**Bulletin of Reports**

**Bethesda Lutheran Services**

**Report to Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod**

Bethesda Lutheran Services is very proud of the services we offer in support of our mission of being a ministry that provides promising futures to children, youth and families. We are also proud of our willingness to expand our programming into new territories so that we can provide a more impactful spectrum of services.

In 2018, Bethesda participated in the Pennsylvania Council for Children, Youth and Families Services (PCCYFS) sponsored Mandated Reporter Workgroup. This workgroup was designed to talk about the best ways to provide safe placement situations for children while figuring out the best way to deal with investigations without leaving agencies unable to meet the current regulations for care. It is possible that new legislation can come from this. Regardless, we were proud to be a participant in this important conversation.

Bethesda Lutheran Services had been a proactive agency when it comes to being trauma informed. In 2018 we continued on this path by restructuring our residential level system. This new system is one that gives the youth in our residential program more incentives for positive behavior and more clearly defined and meaningful consequences for negative behavior.

We were approached by several counties to open a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF). This program is for young ladies who have more acute mental health issues than our other programs are trained to deal with. There are very few places that can care for this specific population. Our facilities department worked diligently to expand our shelter space into the PRTF. One of the requirements for admittance into the program is that there has to be family involvement with the treatment process. We know from experience that youth and families are most successful when they work together towards a common goal.

Another new program in 2018 in the North Star Mentoring Program. This program aims to match kids with a mentor for a few hours every week. Mentors provide support and can keep kids focused and on the right track. Mentors can role model and help teach valuable life skills to kids who do not have anyone else to do this. The North Star Mentoring Program is run through the Bethesda Lutheran Services Erie County Independent Living Program.

2018 also saw the inception our Truancy Prevention Program. What started out in the Union City School District has expanded into the Erie School District. The truancy prevention specialists work diligently to keep kids in school. As part of the program, the Bethesda Lutheran Services Trinity Center hosts School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) meetings which parents can attend to learn their roles and responsibilities in regards to their children’s school attendance.

Our reinvigorated spiritual life program has really taken hold and the children and youth really enjoy it. Pastor Randall Frenz holds a weekly service as well as several special services throughout the year. After every weekly service, Pastor Frenz holds a class for those kids who want learn more about the Bible and the teachings of Christ Jesus. In 2018, Pastor Frenz baptized 18 children and youth. Pastor Frenz has also been teaching the youth here to be Christ-like in their deeds. Our youth volunteer at the local retirement community where one of the things they do is help prepare the facility for their annual BBQ chicken dinner and fundraiser. The also accompany the elderly residents to the local fairs and help them maneuver through them.

2018 was definitely a year of growth for Bethesda Lutheran Services. The staff team here is remarkably dedicated and proud of the work we do. We could not do it without them.

Thank you,

George Trauner, CEO

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