



The

UPDATE

A publication of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest

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Lutheran
Social Services
of the Southwest

Lighting the Way... One Life at a Time™

LEADERSHIP MESSAGE



Dear Friends and Supporters,

A few years ago, as I pursued my spiritual and professional journey, I was blessed with the opportunity to join the staff of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest. As Division Director of Communities, Families & Congregations and Disaster Services, I am able to follow my faith and work for those who have the least among us.

There are many people at LSS-SW who give of themselves generously each day, sustaining our mission by implementing the agency's vision. For several years, the agency has honored those employees and others who make a significant difference in our ability to provide services to the community. In this issue of the UPDATE, I am proud to highlight the work of three award recipients—all fellow laborers in the gospel—who successfully merge their spiritual and professional lives to help others. As people of faith, we are challenged to do as Paul stated in the book of Philippians: “encourage one another through the unity of Christ, and create comfort out of love and fellowship with joy.”

Donna Buckles works in fellowship with congregations, seeking those who are like-minded in spirit, to welcome newly arrived refugees resettle into our communities. Robert Sanders' calm demeanor brings grace to those who come to him in crisis, either seeking a job or asking for utility or rental assistance. Jannah Scott, formerly of the governor's office for faith-based initiatives, was instrumental in helping LSS-SW connect with government, community leaders and area nonprofits to share ideas, best practices, and expertise on how to best serve Arizona communities.

I want to thank Donna, Robert, and Jannah for their outstanding engagement; they are the embodiment of our social ministry. I also wish to acknowledge all those who serve this agency as staff, volunteers and donors. There is much work to do to provide the desired resources to assist those in need. Through our mutual love and shared purpose, we are lifted by *His Spirit*, touching one life at a time.

La'Tresa Jester

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'La'Tresa Jester'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

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Reverend Donna Buckles

2008 Spirit in Social Ministry Award Recipient

The passage from Hebrews is a touchstone of Rev. Donna Buckles' personal social ministry, and affirms that "we are doing what God has called us to do—care for those in need." Donna is Church Sponsorship Developer and a Program Manager for Refugee Resettlement Services for Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest. Her supervisor, Craig Thoresen, Director of the Refugee & Immigration Services Division, describes Donna's commitment to her work as coming from her "very soul and permeating all she does."

During her four-year tenure with LSS-SW, Donna has been very effective in building relationships with congregations and responding to refugee needs. She feels that "her experiences serving in the areas of mission and Christian education in South Africa, Thailand, Czech Republic, Cuba and Mexico, taught her how to interact with fellow pastors and community leaders and to be more sensitive to other cultures."

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13:1-2

Donna believes that when a congregation sponsors a refugee family it expands their worldview and brings joy to their lives. She is very skilled at recruiting and training members of local church groups to co-sponsor new refugees. She collaborates with co-sponsors in setting up apartments, purchasing food, and greeting refugees at the airport. Donna also serves as the liaison between the church and the agency to ease refugees' transition into American culture.

Donna deeply admires and holds dear, the refugees she assists. She respects the bravery, stamina and perseverance it takes to begin a new life in a foreign land. "They want their hope restored and a better future for their children. It is a joy to interact with them and to learn about their culture, while they are learning about ours," she explains. "It is also gratifying to see so many friendships formed among the refugees and their American co-sponsors. We are all richer for these experiences."

In addition to her work with refugee resettlement, Donna is a project manager in the Refugee & Immigration Services Division as the Americorps VISTA project supervisor, and oversees the Women's Empowerment Program.



Robert Sanders

Winter 2008 Employee of the Quarter

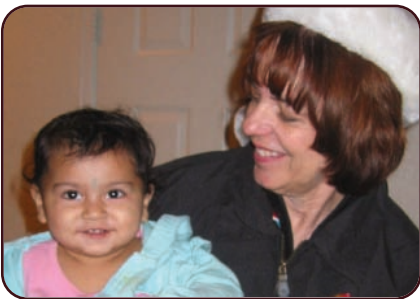
Robert Sanders is the Program Manager for Partners in Caring. He manages the rental and utility assistance programs, two food pantries, and JobNet for Neighbors, a program that helps individuals with employment.

Robert begins his day at sunrise reviewing and responding to phone messages and evaluating if LSS-SW can be of assistance or if referral to another agency is necessary. He collaborates with more than 30 devoted volunteers to ensure the smooth performance of the food pantries and the employment, utility and rental assistance programs. Robert also travels the valley networking in the community. Somehow, he manages to hold quarterly socials for the volunteers, fit in training to become a job coach for newly released prisoners in a re-entry program, recruit college students to volunteer, and speak to congregations around Maricopa County.

Robert's ability to work and communicate effectively with diverse populations and organize complex programs was honed during a 20-year career of service in the United States Air Force. Prior to joining LSS-SW in 2007, he held several positions in the Phoenix area related to assisting people in developing skills to find employment.

This past Thanksgiving and Christmas looked very bleak for many families who asked for food and rent assistance. Robert appealed to his strong community network, and with the help of local businesses and nonprofits created a special holiday season for numerous clients.

Boston Market catered and made home deliveries of complete Thanksgiving dinners for several grateful families. The United States Marines donated several hundred stuffed animals, and Robert, in turn, shared this donation with other nonprofits, giving more than 500 children a joyous Christmas. Starbucks Coffee donated more than \$1,000 of premium coffee to 100 recipients.



Robert's job satisfaction is in seeing one life at a time transformed. "I can only do one thing at a time. I try to give 110 percent to LSS-SW and the people we serve. I am able to witness appreciative tears of joy, cards and hugs from clients. I feel blessed for all that I am able to do on behalf of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest."

Lighting the Way...One Life at a Time



Jannah Scott

2008 Spirit in Social Ministry Award Recipient

Minister Jannah Scott, in her role as Policy Advisor on Faith and Community Initiatives for former Governor Janet Napolitano, was integral in creating bridges for Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest with local, state, and national entities. Jannah helped LSS-SW become a member of the governor's faith-based council, and encouraged the agency to gain Red Cross certification for its disaster preparedness training curriculum.

As Jannah reflected on her relationship with LSS-SW, she noted that "When I was thrust in the middle of disaster relief and recovery for victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, LSS-SW was available early on to provide leadership in the recovery effort. The agency was very responsive to the needs of the victims, and adjusted its on-the-ground demographic that reflected a cultural sensitivity to those being served. LSS-SW demonstrated consistency and perseverance that resulted in the restoration of the lives of many people over a very long period of time."

She believes the agency can provide invaluable leadership as it reaches out to form substantive partnerships between faith, government, nonprofit and philanthropic communities. "LSS-SW always seeks collaborative and innovative ways to ensure clients' needs are met. The staff is committed to the vision and mission of the agency, and their dedication is evidenced in the way those in need are served. I am grateful for the agency's perspective on inclusive partnerships, and look forward to many more years working with LSS-SW locally, nationally, and internationally."

"Jannah truly represents the important role government plays in bringing nonprofit providers together in order to make the greatest impact on the lives of those in crisis and need," said Charles Monroe, LSS-SW President and CEO. "We appreciate all Jannah has done in this state. We bestow on her all our blessings as she moves to Washington, D.C. to assume a similar role in the new administration within Homeland Security."



Visit our website at www.lss-sw.org for more information about our programs. To discuss new programs, bring current programs to your area, or volunteer, contact us at: comments-requests@lss-sw.org, or please call 520.748.2300, toll free 877.258.2059.





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