

# Real Help. Real Hope.

Closer to Home



**2024 Annual Report**

# Letter from the President

**Hello!**

One essential skill in the non-profit world is learning to adjust your sails to always deliver excellent service, even when storms are brewing. At Lutheran Family Services (LFS) we embrace this truth, as our founders did 133 years ago. Back then, the challenge was how to help homeless children. Today, we navigate the shifting winds of the political climate, funding sources, and community needs.

Fortunately, we are bolstered by incredible statewide support. Partners, funders, donors, leadership, clients -- we all work together to bring the LFS mission home: to express God's love for all people by providing quality services that build and strengthen individuals, families, and communities.

The journey through 2024 was mostly sunshine and fair breezes. We wiped away the remaining challenges left by the pandemic, earned statewide designation as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC), passed accreditation with flying colors, and filled Dana Village. We entered 2025 on solid footing, with an excellent five-year strategic plan and an eye towards exponential statewide growth, even beyond the nearly 20,000 people impacted last year.

It was a year of building tremendous focus and clarity on the future of LFS, and an outstanding foundation for us to manage the challenges ahead.

In these coming pages, please join us in celebrating the thousands of lives changed for the better because they've made a stop at LFS. Thank you for being part of it.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Chris Tonniges,  
President and CEO



“ To improve is to change;  
to be perfect is to change often. ”

- Winston Churchill

While we'll never be perfect, we are definitely committed to consistent improvement at Lutheran Family Services (LFS). We saw that come to life in 2024 in dramatic ways, all across the organization.

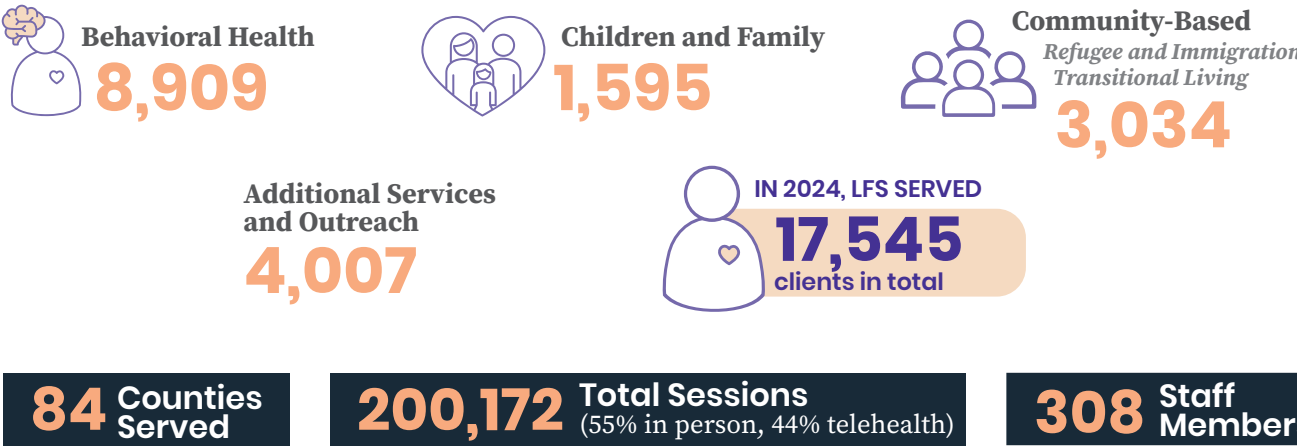
We took to the road to visit all of our teams and offices in 2024 -- a journey we called our "LFS Loves You" tour. We held open houses in every community, including our Council Bluffs, Iowa office. You'll learn more about that in coming pages.

Our commitment to reach and support anyone who needs us brought to life a new way of delivering behavioral health services across the state of Nebraska, as we were the only statewide organization honored as a CCBHC. This will allow us to deliver services addressing substance use issues, mental health needs, and crisis situations into communities currently receiving little or no support.

Our Children and Family Services programming pivoted towards the growing need for kinship care, expanding our offerings for foster care children and families. Our Children's Behavioral Health team moved into a new, larger location to support additional therapies and programming for children and teenagers. Our Refugee Resettlement program welcomed and supported nearly 1,300 people fleeing conflict in their home countries. It was a busy and full year. Here's a quick overview of LFS in 2024:

## LFS at a Glance

### People impacted





# The LFS Road Show



We took to the road in 2024 and visited every LFS office and team. Join us as we celebrate the statewide impact of LFS.



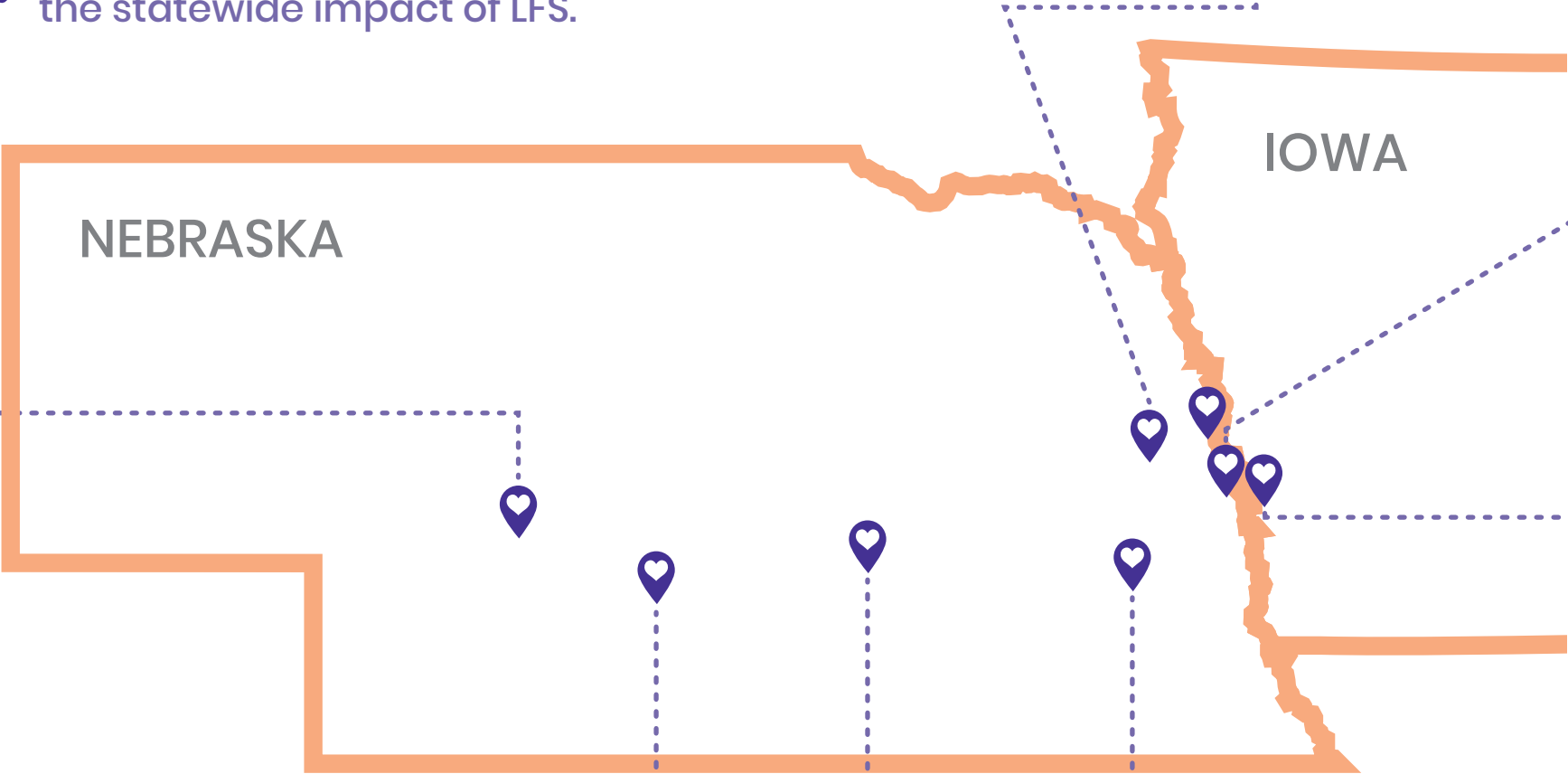
Fremont



Omaha



Council Bluffs



North Platte



Lexington



Grand Island



Lincoln

We started the tour in North Platte, where we were welcomed by local officials, residents, and the news media. It was a tremendous opportunity to share the incredible work being done in the community. We then moved on to Lexington and Grand Island, where we celebrated the one-on-one support being provided, especially for those in crisis situations. In Grand Island, Police Chief Kevin Denny talked about how important the relationships are between his first responders and LFS therapists. Events in Fremont and Lincoln also drew a lot of attention from partners and local residents. Both of these offices have offered amplified services through CCBHC designation since 2020 (Lincoln) and 2022 (Fremont), a precursor to statewide expansion in 2026. We wrapped up the tour in Council Bluffs and at our headquarters in Omaha. **It was an outstanding opportunity to talk about existing services, service expansion, and to simply make new friends.**





# Behavioral Health (adults and children)

 PEOPLE ENROLLED:  
**8,909**

- HIGHLIGHTS
- Crisis Response/ Co-Responder Team Calls:** 1,815
  - Mental Health Outreach and Training Participants:** 1,452
  - Medication Management:** 2,204

New evidence shows a deep and growing need for behavioral health services across our region, but especially in Central and Western Nebraska. There are simply too few providers available, with long waits for those who are. It's a widespread and challenging situation that LFS has been working to address, and in 2024, continued the extensive process of becoming a statewide CCBHC. Once fully launched in January 2026, this new model of care will transform communities struggling to meet those needs. Currently, underserved populations include older adults, low-income families, and young people - a population especially at risk for depression and suicide. Our crisis and co-responder teams continue to work closely with local law enforcement to reduce the need for incarceration during mental health crises. In 2024, our teams were very actively engaged in statewide trainings for mental health first aid and crisis intervention.



# Dana Village

 APARTMENTS:  
**100% full**

- HIGHLIGHTS
- Transitional Living Program for Youth Aging out of Foster Care:** 41 clients

**Current renovation project:**  
The Gym at Dana Village

One of the highlights of 2024 was cutting the ribbon for Dana Village. This newer project is slowly bringing the former Dana College campus back into operation, starting with housing and services for

# Children and Family Services

 PEOPLE ENROLLED:  
**1,595**

- HIGHLIGHTS
- Fatherhood Initiative:** 527
  - Intensive Family Preservation:** 241
  - Adoption Services:** 123

When Jonah\* was released from jail, his first call was to his Fatherhood case manager. He began working on a fresh start while he was incarcerated and was serious about keeping his progress going. Within two weeks of his release, he secured suitable housing, a job, and began working on his GED so he can go to college. He's working with his case manager to improve his employment, but for now -- he's extremely proud of his first paycheck and being able to pay his bills and child support. He is taking the steps needed to preserve and restore a relationship with his children. Jonah is one of many of the success stories from our Fatherhood Initiative -- a growing LFS program that continues to impact the trajectory of lives, not just for the fathers, but for their children as well. So many of the dads tell us they are breaking negative cycles from their own upbringing -- whether their father was abusive or absent.



**\*not his real name**

young people aging out of foster care and low-income seniors. After the February launch, the renovated apartments quickly filled.

Eighteen-year-old Charlie\* was one of the new residents who left the foster care system and found her path at Dana. Initially facing uncertainty and limited financial support, she instead discovered stability. Her one-bedroom apartment at Dana Village is the home base where her dreams are coming true. She's enrolled in community college with plans to become a nurse. She's involved in a work experience program so she can find a job to support herself. In the interim, the transitional living program is teaching her how to budget, pay rent on time, and manage bills through life skills classes. She utilizes the food pantry when needed and has started a small savings account to participate in a car assistance program for former foster youth. Charlie definitely has her moments of being overwhelmed, but she's building a strong support system, including a mentor through Central Plains, a counselor at school, and a few close friends who are encouraging her along the way.

**\*not her real name**



# Refugee and Immigration Services



CLIENTS ENROLLED:  
**3,034**

HIGHLIGHTS  
**Reception and Placement:** 1,296  
**Secondary Migrants:** 800  
**Global Language Solutions:** 259



One motivator at LFS is lived experience. We see it all over our organization – how people who have been through some of the worst life has to offer want to get involved so they can help others. That is perhaps most evident in our Refugee and Immigration Programs. Relying on someone that you know fully understands your fears, challenges, and heartache makes a tremendous difference across all peer support opportunities.



In mid-July, we welcomed a couple escaping the turmoil in Venezuela. There, he was a professional athlete. Now, he works at a Lincoln waste management company, and she works at a fast-food restaurant. With LFS's support, they are now self-supporting, grateful, and eager to give back. He's on deck to volunteer with LFS and help other refugees adjust, including teaching them how to navigate public transportation.

Another great example - An Iraqi refugee who earned his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and now works as a truck driver for a major trucking company. He earns \$2,000 a week to support his family and has generously offered to mentor LFS clients interested in trucking.

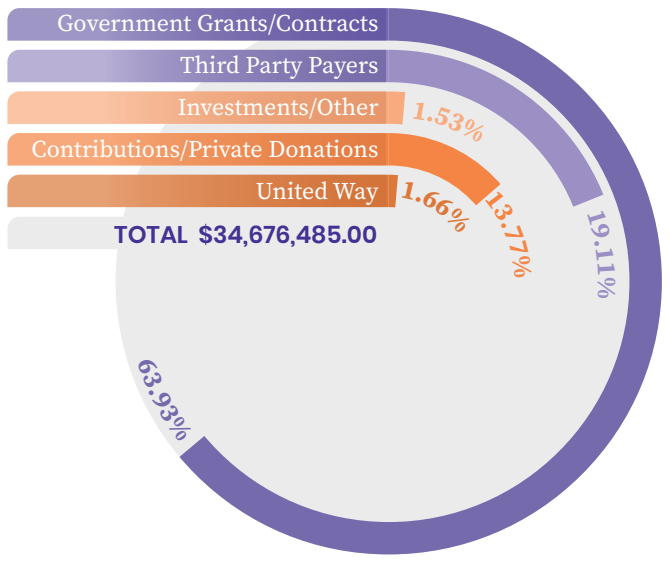


It's been fifty years since LFS first opened its arms to people desperate for a new place to call home. In 2024, we provided services in six locations and resettled over 1,300 refugees. We also provided a wide range of supportive services—including employment assistance, education, career pathways, case management, interpretation, and legal services—to more than 3,000 people.

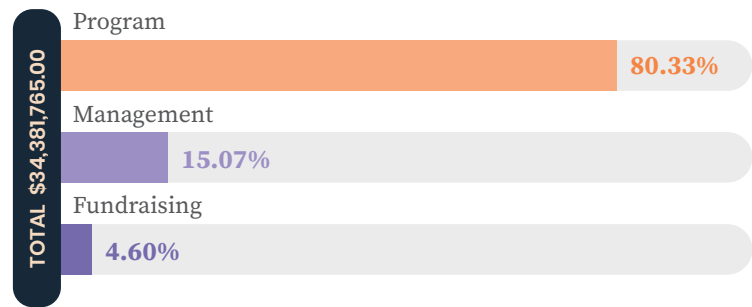
Refugees and asylees are crucial to Nebraska's economy, addressing critical labor shortages in entry-level service and production jobs, particularly in manufacturing, healthcare, and agriculture. Their diverse skills and entrepreneurial spirit also foster innovation and drive local business growth.

# Financials

## Revenue



## Operating Expenditures



In 2024, the Council on Accreditation completed its extensive review of all levels of LFS. The process takes place every four years, and this year the reviewers quickly renewed our accreditation, stating repeatedly how impressed they were.

One reviewer noted they talked to many clients across programs that demonstrate the great work occurring. One client said until LFS, she had never had a caseworker with such a heart, who works so hard, and is there for her whenever she needs it. The individual noted that she had a mental health diagnosis most of her life with several suicide attempts, but after working with LFS for three years, she is now in a place she never dreamed she would be, living a balanced life, and living in a home that brings her great joy.

# Board of Directors

- Miranda Watson**, Chair
- Rev. Richard Snow**, Vice Chair
- Andrea K. Adams**, Treasurer and Finance Chair
- Megan Reay**, Governance Chair
- Dave Anderson**, Audit Committee Chair
- Brenda Smith**, Exec. Committee At Large
- Chris Tonniges**, Secretary (voice, no vote)

- Dave Anderson**
- Mary Ann Borgeson**
- Thad Call**
- Dr. Mark Foxall**
- Jason Hagan**
- Tiffany Henn**
- Kerry Kernan**
- Rev. Scott Johnson**
- Megan Connelly**



# 2024 Events



From left to right, Heidi Higgason, Wendy and Michael Moran, and Brad Negrete

## Fremont Family Friends June 4



Art and Vicki Sorensen



## Rally 4 Kids March 7



Team Ia Hagan Baird



Team Mapes



Sep 11



Team Vandenberg

## The Future of Human Care SYMPOSIUM Oct 15



## In Memory of Coyner Smith

In July 2024, we mourned with Coyner Smith’s family as they said goodbye. Coyner and his wife, Donna, have been tremendous supporters of LFS since 2017, when they first delivered a check to keep refugee operations afloat. Their passion for refugees was fueled by their love for their adopted daughter, Leemah, and her mother. Coyner and Donna later set up the Smith Scholarship Fund, which has created future doctors, engineers, and attorneys. Coyner’s company, Better Business Equipment, was once housed where the LFS Headquarters is today. In honor of the Smith’s overwhelming commitment and support of the LFS mission, that building is renamed “The Coyner and Donna Smith Center.”





# Our Programs and Services

## Children and Family Services



- Family Education and Initiative Programming
- Family Support
- In-home Visitation
- Parents as Teachers
- Adoption
- Pregnancy Counseling Services
- Foster Care
- Fatherhood Initiative
- Kinship Navigator Program
- Children's Behavioral Health
- Children's RSafe® Sexual Abuse Treatment

## Behavioral Health



- Outpatient Mental Health
- Outpatient Substance Use Treatment Services
- Intensive Outpatient Substance Use Services
- Crisis Response and Co-Responder
- Medication Management
- Medication Assisted Treatment
- Community Support
- Care and Service Coordination
- Integrated Health Home Program
- Senior Care Program
- Military and Veterans Services
- Peer Support Services

## New Populations



- Resettlement Extended Case Management
- Refugee Reception and Placement Program
- Economic Empowerment
- Migrant Support Services Program
- Trafficking Victims Assistance Program
- Safe Release Support [fingerprinting]
- Services to Afghan Survivors Impacted by Combat
- Refugee Health Promotion
- Global Language Solutions - Translation and Interpretation Services
- Immigration Legal Services



**Lutheran Family Services**  
for the well-being of all people



**OneLFS.org**

**Lutheran Family Services**

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