



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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LSSI Joins Statewide “Don’t Write Me Off” Campaign to Increase Community Involvement in Foster Children’s Lives

On May 31, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) will kick off its participation in “Don’t Write Me Off,” a groundbreaking social marketing campaign aimed at encouraging residents across Illinois to support youth in foster care and foster care agencies. The event will be held at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, 421 S. Peoria Ave. in Dixon from 6:30 - 8 p.m. Refreshments will be provided, and attendees will have an opportunity to enter a drawing to win a door prize.

The statewide “Don’t Write Me Off” campaign features television ads, a web site, a toll-free resource number and other materials. Its key message is that people can make a difference in the lives of foster children in a number of ways, such as volunteering at schools or with programs that serve foster children, supporting LSSI and the 80 other community-based child welfare agencies in Illinois or becoming foster parents. LSSI provides care for 1,700 foster children – or 10 percent of the more than 17,000 children who are living in foster care in Illinois.

The creative campaign was produced by a collaboration of non-profit agencies, spearheaded by Voices for Illinois Children and Family Support America. WGN-TV in Chicago is sponsoring the television ads and will air them for a year.

“Children in foster care, like all our children, deserve the opportunity for a bright future,” says Mary Sue Shull, LSSI foster parent recruiter. “We all share responsibility for making sure these children – who are removed from their families through no fault of their own – have the love and support they need to succeed in life. This campaign aims to help citizens realize their role in supporting foster children and foster families, and to make it easier for them to get involved.”

A web site (www.fosterkidsareourkids.org) and toll-free number (1-888-4RKIDS2) will direct people who want to get involved to local foster care agencies.

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The kick-off comes during May, which is National Foster Parent Month. Area television and radio stations are expected to help spread the message about the campaign on their morning and weekend interview shows this month. Television stations include KWQC-Channel 6 (Davenport, Iowa); WREX-Channel 13 and WIFR-Channel 23 (Rockford); and WQPT-Channel 24 (Quad Cities). Radio stations include WSDR (Sterling), WIXN (Dixon), WCCI (Savanna), WRHL (Rochelle) and B95FM (DeKalb).

“This is the first time in Illinois that we have a coordinated, statewide communications campaign that has foster care agencies sharing a common message: Foster children are our children,” says Jerry Stermer, president of Voices for Illinois Children. “This powerful, positive campaign and message was developed after a yearlong effort [that involved] conversations with current and potential foster parents, youth in foster care and people across Illinois about their perceptions of foster care, motivations for becoming foster parents and recommendations for improving foster care.”

WGN-TV in Chicago will air the campaign’s 60-second and 20-second television ads for a year. “I have the potential for greatness,” one child says in the ad. “Just because I’m a foster kid doesn’t mean I’m a lost cause,” says another child. “I wish you could see me for who I am,” a third child says.

“This campaign reminds us that foster children are our kids. They are our neighbors, our children’s schoolmates, and our family members,” says Dr. Kirk E. Harris, senior vice president and general counsel of Family Support America. “Foster children are part of our communities, and they need their communities to stand up and be involved in helping them reach their potential and grow up into successful adults, who in turn make significant contributions to their communities.”

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with approximately 180 programs at 89 locations throughout the state, as well as an agency of the United Way.

To RSVP or for more information on fostering a child or volunteering your support to the Don’t Write Me Off Campaign in Carroll, Lee, Ogle or Whiteside Counties, contact Mary Sue Shull, at 815/284-7796, ext. 2119. For more information on LSSI, visit www.LSSI.org.