



## LSF NAMES NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF PROGRAM SERVICES

Dr. Peter Ledecy was recently promoted to the newly created position of Vice President, Program Services. He brings to this position more than 20 years of experience in social services and healthcare. Serving as Director of the LSF-Southwest Region for the past two years, Dr. Ledecy played a leadership role in the Naples, Ft. Myers, and Sarasota areas ensuring that those most in need—at-risk children, troubled youths, families in crisis, and the incapacitated—received shelter, care, and necessary social services. Under his direction, the LSF-Southwest Region was chosen by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) as the Case Management Organization to serve Central and Southern Lee County following the State's recent privatization of child welfare services.

Dr. Ledecy will be responsible for over 60 programs. The Directors of the five LSF Regional Offices and the LSF Director of Program Design and Development will report to him.

## LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE HONORS JUDITH BUNKER



Ms. Judith Bunker, LSF Director of Disaster Response and Church and Community Relations, was chosen by LDR to receive the "Bringing Help and Hope Award" at the recent LDR Biennial Conference—"Spirit in the Desert"—held in Scottsdale, Arizona. Ms. Bunker is only the fourth person to be honored with this important award. "I was surprised and humbled, as well as delighted by this great honor. So many people have worked hard with me over the years and I really want to share this award with them.," said Ms. Bunker.

Although Ms. Bunker retires from LSF, she will remain active as a volunteer serving on the LSF Advocacy Steering Committee and continues to serve as a member of the ELCA Council. Judith Bunker has directed the Lutheran Services Florida Disaster Response team for nearly 10 years following the horrific destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Andrew that devastated Miami and the surrounding areas. During her tenure, tens of thousands of survivors of Florida's hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and wildfires received immediate aid and on-going assistance to rebuild their homes and their lives. Additionally, as Director of the LSF Church and Community Relations Program, Ms. Bunker also served as the liaison between various LSF programs and the Lutheran congregations throughout Florida.



## LSF APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR OF CHURCH AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Ms. Danielle Kearney recently was promoted to the position of Director of Church and Community Relations, succeeding Ms. Judith Bunker who retires from LSF this month. Ms. Kearney will be responsible for developing relationships with the Lutheran congregations and communities throughout Florida to provide support to develop and implement social ministry programs and help congregations form partnerships with LSF. She also will be responsible for Lutheran Disaster Response in Florida, including training and preparation, as well as relief efforts.

Ms. Kearney has been employed with LSF since the agency was founded nearly 23 years ago, and she has played a pivotal role in developing the LSF Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Program. Under her leadership, more than 50,000 refugees and immigrants have become self-sufficient and succeeded in building new lives in freedom.

## MR. WELLS GOES TO WASHINGTON

James A. Wells, LSF President and CEO, was in Washington, D.C. recently to attend the White House National Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives with President Bush. While in our nation's Capitol, Mr. Wells maintained a busy schedule meeting with U.S. Senator Bill Nelson and Jim Towey, White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative Director, as well as visiting the offices of other legislators including U.S. Senator Bob Graham and the Hon. Michael Bilirakis. Additionally, Mr. Wells met with Jill Schumann, Lutheran Services in America (LSA) President; Bob Miles, incoming LSA Board Chair; and Ruth Henrichs, exiting LSA Board Chair, as well as with others from LSA and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS).



(l to r) Lynette Engelhardt Stott, Director of Governmental Relations, LIRS; Lisa Carr, Director of Public Policy, LSA; Sen. Bill Nelson, (D-FL); James A. Wells, LSF President and CEO; and Barbara Below, Director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care's Social Ministry Organizations.

# HEALING, HOPE AND HELP

## "CARING FOR HEALTH: OUR SHARED ENDEAVOR"

By Sue Nardy, RN Parish Nurse

The Parish Nurses of the Florida/Bahamas Synod have joined forces with Lutheran Services Florida to promote health and foster wellness, health education, and care through the Lutheran congregations. One of the first results of this collaboration is the Parish Nurse Program Information brochure, printed courtesy of Lutheran Services Florida.

Parish Nurses act as facilitators, referral agents to community resources and medical services, health counselors, advocates, educators, volunteer trainers, lay ministers, encouragers,



and "friends and prayer partners." Their responsibilities include making home, hospital, and nursing home visits. Parish nurses assist and are responsible to clergy and their congregations. Their work may be in a paid or a volunteer position, and they often serve in a collaborative arrangement with a sponsoring hospital or health care system. It is the goal of all Parish Nurses to be "healing agents" working to carry out God's will. The spiritual dimension is central to the Parish Nursing practice that encompasses people's physical, psychological and social concerns.

The International Parish Nurse Resource Center in St. Louis, Missouri reports that approximately 10,000 Parish Nurses serve congregations in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and other parts of the world.



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# SOARING

LUTHERAN SERVICES FLORIDA

LSF-TAMPA BAY REGION

VOL 2 ISSUE 1



## LUTHERAN SERVICES FLORIDA FOCUSES ON ADVOCACY

By Lisa Carr, MSW, Director of Public Policy  
Lutheran Services in America

Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) has formed a public policy committee and is partnering with Lutheran Services in America (LSA), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), and other organizations

advocating for people in need. As Director of Public Policy for Lutheran Services in America, I met with the LSF Board of Directors at their January meeting and gave a presentation about the importance of public policy. I later gave an update on what is happening on the national level at the first meeting of the LSF Advocacy Steering Committee.



Lisa M. Carr, MSW,  
Director of Public Policy  
Lutheran Services in  
America

James A. Wells, CEO, Lutheran Services Florida (LSF), was in Washington, D.C. recently to attend a conference with President Bush and Jim Towey, White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative Director. Mr. Wells also met with Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) and the staffs of Senator Bob Graham (D-FL) and Rep. Michael Billirakis (R-FL). These meetings provided an opportunity to tell elected officials about Lutheran Services Florida, the programs and services the agency provides, and the people in need it serves throughout Florida.

LSF is focusing on public policy advocacy because the Agency believes it is important to strive constantly to improve the quality of services provided to its clients—be it day care to at-risk children from low-income families, resettlement for refugees who have fled persecution, protection for the frail elderly, or shelter and counseling for troubled youths. The LSF staff believes that service goes hand-in-hand with justice and by increasing awareness and advocating for change in unjust public policy, the quality of the services they deliver to clients is improved. The goal is to help people in need rise above poverty and become self-sufficient.

People often hesitate to get involved in advocacy because they equate it with activities such as demonstrations at the Capitol and public protests or they have a vision of well-paid lobbyists in expensive suits. While demonstrations and public protests are legitimate advocacy strategies, these activities are just a small part of the story. The majority of advocates are just regular people who believe passionately in social justice.

Advocacy is just a matter of seeing a need and finding a way to address it. To advocate is literally "to plead the cause of another" which most of us do all the time on behalf of our neighbors, our families, and our friends. Policy advocacy is the next logical step taking that pleading into the political arena on behalf of people we don't know personally. Advocacy is a practical way to translate such basic values as respect for human dignity and concern for children, the elderly, the helpless and those who have no voice of their own into policies and laws.

Advocacy is a core part of our American democracy that covers a broad range of activities. You can be a policy advocate if you are willing to:

- Speak up;
- Help others receive services or benefits to which they are entitled;
- Challenge government systems that don't work;
- Vote for, laws, budgets, and policies that do work; and
- Be a voice for others, especially those less fortunate.

I invite you to join in our advocacy efforts! Become informed and get involved by volunteering for LSF, your congregation, or your community and begin advocating by making calls or writing letters to legislators about issues of concern before your state legislature and the U.S. Congress. You can make a difference through advocacy.

**Many thanks** to Nancy Amidei and her publication "So You Want to Make a Difference: Advocacy is Key", which I used as a reference in writing this article. For more about OMB Watch series called Tools for Advocates, go to [www.ombwatch.org](http://www.ombwatch.org).

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### HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD

In the past few months we have been commemorating the Supreme Court Decision Brown vs. The Board of Education. This is one of

the most significant social justice actions our nation has taken since the Emancipation Proclamation. By courageously deciding that schools must not segregate on the basis of race, the Supreme Court changed our country's entire school system. This act of social justice made a monumental difference in our world.

"Social Justice" is another way of naming what we do when we make policy changes in our social contract. These changes ensure that more people have access to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately, the terms "social justice" and "public policy" evoke mixed reactions. For some people, they mean change and often that is harmful or upsetting; for others the terms may mean that at long last a wrong has been righted and an injustice redressed. Whatever position is taken, social justice cannot be ignored, since it seeks to address the root causes of injustice and poverty.

Why should we be concerned about social justice? As Christians we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. This surely means equal treatment and care. What we want for ourselves, we also strive to provide for others. When we read the parable of the Good Samaritan, we are struck not only by the need to care for the wounded traveler on the road, but we also know that we are required to do something to make the road safer for all travelers. When we read about

the prodigal son, we know it is the story of a father's forgiveness, but we also are reminded that sons and daughters do stray and make bad choices and we are called upon to act to make the world they go into safer from drugs and exploitation of any kind. This is the call of social justice to which every Christian must respond.

Although Social Justice often is separated from social ministry, they are intricately intertwined. When we establish food pantries to feed the hungry, we also should make every effort to change policies that create hunger. Offering loving and holistic childcare is an important ministry, but it can be even more meaningful when wedded to actions that create better wages and training for those who care for our children. Lovingly made quilts for runaway kids are a blessing indeed, but when we advocate for public policy changes that provide teens with alternative ways to resolve family conflict, stay in school and build productive lives, then we are truly changing the world.

Each of us has a special calling – a feeling for a particular ministry to the poor, the marginalized, the stranger. As we continue our ministries of care, let us look at that we feel called upon to do for others less fortunate or more needy while at the same time seeking ways to change or make public policy that creates a better world for ourselves, our families, our neighbors and our world.

**Judith Bunker**  
*Director, Church and Community Relations*  
*Director, LSF Disaster Response*

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**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.**

# NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE LSF-TAMPA BAY REGION



Dear Friends,

Recently, LSF celebrated World Refugee Day by hosting a news conference at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Tampa. It was a time to celebrate and honor refugees and all of the gifts they bring to our country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees designated

World Refugee Day and Mayor Iorio issued a special Proclamation celebrating "World Refugee Day in the City of Tampa."

Since September 11th, celebrating World Refugee Day has been particularly difficult. Although President Bush signed an authorization for 70,000 refugees to enter the country, only 30% actually arrived. Since January of 2004, we have seen a small increase in refugee arrivals and we look forward to bringing the promise of a better life to all of the refugees we resettle.

LSF is fortunate to have many donors and volunteers and they are vital to the Refugee Resettlement Program. I invite you to join LSF in its Mission to "Bring God's healing, hope and help to people in need."

Please join us in welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and bringing hope to the desperate.

Sincerely,

**Rubis Castro**

**Regional Director, LSF-Tampa Bay**

## WORLD REFUGEE DAY - 2004

By Joy Margolis, LSF Director of Communications and Public Policy

Although the room was filled with people, you could have heard a pin drop when Carlos Chocolate, a former refugee from Angola told the audience how he had to ". . . start again from zero" after arriving in the United States. He talked about his life before the political upheaval in Angola where he had worked as a professional accountant managing a large department in a major bank. Then he talked about fleeing his country, coming to the

U.S., and taking any job he could find—washing dishes, working at a gas station, and a fast food restaurant—just to survive. "I was like somebody lost," he said. Like so many other refugees, Carlos didn't speak English when he arrived. Because of the language barrier, it was almost impossible for him to find anything other than an entry-level, manual labor job, but he persevered and continued to work hard because he had a wife and a young daughter to raise. Eventually, Carlos was hired by Lutheran Services Florida where he now is a Manager in the LSF Employment Program.

*This is the third year that Lutheran Services Florida has hosted an ecumenical news conference in honor of World Refugee Day, June 20th, a special day designated by the United Nations to call attention to the plight of refugees worldwide. As in previous years, all Refugee Resettlement organizations in the Tampa Bay area participated in the event, including Catholic Charities, World Relief, and Jewish Services. Tampa's Mayor Pam Iorio issued a special Proclamation recognizing the event and naming the day "World Refugee Day in Tampa Bay" again this year. Other organizations that provide refugee related services also sent representatives to speak at the event, including the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Hillsborough County School System. We want to extend special thanks to Pastor Jennifer Schaefer for allowing us to hold this event at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Tampa again this year.*



Ho Le, 16, is a former refugee from Vietnam who came to the U.S. as a child with his family. He is in high school and volunteers in the LSF Refugee Resettlement Program in his free time. His goal is to become a neurosurgeon.

Carlos' story is similar to that told by Nemecio Ruiz, an attorney and business owner forced to leave Colombia due to threats and extortion demands from the guerrillas fighting the government. Like Carlos, after arriving in the U.S.

Nemecio also took menial jobs working in fast food restaurants to support his family. Also like Carlos, Nemecio never gave up and today he works for Catholic Charities resettling other refugees while

also taking evening classes and working towards certification to practice law. The other refugees who spoke—Jaime Quintero, from Cuba; Assres Gesses, from Ethiopia; and Ho Le, from Vietnam—all told of incredible journeys and struggles to reach freedom, and they shared a common message perhaps best summarized by Carlos who said, ". . . never give up your dream."

Yes, when these refugees spoke, you literally could hear a pin drop. They had captured the attention of everyone in the audience not only because of their powerful stories, but also because many of the people in the audience were former refugees themselves. While some had been in the U.S. for years, others, like the Dennis family from Liberia, had arrived only weeks ago, but they all shared feelings of loss, fear, and uncertainty about the future.

# WORLD REFUGEE DAY - 2004



A newly arrived refugee family from Liberia—Abraham and Deborah Dennis and their children, Joseph, 5, and Delphine, 2, are adjusting to life in the United States with lots of help from the parishioners at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Tampa, their volunteer sponsors.

These courageous people had left behind everything that was familiar and important—family, friends, homes, jobs, and possessions—to start over alone in a strange country where they didn't even speak the language. They all faced great difficulties and yet they are the lucky ones because today there are still 12 million refugees—80% women and children—suffering worldwide and waiting for their chance at freedom. Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the number of refugees allowed to enter the U.S. decreased by more than 60%. Although it's expected that

nearly 50,000 refugees will arrive in the U.S. this year, millions more will be left waiting in squalid camps throughout the world.

The event also focused on other related issues. Mr. Robert Mosakowski, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Chief of the Tampa Division, spoke about the serious problem of Human Trafficking and the commitment of the U.S. Department of Justice to protect the victims and jail the criminals. He told the audience to be on the lookout

for signs of victims of this horrific crime and to call the **Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline—1-888-3737-888**. Tampa is one of four cities nationwide chosen by the U.S. Department of Justice as a pilot program for its *Rescue and Restore* Campaign to eradicate Human Trafficking.

Deputy Jose Sanchez of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office spoke about the classes for refugees he teaches



Carlos Chocolate, left, is a former refugee from Angola and also is a Manager in the LSF Employment Program. Jaime Quintero, right, is a former refugee from Cuba who now owns his own electrical engineering business. At the World Refugee Day news conference, both men spoke about the struggles they faced starting over in a new country.

with his partner, Deputy Vinny Millan, at Lutheran Services Florida. These classes help newly arrived refugees learn about the laws and customs in their community and also help them adapt to their new environment despite language difficulties. Classes are conducted in both Spanish and English.

Following the speakers, there was a question and answer session and then a buffet lunch was served

compliments of Wright's Gourmet, a local restaurant. The press also had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with refugees resulting in major stories on the evening news programs and in the newspaper the following morning.

The event was a great success because we had significantly increased the public's awareness of the serious plight of refugees both here in Tampa Bay, as well as worldwide.



Deputy Jose Sanchez, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, speaks about his work helping newly arrived refugees learn about the customs and laws in the greater Tampa Bay area. Deputy Sanchez teaches special acculturation classes at LSF to help refugees become accustomed to life in their new community. Seated (l to r) is Robert Mosakowski, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Chief of the Tampa Division, who spoke about the serious problem of Human Trafficking and James A. Wells, LSF President and CEO.