

REPORT FROM LUTHERAN SERVICE SOCIETY

The pandemic has impacted all of us individually and it has especially impacted community based services across our region. Our team of professionals had to change the way they provide services and reach our participants virtually overnight, keeping the vision and mission of Lutheran Service Society at the forefront on how to serve our neighbors. Thankfully with determination, support and creativity, Lutheran Service Society was able to continue to provide all services throughout the pandemic. Here are some of the highlights from this past year.

Adoption and Permanency Services

In 2020, the Adoption and Permanency program celebrated 100 years of continued service to Western Pennsylvania. The program continues to promote permanency to children through foster care, adoption, and Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) services. During the 2020 year, the Department of Human Services responded to the state of emergency allowing many of the services to be offered virtually. Due to that allowance, the program has been able to continue services uninterrupted. The staff quickly familiarized themselves to several different virtual platforms, got creative with implementing virtual activities, and found new ways to connect with clients from a distance. In 2020, approximately 235 families and children with impacted by our services. We continue to expand this program through growth and extended service areas. We are committed to serving all of Western PA and some of our most frequented counties include Allegheny, Fayette, Westmoreland, Greene, and Lawrence. Services include:

- Foster Care
- Adoption (older child, private infant, and international)
- SWAN services (child profiles, child prep, child specific recruitment, post permanency services)
- Training for prospective foster and adoptive parents
- Closed file searches

Affordable Housing Program for Senior Citizens

Lutheran Service Society has five HUD housing apartment properties encompassing a total of 162 apartments as of December 31, 2020. Our properties provide quality rental housing solutions for low to moderate income senior citizens in five Western Pennsylvania counties, Beaver, Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango. This area of Lutheran Service Society's ministry expands our outreach mission into the northwestern corridor of Pennsylvania.

- Lutheran Village in Chippewa, PA – 34 persons
- Von Bora Place in Titusville, PA – 17 persons
- Luther Place in Oil City, PA – 49 persons
- Martin's Landing in Girard, PA – 35 persons

- Lutheran Village in Jamestown, PA – 27 persons

Beaver County Meals on Wheels (MOW)

Our Meals on Wheels program allows many seniors and any adult with a need for food security to remain in their homes that otherwise may not be able to do so. The pandemic did not slow this team down. They quickly shifted to a one time per week delivery process, relying on the support of more than 20 volunteers and kept on feeding our neighbors when they needed it the most with the added benefit of a health and wellness check-in by the volunteer driver.

At its core, MOW is people serving their neighbors in all of Beaver County.

For many of our clients funding is an issue, MOW cannot happen without the contributions of many individuals and organizations such as Beaver County United Way. We are fortunate that there are numerous churches, individuals, business and community organizations that choose to support this needed community service. For those who assisted financially, we cannot overstate our gratitude. With the help of many, we have served a larger number of folks than in recent years. In 2020, we served 210 individual clients an astounding 36,633 meals.

Senior Centers

Lutheran Service Society operates Senior Centers in both Allegheny and Beaver counties. However, due to the pandemic, both senior centers have been closed since March of 2020. Fortunately, both Beaver and Allegheny county AAA continues to support the programs allowing the centers to remain fully staffed. The programs quickly adjusted how they provide services. In an effort to maintain a connection to participants, both programs make weekly wellness calls to check in on their participants. In addition, both programs provide grab and go meals to support food security and offer online exercise programs.

Primetime is located in the Bellevue section of Pittsburgh. The program continues to partner with St. John's Lutheran Church of the Highland to expand our services in Allegheny County via the Healthy Start Café meeting at their location.

Center at the Mall is located in the Beaver Valley Mall and is a community wellness center designed for adults over 50 who want to have fun, stay healthy and be active. With over 12,000 members, the center is the largest senior center in Beaver County.

Some of the Senior Center activities include:

- Wi-Fi Café
- Technology and computer classes
- Holiday celebrations
- Excursions

- Nutritional lunches
- Home delivered meal program
- Wellness and educational seminars
- Social and game clubs
- Fitness center
- Computer Lab
- Celebrations
- Billiards

We are all hoping to be safely together again soon however, we are fully aware that the pandemic may influence and even change how services are offered to our community in the future. Lutheran Service Society is poised to continue to adjust, grow, and connect in any way that is safe and supportive to others.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Israel, Administrator
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