordinary. It is a great way to become a positive, trusted presence in the lives of students who need a friend to eat lunch or offer guidance through a sticky situation."

To volunteer  
as a mentor, visit:  
[Mentoring.LssSD.org](https://Mentoring.LssSD.org)

## It's Their Mentor the Child Is Excited to See

LSS has the tools and support needed for a successful program, but it's the community volunteer who makes the magic happen. It's why the child watches the clock all morning the day they plan to eat lunch together. It's why the child races to the gym the day they plan to shoot hoops, or the library to play board games.

Community volunteers 18 years or older are needed to meet a goal of 20 mentor/student matches per school. Mentoring volunteers spend one hour per week with an elementary school student at their school.

Things my mentor and I  
like to do together... Dear

Mentor You are the best





LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTH DAKOTA  
705 EAST 41ST STREET, SUITE 200  
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57105

1-800-568-2401 [LssSD.org](http://LssSD.org)

LICENSED BY THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA  
ACCREDITED BY THE COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION  
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER  
A UNITED WAY AGENCY

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 678  
SIOUX FALLS, SD

In Psalm 24:1-2, David prays:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”



As good and faithful servants, we are called by God to care for our planet and practice sustainability. At LSS, we’re committed to becoming even better stewards of our environment and your support. Learn more about our efforts at [GoGreen.LssSD.org](http://GoGreen.LssSD.org) and follow us on social media.

# SUCCESSFUL SECOND CHANCES

**“You’re kind, caring and patient—I don’t know why you haven’t given up on me yet. I would have given up on myself a long time ago if I was you.”**

You often get a glimpse of life stories from the people we serve—a quote, a few paragraphs, rarely a full story of their challenges and successes. Joe’s life story answers why our vision is that all people in South Dakota will be healthy, safe and accepted.

Joe received support through LSS Re-Entry Services’ Family Violence Program. It addresses domestic violence and the use of power and control in intimate relationships, using a 24-step approach that requires weekly group gatherings to share progress.

Step 17 required Joe to identify someone with whom he would want to trade places, and name the qualities he appreciated about that person. “Joe bristled at the thought,” says Jay Marchand, Director of LSS Re-Entry Services. “He grew up in a chaotic environment and witnessed consistent violence most of his life; he couldn’t think of anyone he could trust or count on.”

Instead of moving through the steps and checking them off, Joe took a two-week pause. He wanted to talk the task through before he agreed to give it a try.

“I guess I would want to trade places with you,” he said.

Stunned, Marchand asked him to elaborate.

“You’re kind, caring and patient—I don’t know why you haven’t given up on me yet. I would have given up on myself a long time ago if I was you.”

The program is typically designed for completion within six months. Joe didn’t give up on himself, and Marchand didn’t give up on him either. Step 17 was a breakthrough and he graduated seven weeks later—eleven months from when he began.

“Thanks for not letting me give up on myself.”

## WE BELIEVE IN SECOND CHANCES

LSS Re-Entry Services provides assistance that leads to successful second chances for individuals transitioning from jail, prison, group homes and chemical dependency facilities into their home communities, families and the workforce.