



NEWS RELEASE

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Child Welfare Leader Retires After 28 Years of Helping to Improve Services for Children and Families in Illinois

In Illinois, “We’ve made tremendous strides in offering services to children and families – services that recognize new needs, such as substance abuse and how it affects families. But we still have some challenges in meeting children’s needs.” That’s the opinion of Lynn Goffinet, associate executive director of Children’s Community Services at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), who is retiring after 28 years of service with the agency. Goffinet also served as LSSI’s statewide adoption director.

Goffinet, a Peoria resident, says that as she leaves her post, one of her concerns is funding of children’s services. “The ideas are there,” she says, “but it all requires [adequate] funding, which we aren’t seeing today.” She quoted a recent study stating that one reason Illinois is ranked as number-one in terms of people living in poverty in the Midwest is that state funding for services for children and families, year to year, has not come close to the increased cost of providing those services.

Goffinet began her career at LSSI after four years of working for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and then several years of raising her own children. Initially, she started working solely in the adoption area, but for the past 24 years she has been involved in providing services to children and families in central Illinois, including foster care services, intact family programs, single parent programs and specialized child abuse counseling services. She also obtained grants to develop and direct several specialized recruitment programs to seek adoptive families for children who wait for permanent placements, such as sibling groups and children with developmental disabilities.

Her efforts on behalf of special needs adoptions – for children with medical or behavioral problems – earned her the 2004 “Angels in Adoption” award, presented by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute to individuals or organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to improving the lives of children in need of permanent, loving homes. Goffinet developed the special needs adoption program at LSSI, and says its creation was one of the most important developments that occurred during her tenure.

“Lynn is a true advocate for children who believes that there is a family for every child,” says John Schnier, executive director of LSSI’s Children’s Community Services. “Through her many years of service, Lynn has, in some way, affected the adoption of thousands of children.”

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Goffinet's work on the agency's special needs adoption program led to her leadership in statewide committees, including work with DCFS and other private agencies. She was involved in the development of policy and sound practice in special needs adoption, the revision of adoption assistance in Illinois, drafting of the pioneering Illinois permanency legislation, and enhancement of post-adoption services. In the post-adoption services arena, she authored and directed the grant for the agency's Adoption Preservation Services Program, and has been responsible for the development of a broad range of post-adoption services provided by the agency. She was also involved in the writing and passage of the state's adoption registry and confidential intermediary legislation, and serves on the Illinois Adoption Registry Advisory Committee. Her legislative efforts go beyond the field of adoption. She is a member of the Policy Committee of the Child Care Association of Illinois, and advocates for legislation and funding that positively impacts the field of child welfare.

During her 28-year career, Goffinet has seen an increased emphasis on the reunification of children with their birth families – something she strongly champions – as well as the development of specialized therapeutic interventions in the central region of Illinois, an adoption preservation program in 25 counties, a sexual abuse treatment program, a sizable growth in international adoptions and an increase in the number of single adoptive or foster parents.

“All in all, the thing I'm proudest of are the wonderful people that took this journey with me to serve children and families,” she says, referring to her colleagues in the field of child welfare, including those at LSSI. “And what has been most gratifying for me has been the opportunity to impact the lives of children and families.”

About LSSI, Goffinet says, “From the beginning I felt a real commitment on the part of [LSSI's] leadership and staff to provide the best possible services to children and families. ... The agency supported the adoption and maternity staff ... We were allowed to develop programming that would meet the emerging needs of the children and families we served.”

For the immediate future, Goffinet plans on taking some time off to do some traveling and spend more time with her children (she has two sons) and five grandchildren. “But it probably won't surprise people if they see me in Springfield [again],” she laughs, to continue her role of advocating for Illinois children and families.

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. LSSI's services include counseling, mental health programs, substance abuse treatment, residential treatment for children and adolescents, early childhood education and child care services, programs for adults and children with developmental disabilities, foster care and adoption, pregnancy counseling, housing and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, nursing care, and programs for prisoners and their families.

For more information, visit www.LSSI.org and www.AdoptionIllinois.org.

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