

Olmsted County Community Services

Ways to Give 2015 Annual Report



MISSION, VISION & VALUES

Mission: Partnering for the safety, well-being and stability of children, youth and families in Olmsted County.

Vision: Strong families with healthy children within a safe community.

Values: Safety of child or youth, Partnership with families, Collaboration with professionals, and Respect.

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Executive Summary

Ways to Give, (WTG) a Lutheran Social Service program in Rochester, MN, has completed 12 ½ years of contracting with Olmsted County Social Services (OCSS).

- **The purpose** of WTG is to assist social workers in meeting short-term, immediate needs of families who are experiencing difficulties and do not have the economic resources to purchase needed items to succeed.
- **The task** to meet client and staff expectations in a timely and cost-effective manner in a challenging economy.
- **The program** success is two pronged: 1) the support of community members sharing their resources of time, money and much needed items; and 2) referrals from social workers.

Mission:

- Meet needs of children, families and individual adults, allowing them to be successful, while working as a family unit on issues that brought them to the attention of Social Services.
- Educate and engage the community and churches (primarily ELCA churches through a new LSS Ambassador Program) about unmet needs in our community.
- Coordinate seasonal projects for benefit of clients and donors.

WTG is grateful for support that OCSS provides in office space, clerical support and storage space.

Service Highlights

	2015	2014	2013
Number of Volunteer hours donated	3,158	3,970	3,336
Number of Volunteers	909	675	596
Value of Volunteer hours (24.31/hour)	\$76,770	\$96,511	\$81,098
Value of product and money donated	\$120,770	\$120,799	\$121,008

***Downturn in number of volunteer hours and upward turn in number of volunteers follows trend of volunteers engaging in one-time/short-term volunteer activities as opposed to long-term commitments.

Ways to Give Strengths

- Has an established network that matches new ideas and opportunities with client needs.
- Volunteers have a long-term project relationship with the program, which constitutes the base for volunteer involvement.
- Lutheran Social Service (LSS) continues to have strong partnerships with local congregations.
- Has a physical presence in both Adult and Child and Family Service's divisions, located in 2100 and 2117 buildings, respectively.



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Core Programs Descriptions and Highlights

Kids in Need

Addresses basic needs of children (0-18) in their home/school environments.

	2015	2014	2013
Bundles of Love/baby items	9	10	36
Non-clothing items (includes beds)	39	50	45
Clothing items	17	45	20
Items to benefit whole family (furniture)	34	16	15
Totals	99	121	116

Items include bikes, furniture, appliances, clothing/outerwear, and baby items (Bundles of Love and quilts.)

Adults in Need

Similar to Kids in Need except population is 18+ years with requests originating in Adult Services.

	2015	2014	2013
Bundles of Love/baby items	2	4	0
Non-clothing items (bikes, gift cards, etc.)	58	33	42
Clothing Items	16	34	17
Furniture (beds, etc.)	21	21	18
Totals	97	92	77

Items include bikes, furniture, appliances, clothing/outerwear, and baby items (Bundles of Love and quilts.)

Adopt-A-Family

Holiday matching of donors and gifts to clients' in need.

Volunteers:	40
Hours:	300
Value of Volunteer Hours:	\$7,300
Number of Families:	321 (878 Individuals)
Money Donated:	\$91,770
Number of Donor Groups:	225
Estimate of donor hours for shopping, wrapping, etc.:	3,750

**Note: Family referral numbers were down by 100 for Salvation Army and also for Christmas Anonymous programs in 2015. Is the reason that more people are working?



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Additional Programs Descriptions and Highlights

Back to School

Churches, work groups, and individual donors provided school supplies, backpacks and tennis shoes for youth returning to school in August.

Volunteers: 20
Hours: 35
Product Value: \$4,550

- School supplies for 12 youth not participating in other community programs valued at \$550.
- 185 youth matched with new pairs of tennis shoes, value \$4,000.



Easter Baskets

A Beta Sigma Phi sorority donated Easter baskets to **120** children. Social workers identified the recipients and delivered the baskets. Baskets were beautifully decorated and contained a new stuffed toy and candy.

Volunteers: 25
Hours: 70
Product Value: \$2,400



Holiday Dinners

Bethany United Methodist congregation continued to donate holiday dinner ingredients, four times yearly. This year they provided meals for **18 families**. Additionally, **7 families** received grocery gift cards, amounts determined by size of family. There were no mid-summer picnic dinners this year.

Volunteers: 75
Hours: 100
Product Value: \$1,800



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Adopt-A-Family Focus

Adopt-A-Family (AAF) focuses on Christmas/holiday gifts matching community donors with client wish lists. The families who participate are referred by their social workers and are not served by other community holiday programs. Donors purchase gifts from a wish list, wrap/label/deliver gifts the distribution point, Zumbro Lutheran Church. (Donated space continues to be a gift of location, time, and support of church staff, especially during the holiday season.) Clients pick up their gifts or gifts are delivered to those lacking adequate transportation.



As anticipated, the donor and referral numbers were down again this year. However, all families were referred to AAF were matched with donors. Social workers did a great job of referring those with greatest need. In addition, many warm clothing items and holiday candies were collected for the residents of **the Crisis Receiving Unit**. Gifts were also purchased for residents of the **Francis House** and the youth at **Von Wald Shelter**. Walmart gift cards were provided to **39** residents at **Silver Creek Corner**.

Ambassador Program: Lutheran Social Service

It is the intent for each of the eight ELCA churches in Rochester to have an Ambassador, a congregational member who educates, advocates and involves their congregation in local and state-wide activities of LSS. While focus is local, Ambassador involvement may be state-wide such as legislative issues. In 2015, congregational Ambassadors continue to inform members of the needs for housing of homeless youth. A second focus is on “neighboring,” caring for individuals who may be housebound, frail, elderly, and remembering the individuals throughout the year. Ambassadors continue to be an asset to educating the public about the needs of individuals and families.

Ways to Give – Additional Activities

- Attendance at LSS Board (community member) luncheon and education.
- An evening of AAF gift wrapping with volunteers and Thrivent members as a result of Thrivent donation.
- Provided ongoing support/information to Ambassadors as needed.
- Provided leadership for a congregation in the making of 200 fleece blankets and Compassion Kits for homeless individuals to be distributed by Ways to Give and LINK/LSS.
- Collaborated with volunteer in “Fish Tales” project which provided opportunity for clients, young and old, to learn to fish and become owners of fishing equipment.

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Recap of All Activity – 2015

Volunteer Hours:	3,158
Number of Volunteers:	909
Value of Volunteer Hours:	\$76,770
Product Value:	\$120,770



Additional Donations – 2015

- Bedding/beds furniture from households downsizing or moving parents to assisted living households
- Fleet Farm donated a \$500 gift card to buy additional presents as well as large Christmas bags
- Church fundraiser gifts of \$1,200
- **Thrivent** grant for \$2,500
- Local business donations of children's books and clothing for \$1500
- Continued support of **Bundles of Love** for newborns as they leave the hospital
- Continued donation from **Evangel United Methodist Church** quilters of 40 small quilts

Challenges for 2016

- Increased visibility in community to provide needed furniture resources for clients, especially beds (resource used is gone).
- Provide leadership for Ambassadors as program direction is changing.
- Renew/refresh WTG programming focusing on “neighboring”/caring for isolated community members, with a goal of 8 matches, either continuing or new.
- Cultivate additional AAF resources to meet growing needs such as winter outerwear and clothing and tennis shoes for school.

Conclusion

Ways to Give is grateful for the long-term partnership with Olmsted County. The office space, technology, and administrative support are integral to the success of the program.

Jan Vetter, Volunteer Coordinator

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Adopt-A-Family Letter Quotes

“You were so kind. We felt your love. I feel blessed beyond words for your generosity. I’ll remember the kind, caring person that you are. My special needs son really needed the mittens you gave him. I can’t even tell you the squeals of joy our boys had on Christmas morning.”



“Please know that I will think of your generosity of spirit and person frequently throughout the year. Know what a great person you are.”

“The gifts and your caring really filled my heart with love and my life with joy and laughter.”



“Knowing that a bunch of students did this for us made my heart swell. Knowing there are kids out there with huge hearts was a better gift than the present. My college son adds his thanks.”

“I don’t have a family. So I just pretend you guys are my family. Thank you for all the gifts.”



“Our family appreciates everything. We will never know what life may throw our way, but with people like you in the world, it helps hard times become bearable. We will give back when the opportunity presents itself, maybe soon. Thanks for your support.”