



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Jo Ann Dollard

847/390-1446

Carol VanderMey

847/635-4604

Gail Beard Joins LSSI as Director of Storybook Project, Which Connects Families Separated By Incarceration

On July 2, Gail Beard, a resident of White Hall, Ill., joined Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) as the director of the Storybook Project, replacing Linda Brumleve, who recently retired after being the director for the past two years.

“Gail comes to us with an excellent background in Corrections, as well as volunteer experience,” says Jane Otte, executive director of LSSI’s Prisoner and Family Ministry, which oversees the Storybook Project.

Beard has a master’s degree in human development counseling and community counseling and is also a Licensed Professional Counselor. For the past six years, she worked for the Wells Center in Jacksonville, which provides substance abuse treatment at various Illinois Department of Corrections facilities. She describes herself as a passionate advocate and a person dedicated to the restoration of inmates.

“Gail has the expertise and enthusiasm to lead Storybook with vision into the future,” Otte says. “We also celebrate the fine leadership of Linda Brumleve, our outgoing Storybook director, and ask God’s blessings on her retirement.”

The Storybook Project is a part of LSSI’s Prisoner and Family Ministry (PFM) that works to help preserve the connection between incarcerated parents and their children. Assisted by LSSI volunteers, parents choose children’s books and read them into tape recorders. The books and tapes are then sent to their children.

The program impacts many Illinois children and parents affected by incarceration. During the 2007 fiscal year, 2,934 incarcerated parents at 13 jails and prisons had the opportunity to strengthen the connection with their children by reading and recording books for them on tapes, and 4,219 children experienced the joy of receiving a new book and hearing their parents’ voice reading to them. In

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addition, volunteers had 488 opportunities to support inmates in their role as parents.

One child served by Storybook says, “Whenever I was feeling down or feeling alone or abandoned, I could pop that tape in and listen to my mother’s voice telling me how much she loves me and how she was think of me. I could never call my mom, so the tape was the next best thing.”

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 with more than 89 program locations.

For more information about the Storybook Project, or to volunteer, call 217/528-0870. For information about LSSI, visit www.LSSI.org.

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