

Lutheran Family Services  
of Nebraska, Inc.

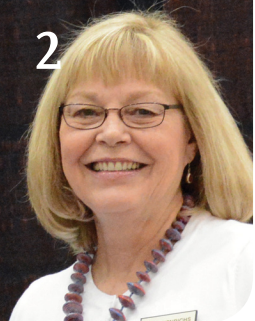
# Connections

Fall 2014

BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU  
**INTEGRITY**  
AWARD 2013 WINNER

*Jazmine, a Pottawattamie County  
Center For Healthy Families®  
client, with former Council Bluffs  
Mayor Tom Hanafan*

# Investing in Healthy Childhoods



## Message from the President & CEO

A theme that continues to resonate at LFS is "Hope Restored." Hope can seem out of grasp when clouded by negative and unpredictable life circumstances. In this issue of *Connections*, you'll read about our annual Faith in Action® event, where we celebrated mental wellness and those, like Deryl and Ramona Hamann, who support the journey to "Hope Restored."

You'll also read about disaster recovery in 29 Nebraska counties, and how LFS is helping families rebuild in the aftermath of these traumatic events.

The horrors of war haunt many of the refugees served through Lutheran Family Services (LFS). I'm excited to share that we now have a therapist who works full time in our International Center of the Heartland. Refugees who have experienced trauma now have a therapeutic resource for healing thanks to United Way of the Midlands and LFS.

You'll also learn more about how EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) trauma therapy is changing lives at LFS. I'm so proud of our therapists Cyndi Muhlbauer and Ben Czyz whose research into new uses of this therapy is being recognized nationally.

LFS made the decision this year to hold a fund drive, not an event, to raise necessary funds for the crucial early intervention and prevention programs at our Pottawattamie County Center for Healthy Families®. Former Council Bluffs Mayor Tom Hanafan is chairing this Wicker and Wine® Fund Drive. We hope you'll choose to continue investing. Without private contributions, these programs cannot continue to "prevent" child abuse and neglect.

LFS is honored and humbled to answer the call to serve. Thank you for joining with us on this journey to recovery and "Hope Restored."

God bless you and your family,

Ruth Henrichs, President & CEO



## Pottawattamie County Center for Wicker & Wine® Honorary Chair: Tom Hanafan

At a recent visit to the Pottawattamie County Center for Healthy Families®, Tom Hanafan—former Council Bluffs, IA Mayor and Honorary Chair of the Wicker & Wine® Fund Drive—was introduced to one of the Center's young families. In Tom's words, "I felt privileged to meet Matt, Karri and their three-year-old daughter Jazmine, hear their personal story and learn of their experience at the Pottawattamie County Center for Healthy Families®."

Both Matt and Karri had serious surgeries recently, and yet they continue to engage in community programs. Matt is in the STARS Scholarship Program at Iowa Western Community College and he went back to class shortly after recovery. "We push ourselves," Matt said, "to show Jazmine that you need to work hard for the important stuff."

Matt and Tom Hanafan were raised in the same neighborhood, just blocks apart, by parents who worked hard to provide for their families. The difference, according to Matt, was that his parents "really needed these programs – these parenting classes." He added, "They needed the kind of support and guidance we have found at the Center."

Matt and Karri first came to the Center because they thought it was a way to get a car seat, clothes and diapers for their daughter. Once enrolled, they began developing new parenting skills and have become better parents, all while earning points in the incentive program that are traded for much-needed items. "The staff and the other parents have become our family," Matt said. "We know the classes, education and support help us as a couple, but everything we do is for Jazmine." ■

## Connections

President & CEO  
Ruth Henrichs

Vice President of Development  
Ruth Henneman

Director of Public Relations  
Bev Carlson, APR, PAHM

Creative Design Manager  
Jeff Jensen

We welcome your feedback. Contact the editor by phone (402) 978-5646 or email [bcarlson@LFSneb.org](mailto:bcarlson@LFSneb.org)

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**Our Mission:** *To express God's love for all people by providing quality human care services that build and strengthen individual, family and community life.*

Please consider a gift to support the life-changing programs of the Pottawattamie County Center for Healthy Families®! Gifts may be given at [www.LFSneb.org](http://www.LFSneb.org) or by using the remittance envelope in the center of this magazine.

# Healthy Families® Fund Drive

# No event. No dinner. No auction. No overhead.

300 West Broadway, Suite 7 · Council Bluffs, IA 51503 · (712) 242-1040



Tom Hanafan, Matt,  
Jazmine and Karri

“This program is extraordinary! It breaks cycles of abuse, neglect and poverty in our community!”

—Tom Hanafan

FS Centers for Healthy Families work with highly stressed families who have children under age five and expectant mothers to **break generational cycles of child abuse and poverty through education and assistance – not a “hand out” but a “hand up.”**

The entire concept began in Council Bluffs in 1999 with the then-named "Building Families Boutique" and has grown to include centers in Fremont and North Omaha. Now known as Centers for Healthy Families, the three locations served 826 families and 1,069 children last year—with over 300 families served in Pottawattamie County.

This year, the decision was made to replace the annual event with a **Wicker & Wine® Fund Drive**. This is a wonderful opportunity to invest in early intervention and child abuse prevention, knowing that 100% of your gift will go to support the program.

For each of the 350+ children served in Iowa, **\$350 must be raised from the community** – half of the funds needed to sustain the life-changing programs – and a small price to keep Pottawattamie County children safe, nurtured and prepared for learning and life.

View a special Center video at [www.LFSneb.org](http://www.LFSneb.org)

Please  
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Year's  
Fund  
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Sponsors!



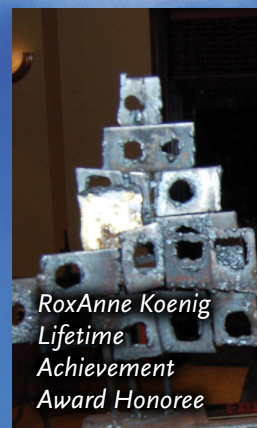
# Faith in Action®



Ramona and Deryl Hamann  
Douglas E. Parrott Faith in Action® Award Honorees



LFS President and CEO Ruth Henrichs with Deputy Chief Dave Baker of the Omaha Police Department, Community Partner of the Year Honoree



RoxAnne Koenig  
Lifetime Achievement Award Honoree



Renee and Wil Tewes



Cyndi and Doug Parrott

One in four—that is the estimated percentage of adults who will experience some form of mental illness this year. Most people have experienced a behavioral health struggle—perhaps depression, alcoholism, anxiety or other life-threatening conditions—either personally or through someone very close.

To recognize and celebrate the significance of mental wellness and those who support the journey to recovery, LFS highlighted its statewide continuum of behavioral health programs at this year's "Faith in Action®: Hope Restored." From the social hour, where guests were able to spend a few private moments viewing the "Remembering Our Fallen" exhibit, to the Omaha Police Department's Pipe and Drum Corps presenting the colors with honor and decorum, to award presentations ending full of gratitude and humility—it was truly a memorable and moving evening.

The program began with the story

of Clare, introduced by emcee and KETV anchor Rob McCartney. Clare received trauma therapy at LFS after she discovered her daughter's suicide. She credits LFS for helping her divert from a path toward alcoholism.

LFS President and CEO Ruth Henrichs compared the need to treat mental illness with the same respect and compassion as physical illness.

"When someone says they have a brother with cancer or a sister with diabetes, we respond with compassion and encouragement," said Henrichs. "But when someone says they have a father whose depression causes him to sit in the chair all day...or a mother who can't sit still five minutes due to her bipolar illness, the response is more frequently one of folks thinking quietly to themselves that 'maybe these people just need to "buck up," get a grip on things, and get on with their life.' And more often than we like to believe, there are those who immediately begin asking 'who is to blame' for 'these conditions.' We simply must get past

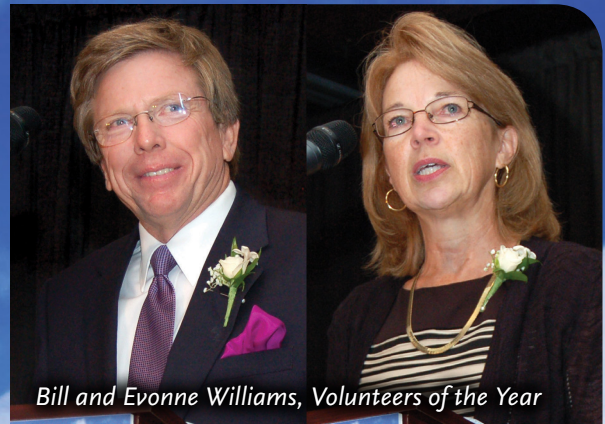
this. Mental illness is treatable.... And untreated mental illness can be just as deadly as untreated heart disease."

Lutheran Family Services honored special guests who received the 2014 LFS Lifetime Achievement, Volunteers of the Year, Community Partners of the Year, and the Douglas E. Parrott Faith in Action® awards.

**Longtime LFS employee RoxAnne Koenig received the Lifetime Achievement Award.** As only the second recipient of this honor, RoxAnne has dedicated her 20-year career at LFS to community safety through the treatment and prevention of sexual abuse.

**On behalf of the Omaha Police Department (OPD), Deputy Chief Dave Baker accepted the award for Community Partner of the Year.** Omaha Police officers work with LFS staff across all three core competencies to provide a more compassionate and understanding response to those with mental health issues. To enhance this partnership, LFS has an on-site peer

# HOPE RESTORED



Bill and Evonne Williams, Volunteers of the Year



J.F. and Alicia Hoffman, Mary and Hal Daub with Parker and Alanna Schenken



Norm and Joyce Riffel

support specialist at OPD who works with Omahans who struggle with mental illness and addiction and need ongoing support to stay stable and healthy.

**Bill and Evonne Williams accepted the award for 2014 Volunteers of the Year.** Bill and Evonne were chosen for their passion and commitment to ensure the sacrifices of veterans and their families are remembered and honored. During their acceptance, Bill and Evonne recognized two veterans from the nine Honor Flights they organized, as well as the Gold Star families they've worked with to create the "Remembering our Fallen" displays. Bill and Evonne were also instrumental in helping LFS launch special military outreach programming into Nebraska congregations and communities, a program funded by Wheat Ridge Ministries.

**The Douglas E. Parrott Faith**

**in Action® Award recognized Deryl and Ramona Hamann.** The Hamanns were honored for setting a lifetime standard of humble servant leadership, and for their tremendous commitment of time, talent and treasure to those in need. As he accepted the honor, Mr. Hamann complemented the work of LFS, saying: **"...this organization has rolled up its sleeves and grappled with some of the most complicated and heart-rending social challenges that all communities face. And it has done so quietly, with determination and with an inexhaustible belief in the inherent goodness and value of everyone who lives around us."**

**He went on to express his gratitude to those who support the work of LFS saying, "The need will always be there, and it's up to us to meet it with the kind of quiet energy and grace that Lutherans are known for." ■**

## Lincoln South—Settling In

**S**ince Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska (LFS) expanded its behavioral health programming in Lincoln on February 1, staff at the Lincoln South location at 17th and South Streets have served over 1,200 clients. Plans are now underway to consolidate two LFS offices into one location at Lincoln South, including the busy refugee resettlement office.

The primary behavioral health services offered at Lincoln South include Medication Management, Outpatient Mental Health and Community Support. "The office conducts regular quarterly surveys with clients to make sure their needs are being met – and if they are not, we want to know why," states Kerry Kernan, Regional Administrator of Behavioral Health in Southeast Nebraska.

So far, so good. The most recent surveys completed at the end of June show 89% of clients agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with their service provider. 93% agree or strongly agree that they were treated with dignity and respect, and asked if they would return to LFS for help, 89% agree or strongly agree they would. ■



# Fremont Family Friends

Creating and Restoring Safe and Happy Childhoods

Presenting Sponsor: **valmont**



LFS President & CEO Ruth Henrichs, LFS Children Services Regional Director Christy Fiala, and Honorary Chairs Linda & Terry McClain. In the center is the shoe tree that raised \$2,600 for Fremont children and families.



Event Chairs  
Myrna & Darrell Puls



Heather Parker, Dunklau Center graduate and Fremont business owner



Bill Kernen with LFS Development Officer Susan Jael Medina



LFS President & CEO Ruth Henrichs with Rupert Dunklau



LFS Board Vice Chair Bradley D. Holtorf with Carla & Lonnie Mahrt



Tim Daugherty and LFS Board Member Linda Daugherty

Tuesday, June 10, 2014 was a full house at the Fremont Golf Club for the third annual “Fremont Family Friends” event, which supports the Rupert Dunklau Center for Healthy Families®.

Valmont Industries was the presenting sponsor for the evening. Linda and Terry McClain were honorary chairs; Myrna and Darrell Puls were the Event Chairs.

Nearly 300 guests were inspired by the story of Fremont business owner Heather Parker, a graduate of the Rupert Dunklau Center for Healthy Families®.

The Center started operations in 2009, which means there are now many children in Fremont elementary schools who once played at the Center while their parents attended classes and support groups. Heather’s sons are among them. Heather credits the support she received at the Center for the confidence she needed to pursue owning her custom cookie business. In fact, she recently moved her business into a new, bigger location with two partners!

The theme of the evening was setting goals and celebrating success. Following the live auction, some of the auction items were donated back to the Center, including a lovely tree filled with children’s shoes that sold for \$2,600! **The entire evening raised \$119,235, all of which will stay in Fremont to support the operating budget of the Center.**

The Rupert Dunklau Center for Healthy Families® is at 1420 East Military Avenue in Fremont. It provides early intervention and child abuse prevention programming for expectant mothers and families parenting children up to age five. ■

# LFS Supports Disaster Recovery

**W**hen tornadoes and hail swept across Nebraska in June, the damage left behind was devastating. It was not just the houses blown away, or the schools and churches damaged beyond repair – the people who live in these communities experienced heart-wrenching trauma unlike anything most of them had ever experienced.

It's not something you just "get over."

Midwesterners may be known for their resilience, but even the hardiest souls are tested when pitted against the worst that nature has to offer. Pilger and surrounding communities in northeast Nebraska were hard hit. Rare twin tornadoes whipped through Pilger, killing two people and leaving at least 20 injured.

A national weather expert said they were some of the most violent tornadoes he had ever seen on radar. In all, 29 Nebraska counties qualified for federal disaster assistance this year. Baseball-sized hail in Washington County shredded homes and cars, and injured a dozen people at Walmart. Flooding caused extensive damage elsewhere. Since these summer storms, Lutheran Family Services has worked with other organizations and local leaders to meet needs in the recovery phase of the disasters.

A major component of recovery is helping those struggling to cope with their fears and feelings in the aftermath of the storm. Untreated and unresolved trauma can lead to a range of mental health conditions, including anxiety and depression, even suicide.

LFS therapists have spent time in some of the storm-ravaged communities, where mental health needs are evident.

"People are trying to help each other," says Katie Hruska, LFS Clinical Supervisor. "But everyone recovers in his or her own time. Everyone is trying to make sense of what they are feeling. There is healing that needs to happen." ■

**D**isaster response dollars contributed to LFS are being made available to pay for mental health and substance abuse treatment vouchers. If you or someone you know could use this help, please:

1. Call the Rural Response Hotline at (800) 464-0258.
2. A Rural Response Hotline team member will determine if the caller lives in one of the 29 Nebraska counties that received a FEMA designation this year.
3. If the caller feels they need behavioral health or substance abuse counseling services AND they do not have insurance or Medicaid OR if their insurance has an extremely high deductible, they can receive a voucher to see a counselor on the approved list of providers.
4. The voucher is mailed to the provider with the caller's name on it, which the caller will be told.
5. The caller visits the approved provider.



## Nebraska's Summer of Disaster

- 29 counties eligible for federal disaster relief
- Damage from tornadoes, straight-line winds, hail and flooding
- Washington County: Baseball-sized hail caused millions in damage
- Northeast Nebraska: Multiple tornados, including dual twisters hit Pilger, killing two.
- Of Pilger's two Lutheran churches, one (St. John's) was destroyed.

*Pilger, NE after twin tornados struck on June 16, 2014. Photo courtesy State Farm.*

# Use of a Traum

Two Omaha therapists have found EMD

By Bob Glissmann, Omaha World-Herald Staff Writer

Originally published in the Omaha World-Herald on July 31,

**A** horrible accident, the brutality of war or childhood abuse can disrupt someone's life years after the trauma.

Mental health providers can help people try to cope with trauma's lingering effects, but counseling doesn't always help people put events behind them.

Therapists at Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and elsewhere are finding that a treatment regimen called EMDR, or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, can help people move past the effects of trauma when other methods have failed. The method uses lights, tapping or alternating sounds with the idea of engaging both sides of the brain while the patient thinks about a traumatic event.

Therapists with the Department of Veterans Affairs use EMDR to help servicemen and -women who have post-traumatic stress disorder, and

treatment guidelines of the American Psychiatric Association designate the treatment as effective on post-traumatic stress.

Cyndi Muhlbauer and Ben Czyz, two Lutheran Family Services therapists in Omaha, have submitted a paper that they hope to have published in an EMDR journal, outlining their successes in

using the method as a supplemental therapy.

**A few years ago, Muhlbauer and Czyz started noticing that when they used EMDR with their patients—many of whom are homeless, and some who haven't been able to hold jobs—clients "got not just better, they got lots better, and they stayed better," Muhlbauer said.**

During the treatment sessions, clients and counselors talk about issues that may be causing the person nightmares, flashbacks or anxiety, Czyz said.

"We start taking a look at some of those events in their life that may have caused high distress or disturbance, to help get rid of present-day issues," he said.

"There is, a lot of times, a negative thought attached to those events, like 'I'm worthless,' 'I'm stupid' or 'I'm useless.'"

The treatment involves many phases, including assessing troubling memories, reviewing current situations that cause emotional distress and working on coping strategies.

In a phase that involves eye movement, clients are asked to think about — not talk about — a traumatic event and associated negative thoughts while their eyes follow scrolling lights on a light bar, or while they're tapping both hands or drumsticks, or hearing tones in alternating ears.

They're instructed to pay attention to

the emotions they experience and where they feel tension in their bodies.

The bilateral stimulation is thought to help the person begin to process the memory — and the disturbing feelings — because both hemispheres of the brain are being engaged.

"The theory behind this is that information that's associated with strong, negative or frightening emotions doesn't get stored in the memory the way normal emotions do," Muhlbauer said. "It gets stored in a place that isn't easily accessed and processed during (rapid eye movement) sleep the way normal memories are."

EMDR, Czyz said, "helps kick those

**When they used EMDR with their patients—many of whom are homeless, and some who haven't been able to hold jobs—clients got not just better, they "got lots better, and they stayed better."**

memories, and store them, into the correct places in our brain."

It doesn't work for everyone, he said, but in a lot of cases, it does.

The process is intense, said Omahan Clare Marsh, who underwent the treatment after her adult daughter's suicide. "It's like being there again," she said.

Marsh remembers screaming when she found her daughter's body. "I didn't experience any of that" during the treatment, she said. "I just felt it....



Cyndi Muhlbauer



Ben Czyz

# a Therapy Expands

*R works in helping clients get past traumatic memories*

r

2014. Reprinted with permission. Edited for space.

You get really, really emotional because you're seeing the same thing again."

Before those sessions, Marsh said, Czyz helped her to develop coping skills to deal with the anticipated flood of feelings.

Marsh, who is 61, said that before the treatment, she felt guilty and blamed herself for her daughter's death. Forty to 50 times a day, she said, she would flash back to when she found her daughter's body. "I had gotten to where I had a hard time walking into a dark room," she said. "I couldn't go down in the basement."

After her treatments, she said, "I realized the guilt was pretty much gone. It did not change the sadness, (but) I don't have the guilt. It was her choice to end her life. I had nothing to do with it."

Dr. Robert Langenfeld, a psychiatrist at the VA Medical Center in Omaha, said that when he first heard about EMDR in 2001, it sounded like voodoo to him. "I couldn't believe it," he said. "I was a healthy skeptic."

But the more he read, he said, he found "it's an accepted practice, it's got good empirical evidence behind it. It's a matter of finding the right fit for the patient."

**According to the EMDR International Association, about 20 controlled studies have investigated the treatment's effects. The studies consistently have found that EMDR effectively decreases or eliminates the symptoms of post-traumatic stress for the majority of clients, the group says.**

Langenfeld said he sees a significant reduction in symptoms in well over half the people who undergo EMDR.

A person who survives a tornado, Langenfeld said, may recall being trapped under debris. The thought he or she associates with that memory might be, "The world is not a safe place."

Langenfeld asks the person what she would rather believe, and she might offer

a positive statement along the lines of "It was a 1 in a million event, and the world is a safer place than I believe it is."

Through the therapy, he said, he tries to move the person toward the positive idea and away from the negative. If successful, he said, "the memory is still there, but the memory in terms of how it affects that person changes. It no longer interferes with their day."

The process is cathartic, Langenfeld said. "You'll see some of these great, big burly guys crying at times during the session.... Afterward, they say they really feel a positive benefit."

After Muhlbauer and Czyz showed their results to Lutheran Family Services management, officials decided that EMDR could be a useful intervention for clients. The two have trained 12 other agency therapists from across Nebraska to use EMDR.

The treatment is covered under mental health benefits, said a spokeswoman for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska. But Muhlbauer said it can be expensive. The training of therapists is costly, she said, and the treatment usually is provided by private caregivers, not agencies such as Lutheran Family Services. In order to undergo EMDR, she said, the person must be stable, which can take months of therapy.

**"If you don't have insurance, you can't get in therapy long enough, usually, to get stable enough to have EMDR," she said. "What we're trying to do is make this affordable and easily doable for the agencies that do serve that population."**

Marsh, who was referred to Czyz by her regular therapist, said she was left with a strange—and welcome—side effect from her EMDR treatment. "I used to have a really, really bad, horrible snake phobia," she said. "Now I wouldn't say I like them—I still don't like to be around them. But I'm not phobic anymore." ■

## How EMDR Seems to Work

### RELEASING "FROZEN" EVENTS

When a person is very upset, his or her brain cannot process information as it does ordinarily. One moment may become "frozen in time," and remembering a trauma may feel as bad as going through it the first time because the images, sounds, smells and feelings haven't changed. These memories cause lasting pain that interferes with the way one sees the world and relates to others.

### BACK TO NORMAL PROCESSING

EMDR seems to have a direct effect on the way that the brain processes information. Normal information processing is resumed, so following a successful EMDR session, a person no longer relives the images, sounds and feelings when the event is brought to mind. You still remember what happened, but it is less upsetting.

### IT CAN WORK LIKE A DREAM

EMDR appears to be similar to what occurs naturally during dreaming or REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. Therefore, EMDR can be thought of as a physiologically based therapy that helps a person see disturbing material in a new and less distressing way.

*Source: EMDR International Association*

# After Years of War and Constant Fear, Iraqi Family Finds Peace

By Robyn Murray, LFS AmeriCorps



Hadeel Haider and Mohammed al-Kadhim

**I**t was 4:30 in the afternoon; people were getting ready to leave work and head home. The bustle of the city hummed in the background—pedestrians shuffling through crowded sidewalks, yellow taxis honking in staccato bursts. On a tree-lined street to the north, foreign aid workers busily prepared for a late-afternoon news conference. It was set to take place at the United Nations headquarters—a three-story converted hotel that loomed above Baghdad’s Tigris River. Amid the flurry, no one heard a cement truck pulling up to the side of the building.

The explosion was deafening. It ripped a six-foot crater in the ground and hurtled through the building’s concrete roof, causing it to collapse into rubble. It cut the electricity and plunged the building into darkness.

“You can’t imagine—” Mohammed al-Kadhim tries to find the words as he recalls that bloody afternoon. “I never imagined the things I—you just see things flying everywhere, walls collapsing, people running with blood on their face.”

“It’s just like watching a movie in slow motion,” he says. “Your brain doesn’t react because it’s so severe.”

Al-Kadhim was working at the UN building that day. A Baghdad native, he had started as a driver for the international aid group and quickly worked his way into an administrative position. It was a good job; he was paid in U.S. dollars. But he knew it was dangerous work. It was August, 2003—the first months of the Iraq War—and any Western organization was a target.

At least 22 people were killed in the bombing, and more than 100 were

injured. Al-Kadhim escaped with minor injuries. “I didn’t realize I was covered with blood, and I was injured until someone saw me,” he recalls. “I was just running, trying to get out of the building. The building was dark, the dust, the fumes and everything. It was terrible.”

Al-Kadhim is uncomfortable as he tells the story. More than a decade later, he is still tormented by flashbacks, and sometimes awakened by nightmares. “It was like hell,” he says, as he stirs a cup of traditional Iraqi tea. He’s seated across from his wife, Hadeel Haider, in their immaculately kept west-Omaha home, which overlooks a peaceful grove of trees and green, open space. **Five years ago, the couple arrived on U.S. soil with their two sons—greeted at Omaha’s airport by refugee resettlers from Lutheran Family Services. The agency helped them move into their first American apartment and fill it with used furniture. Today, after years of war, fear and upheaval, they are finally finding peace.**

The UN bombing was a single event in a litany that shook al-Kadhim and his family, eventually prompting them to risk their lives by fleeing Iraq. “We were trying as much as we could to survive,” he says, “and hoping it was going to get better.” But it only got worse. Speaking both of insurgents and opportunistic gang members, al-Kadhim says, “They just randomly killed people. They killed kids; they killed women, for nothing, just to spread chaos and horror among people.”

Al-Kadhim’s family was often a target. He speaks fluent English (his parents were educated in the U.S.), and

so he was sought by Western companies looking for translators in Iraq. But that put a price on his head. He received death threats directly and sometimes by letter. “You don’t know what’s going to happen to you in the next minute,” he says. Mostly, the couple feared for the safety of their children. Kidnappers had targeted their sons’ school, which left them in a panic. But the moment that broke them came on a hot summer night. Baghdad was enduring a recurrent electricity blackout, and inside their home, the rooms baked without air conditioning. The family decided to camp out on the flat roof of their house – a fateful decision that spared them another attack. In the middle of the night, they woke to the sound of machine guns tearing through their walls, bullets spraying throughout their home.

“We were scared to death,” al-Kadhim says.

The next morning, they packed up to leave. “We couldn’t take it anymore,” he says. “We decided to leave no matter what.”

That decision was fraught with its own dangers. To get to the border, the family had to travel by car through the worst of the fighting. “You’re in a battlefield,” al-Kadhim says. “It was very, very risky.” Border agents would turn people away on a whim, and many died on their way back to Baghdad. But, “with God’s mercy,” al-Kadhim says, they made it through.

The family crossed the border into Jordan, and al-Kadhim was able to find work for another U.S. company in Amman. They worked hard to establish a life for themselves in a new,

# Therapy for New Populations

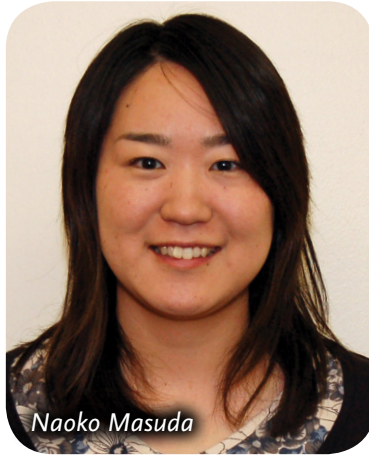
*An LFS therapist focuses on refugee mental wellness*

Sometimes the joy of freedom simply isn't enough.

For many refugees, the journey to a new life can come with strings attached. While they leave their former life behind, they rarely escape without some exposure to horrific, traumatic experiences, like war, genocide, torture, sexual assaults or family separation.

Once they arrive in Nebraska, refugees must overcome culture shock, adapt quickly and meet the expectation that they will thrive within 90 days of being resettled. The first three months pass very quickly as the refugee must attend doctors' appointments, English classes, cultural orientation and other mandatory activities. This creates a new type of trauma and can compound symptoms and the severity of the needs.

Fortunately, Lutheran Family Services now has a behavioral health therapist on staff at the International Center of the Heartland (ICH).



Thanks to support from United Way of the Midlands, LFS therapist Naoko Masuda is now able to work exclusively with new populations. She sees first-hand the power of having culturally-sensitive therapy available. "Experts believe as many as 40% of newly-arrived refugees suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many others have severe depression and high levels of anxiety," says Masuda. "By providing these services, we can help them start their lives in America with the tools they need to cope not only with their past experiences, but with the demands of acculturation."

"Having Naoko at the ICH is incredibly important to the continuum of services we can provide," says Kara Tofte, Supervisor of the International Center of the Heartland. "She's able to work with all of our case managers, and provide a holistic approach to the refugees' overall mental, emotional, physical and social health. It really is the best case scenario for everyone." ■



## In Memory of One Who Made a Difference

In her short time in Nebraska, Karen Bricklemeyer (above) made a tremendous impact on the community she quickly grew to love. As President and CEO of United Way of the Midlands, Karen was an enthusiastic supporter of the work of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. In 2013, she accepted the LFS "Community Partner of the Year" honor on behalf of United Way of the Midlands. Her leadership and vision will be missed. ■

## Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service Marks 75th Anniversary

The year was 1918, and immigrants and refugees were seeking a new life in America after World War I. The New-York based National Lutheran Council (NLC) set up a program to help with the transition. That program has grown into what is now known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). In June, LIRS celebrated 75 years of "Courageous Journeys" at a "Walk of Courage" Gala in Baltimore. LFS was well-represented by Ruth Henrichs, Naw Latt Nlam and Govin Magar. Naw Latt and Govin were resettled from Burma and Bhutan, respectively, to the United States by LFS, and both are former employees of LFS Community Services. ■



Naw Latt Nlam, Ruth Henrichs and Govin Magar at the LIRS 75th Anniversary event.

# Open Door Mission Surplus Diapers Benefit LFS Centers



Just to prove that no good diaper goes to waste in Omaha—check out this huge donation from the Open Door Mission! The Open Door Mission generally needs larger size diapers, so the 1s and 2s tend to pile up. Fortunately for LFS, those are the most requested sizes at the Centers for Healthy Families. The Mission donated 17 huge bags full—totaling about 5,100 Huggies and Pampers. Every single one of those donated diapers will be used by the hundreds of young families served in North Omaha and Council Bluffs. Thank you! ■

## Online Giving Days

The rise of online giving campaigns has opened up new opportunities for non-profit organizations like Lutheran Family Services (LFS). LFS is eligible to participate in four of these community-driven campaigns: Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island and Lexington.

Lexington holds its “Give Big Lexington” campaign in November. The other three communities hold theirs in May. This was LFS’ first year in Grand Island’s “Go Big Give” campaign, whereby \$775 was raised, including an hourly incentive prize. In Lincoln, LFS raised \$21,285 during “Give to Lincoln,” and “Omaha Gives” netted \$43,355 for LFS from 116 donors. In addition to these gifts, corporate donors in all three communities provided matching funds that were distributed among participants.

These campaigns are designed to be primarily driven through social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter and e-mail. ■

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## Lutheran Night at the Storm Chasers



The pitches might have come in a little low at the June 23 Storm Chasers game, but that’s okay. After all, Jain and Eva Suhr really aren’t that tall! Two feet, maybe? The girls are the daughters of LFS’ Statewide Administrator for Children Services, Ryan Suhr. They were tapped to throw out the first pitches during the third annual “Lutheran Night” at Werner Park. LFS was well-represented by staff and family members. And the Storm Chasers won! ■

**H**uge thanks to the team at Farm Credit Services of America. 105 beautiful blankets were made for the children and families in the foster care and RSafe® programs! For three weeks the employee volunteers learned about these programs while quilting. We are so grateful for the warmth and kindness these quilts will represent to foster families and families healing from child sexual abuse. ■



**Farm Credit Services  
of America**

## Final Project: Suitcases for Kids

**I**mmanuel Lutheran Church Ladies Aid in Rising City, Nebraska celebrated their 100th anniversary in a special way this year. They collected items for children served through LFS foster care programming. The project was bittersweet. The ladies made this their last service project and have since retired their group. ■



*(Left photo) Melba & Eugene Glock of Immanuel Lutheran Church with Rachael Fineran (center), LFS RSafe Treatment Foster Care Coordinator*

## Ways to Support LFS Human Care!

### Gift Options

- Cash Gifts
  - Requests or Estate Gifts
  - Gifts of Stock
  - Gifts of Grain
  - Donate Online
  - Employer Matching Gifts
- Call (402) 591-5063 or send an email to [development@LFSneb.org](mailto:development@LFSneb.org)

### Engagement Options

- Volunteer as a group, through your workplace or church, to sponsor a refugee family
- Participate in a diaper drive or donate new items for children under five to the Centers for Healthy Families®
- Join the “Forever Families Guild” or “Fremont Family Friends”
- Donate your professional skills to help a veteran or child aging out of foster care

### Stay Connected with LFS

- Become a Facebook fan—[facebook.com/LFSNEB](https://facebook.com/LFSNEB)
- Follow us on Twitter—[@LFSofNebraska](https://twitter.com/LFSofNebraska)
- Join our LinkedIn network—[linkedin.com/company/lutheran-family-services-of-nebraska](https://linkedin.com/company/lutheran-family-services-of-nebraska)
- Subscribe to our YouTube channel—[youtube.com/user/lfsneb](https://youtube.com/user/lfsneb)
- Email us at [info@LFSneb.org](mailto:info@LFSneb.org)
- Sign up for email updates at [LFSneb.org](https://LFSneb.org)

### THRIVENT MEMBERS— You can also support Lutheran Family Services with your Choice Dollars<sup>SM</sup>!

Thrivent Choice® makes it easy to support LFS with added gifts. If you are eligible to give through this program, simply visit [thrivent.com/choice](https://thrivent.com/choice) and follow the instructions or call Thrivent at (800) 847-4836 to make LFS your choice!

**YOUR GIFTS WILL HELP PROVIDE "SAFETY, HOPE AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL PEOPLE"**

Sharing your email with Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska allows us to send you important information, stories and community updates electronically. We are able to be better stewards of our resources by eliminating some printing and mailing costs. We will never share your information.





Eric Gurley, Ramona Edwards and Ruth Henrichs at the Augustana Heritage event

## Augustana Festival in Nebraska

In June, Nebraska hosted the national Augustana Festival at Midland University in Fremont. The theme was "Prairie Roots, Global Impact," which celebrated the heritage and contributions of the four Augustana-founded agencies and institutions in Nebraska: Luther Junior College & Academy in Wahoo, Bethphage Mission in Axtell, and the Immanuel Deaconess Institute and Immanuel Hospital in Omaha. Since the ELCA roots of Lutheran Family Services (LFS) began at the Immanuel Deaconess Institute, LFS was deeply involved in the event, hosting tours of the Rupert Dunklau Center for Healthy Families® and highlighting refugee resettlement programs. LFS President and CEO Ruth Henrichs also gave a keynote presentation with Immanuel CEO Eric Gurley. Their topic: *Immanuel and Lutheran Family Services: Common Origins, Current Mission, Future Visions*. Attendees got into the spirit of the event, with some, like Immanuel employee Ramona Edwards, even wearing traditional Swedish attire! ■

## Business Excellence Award



Lutheran Family Services was honored with the 2014 Greater Omaha Business Excellence Award – Non-Profit. Ruth Henrichs accepted the award on behalf of LFS at an awards luncheon on May 13. The Chamber highlighted this quote from CEO Ruth Henrichs, "What can be better than going home each night knowing you made a difference in someone's life?" ■



Mental illness is treatable. Get back in the game.

## "Don't Be Sidelined" Campaign

Lutheran Family Services is proud to be a partner in the "Don't Be Sidelined" campaign, a mental health public awareness campaign created through the collaboration of various non-profit and health and human service organizations across the state of Nebraska. The Kim Foundation leads the campaign, which was launched in September of 2012 in partnership with Husker Sports Marketing. Volunteers will be handing out materials and bracelets at Husker sports events this year.



## Connections Honored

At the 2014 Omaha Press Club's Excellence in Journalism Banquet, the staff of LFS was honored with a "Best of Show" award for the very magazine you are reading, "Connections." The judges said: "An impressive package of interesting well-written stories, attractive art and appealing design. This is a publication readers would look forward to receiving." We hope that is the case, and that you enjoy reading Connections as much as we enjoy producing it! Feedback is always welcome. ■

# Iraqi Family Finds Peace

*Continued from page 10*

though culturally familiar, country, but Jordan was inundated with Iraqi refugees, and permanent residency seemed perpetually out of reach. “It was not easy to live there,” Haider says. “It wasn’t a good solution for us,” her husband adds. “We were always in panic that we’d have to go back.”

Four years later, the family discovered a U.S. program for Iraqis whose work had placed them in particular danger: refugee status for those who could not return home. They decided to apply. “We were hoping this would save us from the hopeless situation,” al-Kadhimi says, and it did. Soon, they found themselves on a plane bound for the heart of the United States.

In the middle of winter, at Omaha’s Eppley Airfield, volunteers from LFS were ready to greet the weary family. Haider’s cousin, who had settled in Omaha ahead of them, had prepared them for the gesture, but to be welcomed by strangers still meant everything, al-Kadhimi says. Later they were escorted to their new apartment, where they found a refrigerator filled with groceries and a pantry with essentials. “These things really matter,” al-Kadhimi says. “It means a lot.”

LFS staff helped the family apply for social security cards, driver’s licenses, and food stamps; they got Haider signed up for English classes, and helped the couple find work. Al-Kadhimi took a job as an international program specialist at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, which he continues to supplement with part-time work as a translator. Haider took two jobs: one at Sears, and another at an after-school program. Within months, they had bought cars and found a bigger apartment. Within a few years, they had four cars, their own home, one son in pre-med, and another a freshman at the University of Nebraska Omaha—both with their choice of scholarships. **“We are dedicated,”** al-Kadhimi says. **“We have goals, and**

**we want to achieve our goals. And in this country, if you have a goal and you work hard, you will get to it.”**

But even after they found safety and security in the U.S., life has been a struggle for the al-Kadhimi family. In 2012, doctors found a lump on their youngest son’s skull, and a few months later, Haider was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Their son underwent brain surgery, which was successful, and Haider turned

Jordan—that never materialized. But on their first-year anniversary in Omaha, they were eligible for permanent residency; and after another five, citizenship. Haider proudly shows off a framed photograph of the family with the words “My fellow Americans” inscribed in shimmering red, white and blue. “This is not something that we could take for granted,” al-Kadhimi says. “This is something that is really huge, and we really appreciate that.”

**Citizenship “is not something that we could take for granted. This is something that is really huge, and we really appreciate that.”**—*Mohammed al-Kadhimi*

to UNMC, home to some of the best Hodgkins specialists in the country. “We could have gone to any city that we want in US.,” Haider says. “Maybe it was meant to be.”

By the end of 2012, after months of chemotherapy, Haider was cancer-free. Today – just 18 months later – she teaches high-energy Zumba fitness at the local YMCA. “She was very strong,” al-Kadhimi says. “She didn’t collapse. She didn’t miss one day of work.” Haider says it wasn’t easy to stay positive, but she did it for her family. “If I be down, they will be down too,” she says, “and I didn’t want to—they were already down.”

Al-Kadhimi says he is proud of his family and the courage they’ve shown through times of tumult. “We are a team,” he says. “We work together. We do everything together.”

For now, their future seems secure, and much of that is due to promises delivered. When the family arrived in the U.S., they were told they could apply for permanent residency after one year in the country. They were given a similar promise in

Al-Kadhimi says he once worried his family wouldn’t be accepted in America, but he found the opposite to be true. “You can find people who become your closest friends and your family who’ll love you and support you in any place that you could be,” he says. He has since brought his elderly mother and sister to Omaha (Haider’s family lives mostly in Canada), and the couple tries to give back however they can, to return the opportunities they’ve been given. “We feel that people are supposed to help each other,” al-Kadhimi says, “just like we were helped at the beginning.”

Though they sometimes miss Iraq – the Iraq of their youth, that is – al-Kadhimi says he is thankful for a fresh start, and a chance to live a peaceful life in a quiet city.

“We are so grateful for being here,” he says. “It’s like a reward that God kept for us.” ■

# Mark Your Calendar

 **Lutheran Family Services**  
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Fremont  
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Grand Island  
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Lexington  
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Lincoln  
(402) 441-7940

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## Kansas

Wichita  
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