

STATE BUDGET CUTS THREATEN JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Governor Jeb Bush's proposed cuts – nearly \$65 million – to the Juvenile Justice Department's budget severely threaten assistance programs throughout the state for Children in Need of Services (CINS) and Families in Need of Services (FINS). Lutheran Services Florida's Youth Shelters and Crisis Counseling Programs, located in the Pensacola, Fort Myers, Port Charlotte, and Fort Lauderdale areas, are examples of programs targeted by the proposed budget cuts. These assistance programs for children and families in need, operated by LSF and other agencies throughout Florida, provide prevention and outreach services, a safe haven for runaways, and counseling to help troubled youths and teen runaways get their lives back on track, stay in school, resolve family conflict, and become reunited with their parents.



Youths receive individual and group counseling at LSF Youth Shelters

In the past four years, juvenile crime decreased by 10% because of these vital prevention and intervention services. If these programs are eliminated, thousands of youths and their families will be adversely affected and juvenile crime likely will increase. Without the services provided by the youth shelters and counseling programs, such as those run by LSF, children most in need of help may end up in state care and custody – drastically increasing costs to taxpayers.

LSF and other agencies providing CINS/FINS services are members of the Florida Network that develops, coordinates, and delivers training to its member agencies regarding the

delivery of CINS/FINS services. The Network also collects and analyzes data and evaluates the services offered by its member agencies. A recent study conducted by TaxWatch, a taxpayer advocate and research institute, evaluated the Florida Network and found that:

- Prevention is one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce juvenile crime
- The member agencies of the Network serve 22,000 at-risk children and families each year
- Their average annual success rate for reuniting children with their families and keeping them out of detention centers is 90%
- It costs more than 4 times as much to send a child to a juvenile detention facility as it does to provide that same child and his or her family with comprehensive prevention services through Florida Network agencies
- If only 3 in 20 of the youths served by the Florida Network agencies were diverted from entering the detention system, the state saves more than \$45 million each year
- The Florida TaxWatch concluded that it is reasonable to assume that the CINS/FINS services not only pay for themselves each year, but they also save taxpayers \$10 to \$15 million in delinquency-related costs every year

You can make a difference by voicing your opinion to the representative in your district, as well as to your senators, and to House Speaker Johnnie Byrd and Representative Bruce Kyle, Chair of Appropriations. They can be reached as follows:

- House Speaker Johnnie Byrd: (850) 488-0807
speakerbyrd@myfloridahouse.com
- Rep. Bruce Kyle: (850) 488-1514
kyle.bruce@leg.state.fl.us

You can make a difference, so please help by getting involved. Our children need your support.

"THE MEANING OF SHELTER" (CONTINUED)

Just a few months after arriving in Florida, Jasna and Miroslav were hired by LSF as Employment Specialists and they soon began helping other refugees find jobs. In addition, Miroslav also worked extra jobs to save money and, within only two years, they bought their own home. After working at LSF for three years, Miroslav found employment in his chosen field as an engineer with a private land surveying company. Jasna continues her work at LSF and recently was promoted to the position of Case Manager in the LSF Case Management Program where she helps newly arrived refugees resolve the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture.

"That was such a joyous day; I'll never forget it,"

It's been ten long and difficult years since they were uprooted from their country, their home, their families, and life as they knew it, and Jasna and Miroslav have survived and accomplished so much through hard work, perseverance, and the help of many caring new friends. "I feel that the people at Lutheran Services are my second family," said Jasna.

They haven't forgotten their elderly parents still living in Bosnia – they send money to them every month, but in the

seven years since they first arrived in the United States Jasna and Miroslav have built an entirely new life. They bought their own house, raised and educated their children, built new careers, and made many new friends. Most importantly, they can look forward to a bright future for their children. Their daughter, Lana, 18, graduated from Hillsborough High School's International Baccalaureate Program with honors and received a full academic scholarship to the University of Florida where she is now a freshman. She speaks four languages – English, Spanish, Bosnian, and French – and she also plays the violin and the guitar. Their son, Dino, now 15 years old, is in high school and he plays the French horn in the band. He also plays the guitar and speaks three languages – English, Spanish, and Bosnian – and he is learning Italian. He is studying hard in school and hopes to earn a band scholarship for college. He wants to study computers and become an engineer like his father. During their summer vacations, both Lana and Dino work to save money for college and their extra personal expenses – they have learned a strong work ethic from their parents.

Just before Christmas last year, the entire family became U. S. citizens and Jasna and Miroslav voted for the first time in the recent elections. "I want so much to help my children, and I'm so happy because I know they are growing up in freedom in this land of opportunity where they will have a good future," said Jasna.



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LUTHERAN SERVICES FLORIDA

WINTER 2003



THE MEANING OF SHELTER

Shelter: a roof and four walls, at its most basic, but there are other kinds of shelter . . .

- Shelter from political oppression,
- Shelter from religious persecution,
- Shelter from the tyranny of hunger,
- Shelter from fear.

The tools to build these kinds of shelters are not hammers and nails, but freedom, education, and opportunity. People from countries around the world come to the United States because here they have the freedom to express their political beliefs freely and to practice the religion of their choice. Here, they have the opportunity to get an education and find a job so they can be free of the tyranny of hunger and earn a living so they can care for themselves and their families. Here, they can build the four walls and a roof, and here they finally can find shelter.

This is the story of one refugee family – their struggles, their travel to this country, and their triumphs once here. This is also the story of Lutheran Services Florida – our donors, professional staff, caring volunteers – and the role they played in helping this family and thousands of others succeed in their search for that most basic of human needs – shelter.

The Spendl Family

"Before the war, life was wonderful. We had great jobs, lots of family nearby, and so many friends, but everything changed forever when the war came," said Jasna Spendl, a former refugee who fled Bosnia in 1992 with her daughter Lana, 8, and her son Dino, 5. "The war affected everyone – men, women, children, and the elderly – and it destroyed families and life-long relationships with friends and neighbors. It didn't matter if you were educated or not, affluent or poor – you couldn't hide from the war," she added.

Both Jasna and her husband, Miroslav, had grown up in close-knit



**The Spendl family
(l. to r. Miroslav, Jasna, Dino and Lana)**

families, graduated from college, and established professional careers. After marrying and having children, they were busy building a future. Jasna, who worked as a lawyer practicing civil and urban law, was about to begin serving as a judge and Miroslav was an engineer with a land surveying company. Then the war started and everything changed.

(continued on page 3)

HEALING HOPE HELP

A HUMAN CARE AGENCY OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN FLORIDA

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Soaring is published quarterly
by LSF Central Services.

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Dear Friends,

As we reviewed this past year, one phrase came to mind, "We truly are blessed!" While there were many wonderful events that took place, the following are just a few of our most special blessings:

- Due to the severe curtailment of refugees allowed to enter the country following September 11th, the LSF Refugee Resettlement Program experienced nearly a 70% decline in the number of refugees resettled. Nevertheless, the Program staff in Miami, Lake Worth, Orlando, Tampa, and St. Petersburg rose to the challenge and worked diligently to help those refugees who did arrive find jobs and become self-sufficient. Today, the Program survives and its vital work continues.

- Two caring donors left bequests totaling \$227,000 to support the Guardianship Program. This was a tremendous blessing since we spend almost \$800,000 annually to serve indigent clients and, without LSF, these people would be alone with nowhere to turn for help.

- Our Youth Shelters in Pensacola, Crestview, Port Charlotte, and Ft. Myers once again achieved "Deemed Status – the highest level possible" in recognition of the outstanding services the Agency provides to help youths and their families in crisis resolve conflict and remain intact.

- The Good Samaritan Dinner honored almost 300 volunteers from Lutheran congregations in the Miami area for their outstanding services helping people in need in their communities.

- The Lutheran Centers in San Pedro (Miami) and Hospital del Alma

(Homestead) were opened as shared ministries between LSF and the local Lutheran congregations to extend human care to our neighbors in need of assistance.

- The Agency received a \$50,000 anonymous gift that was used to purchase the building in Crestview in which our HOPE House Youth Shelter is located. This gift was especially timely because the owner was about to sell the building and, without the gift, we would have had to relocate the Shelter causing many families in need of counseling to travel a significant distance to Pensacola to receive comparable services.



Margret Bowles,
LSF Chairperson
Jim Wells, LSF
President and CEO

- The LSF P.E.P.P.I. Head Start Child Development Center cared for and educated 177 at-risk, preschool children and prepared them to succeed in public school as they entered kindergarten.

Yes, we have been truly blessed, and we thank each of you who joined in our Mission "To bring God's healing, hope and help to people in need."

Sincerely,

Margret Bowles, LSF Chairperson

Jim Wells, LSF President and CEO

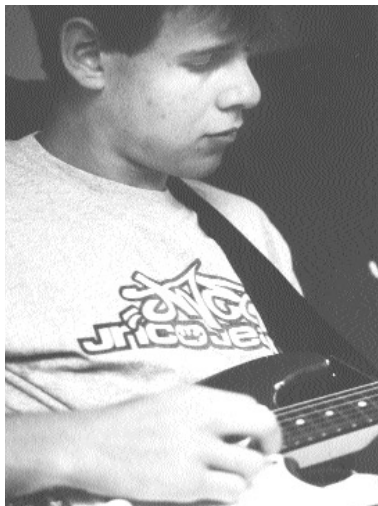
**IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE IN JESUS CHRIST,
LUTHERAN SERVICES FLORIDA, AS AN AGENT OF ITS
PARTICIPATING CHURCH BODIES,
SERVES TO BRING GOD'S HEALING, HOPE AND HELP
TO PEOPLE IN NEED.**

"THE MEANING OF SHELTER" (CONTINUED)

Desperate to seek safe refuge, Jasna and the children managed to escape war-torn Bosnia, but Miroslav was not allowed to leave the country and had to stay behind. As he watched his family leave, Miroslav promised he would follow as soon as he could, but he never thought it would be three long years before they would be reunited. The war changed their lives forever. They lost their home, their possessions, their jobs, and their once close-knit family was fragmented. They became refugees searching for safe haven in a foreign land where they had no family, no friends, and they didn't even speak the language.

"I feel that the people at Lutheran Services are my second family,"

The journey to safety and freedom was difficult for Jasna and the children. After leaving Bosnia, they went first to Slovenia and then to Croatia staying in each country for several months before being allowed to travel to Spain where they lived for the next three years.



Dino Spendl

Although they didn't speak Spanish when they arrived in Madrid, they soon became fluent. The children learned the new language while attending school and Jasna learned by necessity through daily living interactions and by working at jobs caring for young children and the elderly. As a refugee in Spain, she worked at any honest job she could find just to earn enough money to support her children. Their life was lonely without close family or good friends and from one day to the next Jasna didn't know if her husband and mother were even alive. Every day she anxiously awaited news hoping to learn they were all right and soon would join them. For nearly three years she and the children lived day-to-day as best they could with assistance from local sponsors in the medical community, but always they yearned for the day when their family would be together again.

Finally, Jasna received news that her husband and mother were alive and, with the aid of the international Red Cross, they finally were all reunited in Spain. "That was such a joyous day; I'll never forget it,"



Miroslav and Jasna Spendl

she said. Shortly thereafter, World Relief told the family they would sponsor them for permanent relocation to the United States and the next thing they knew they were on a plane headed to Florida. Representatives from World Relief welcomed the family at the airport in Tampa and took them to an apartment that had been furnished

"I want so much to help my children, and I'm so happy because I know they are growing up in freedom in this land of opportunity where they will have a good future,"



Lana Spendl

especially for them. They also helped the family resettle into their new community, enrolled the children in school, and referred Jasna and Miroslav to Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) for employment assistance.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Is Lutheran Services Florida a church?

- A. No, Lutheran Services Florida is a non-profit, human care agency dedicated to providing social services to children and families in need throughout Florida.

Q. Does Lutheran Services Florida only serve Lutherans?

- A. No, Lutheran Services Florida provides services to all people in need regardless of religious affiliation, age, or national origin.

Q. What kinds of services and programs does Lutheran Services Florida provide?

- A. The following is a selection of some of the many programs and services available at Lutheran Services Florida:

- *Head Start for at-risk, preschool aged children*
- *Child Care Food Program for children in licensed home daycare*
- *Guardianship Services for the incapacitated (mainly the frail elderly)*
- *Youth Shelters for troubled youths and teen runaways*
- *Counseling Programs for families in crisis*
- *Housing Programs for the homeless*
- *Refugee Resettlement Services*
- *Immigration Services*
- *Naturalization Services*
- *Employment Services*
- *Ryan White Title II Program for people living with HIV disease*
- *Disaster Response*
- *Church and Community Relations Services*

Q. How can I learn more about volunteering at Lutheran Services Florida?

- A. Caring volunteers are welcomed and they are an important part of most of the LSF programs. To learn more about how to volunteer your services, please call the LSF Regional Office located nearest to your community.

Q. How is Lutheran Services Florida funded?

- A. The Agency receives funding from many sources, including: local, state, and federal government, the Lutheran Church (both ELCA and LCMS), Lutheran congregations, individual donors, businesses, and private foundations.

Q. How do I start a social ministry partnership in my congregation?

- A. If you have an idea for a ministry, but you know your own congregation may not have all the resources you need – time, talent, and treasure – you can turn to LSF for help. Please consult with Lutheran Services Florida's Church and Community Relations Program (1-800-651-1853). The professional staff will help you think through your ideas and will offer suggestions and resources to help you build a ministry you know is needed in your community? The Church and Community Relations staff works with individuals, committees, and congregations to help them develop new partnerships with the programs at Lutheran Services Florida.

Q. Are my contributions to Lutheran Services Florida tax deductible?

- A. Yes, Lutheran Services Florida is designated as a 501C (3) non-profit organization by the State of Florida. All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. A copy of the official registration (##SC-13359) and financial information may be obtained from the division of consumer services by calling toll-free 1-800-HELPFLA (1-800-435-7352) within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state. Lutheran Services Florida retains 100% of all contributions received.

Q. How can I find out more about which LSF Programs are available in my local community?

- A. Lutheran Services Florida is a statewide agency with five (5) Regional offices located in the major geographical areas of the State. Programs and services vary in each Region depending upon the needs of the communities. To determine which programs and services are available in your local community, please call the Regional Office that is located nearest to you at the numbers listed below or go to the LSF website at www.lsfnet.org.

LSF-Northwest Region	(850) 453-2772
LSF-Southwest Region	(239) 275-1126
LSF-Tampa Bay Region	(813) 877-9303
LSF-Southeast Region	(954) 486-4222
LSF-Miami-Dade Region	(786) 293-6110

LSF Church & Community Relations **(305) 256-7728**

LSF Disaster Response **(800) 651-1853**