



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Social Ministry to Be Explored at LSSI Sunday at First English Lutheran Church**

On September 17, First English Lutheran Church will host staff members from Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), who will participate in the worship services and talk about the agency's social ministry to people in need. The church is located at 725 East Forrest Hill in Peoria.

The church, led by the Rev. James Lillie, is quite active in its outreach to the community in and around Peoria. "The big thing here is the Thursday afternoon tutoring, which is held in conjunction with LSSI," says Pr. Lillie. He notes that tutors – primarily members of the First English congregation – work with about 20 at-risk children from the Peoria school districts in two areas: math and reading. "I think that this is a premier program," he says.

Another program is "the outpouring of Christmas gifts for the children that LSSI serves in the area," Pr. Lillie says. The congregation provides gifts of between \$25 and \$30 each year for 150 to 200 children.

The reason for the success of these and other programs managed by the congregation is that "we have a couple of lay leaders for whom this is their passion," Pr. Lillie explains. "They push us [beyond our] limits." He cites Mary Niemi, who is involved in the tutoring program, and Janice Gomes and Carrie Mayer, who have led for the Christmas gifts program. "That's what it takes in a parish is the people who have a passion for this work," he notes.

First English's members are also involved in a prison ministry, where the congregation collects toiletries and birthday cards for inmates; quarterly food drives in January, March, July and October; Miles of Pennies, a collection to combat world hunger; a fall blood drive for the Red Cross; and Missionary for a Day, which supports overseas ministries.

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Finally, members of the church are also very active in the Lutheran Women of Greater Peoria (LWGP). "They run the Church Mouse Thrift Store, with the proceeds split between LSSI and Lutheran

Hillside Village, and have operated this project with volunteer support for many years,” explains Alexa Schwartz, LSSI director of annual giving. LWGP has also hosted a Fashion Show for about the past 22 years to support LSSI’s agency’s Sexual Abuse Counseling Program for children. “It has been such [an important] support through the years [for this program],” Schwartz adds.

*Founded in 1867, 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 (ELCA). LSSI serves people through an array of services at more than 89 program sites across Illinois. In the Peoria area, LSSI offers a variety of foster care and adoption services, pregnancy counseling, services for at-risk families, sexual abuse treatment services, Intouch Home Care Services (for seniors) and Prisoner and Family Ministry. For more information, visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org).*

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