

# A Story of Compassion

## USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

### Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Through USDA Rural Development's outreach efforts on behalf of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, the Community Facilities Guaranteed Program has provided funds to Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota to fulfill the need for expansion of services to at-risk youth from western South Dakota. The former facility was limited to only 18 boys and could not serve girls. The new 19,115 square foot residential treatment facility provides service to 30 individuals from the ages of 10 to 17 with emotional, behavioral and educational problems.

Living quarters, kitchen and dining areas and recreation areas were enhanced in the building and on the grounds. The new facility is accessible for children with disabilities. The therapeutic environment reflects respect and dignity for youth and staff by allowing adequate space for confidential counseling and areas for group sessions. On-site classrooms allow integration of education and therapeutic components. The children are not far from counselors if needed, yet they have opportunities for natural maturity and independence.

The facility is licensed by the state of South Dakota and has professional counselors who work with the youth to help them over come trauma, abuse, neglect, abandonment, violence, chemical and alcohol addictions. Last year, Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota served nearly 300 children at their various

facilities located in Spearfish, Aberdeen, Sioux Falls, and Beresford.

"Lutheran Social Services is grateful for USDA Rural Development in reaching out to help South Dakota's children in need," stated Billie Greenfield, Changing Children's Lives capital campaign director and LSS vice president of resource development. Last July, Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota dedicated the \$2.6 million Canyon Hills Center at 2519 Windmill Drive, Spearfish, South Dakota. The new 19,115 square foot center is now home for both boys and girls, primarily from the Black Hills area. The number of children able to be served increased from 13 to 30.

"An important gauge of the success in residential treatment involves how successful the children are after leaving care. For some children, returning to their homes may be the best option. For others, foster care or adoption is best," says Tom Walsh, LSS vice president of program services. "The goal of treatment is that clients are successful in a less restrictive environment than residential care. This is tracked at discharge and again six months after discharge. Of the children completing the program, 75 percent were discharged to a less restrictive environment. After six months, 79 percent remained in a less restrictive environment. These statistics reflect a successful residential treatment program."

This project is part of a statewide campaign, Changing Children's Lives, to raise capital for the construction of new



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facilities in Spearfish and Sioux Falls and an expansion of current facilities in Aberdeen. USDA Rural Development is joining many other individuals, businesses, organizations and congregations in South Dakota in helping abused and neglected children find a place where they can be safe today and successful tomorrow. A large network of dedicated volunteers statewide has been vital to the success of the campaign. To date, the campaign has raised \$5.4 million in gifts and grants toward the \$10 million needed to complete all three projects.

The new LSS Center for Children and Youth in Sioux Falls is expected to begin construction in spring 2006. The expansion of New Beginnings Center in Aberdeen will be completed soon.

### How the Initiative is Helping

As part of the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative, USDA Rural Development approved a guaranteed loan of \$1,125,000 and a direct loan of \$1,125,000 to assist Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota in financing the construction of Canyon Hills Center, a residential treatment facility in Spearfish serving the needs of youth at risk throughout western South Dakota. Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota is a faith-based non-profit corporation incorporated under the laws of the state of South Dakota.

### About the Organization

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of South Dakota was founded in 1920 as the Lutheran Children's Home Finding Society. Until the 1950's, LSS primarily provided adoption services. Since that time, LSS has developed a wide variety of additional human service programs serving South Dakotans across the state. Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota is a social service ministry, owned by the South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Its mission statement: "Inspired by God's love, we care for, support, and strengthen individuals, families, and communities." LSS serves people of all ages, race, faiths, and economic levels.

