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Fall 2024





Faith, Family and Partnership



Lutheran Ministries of Mercy

The Power of Partnership

So many years ago, our LMM agencies were founded by the goodness of others. Partnerships with churches, and with individual donors who had a greater vision of service, were the cornerstones of our early beginnings. Over the last century, as these community partnerships have continued to flourish, we are reminded that this support resonates deeply with the teachings of compassion and service found in Scripture.

Today, these collaborations- not only with churches, but with businesses and other service organizations, with volunteers and donors-amplify our efforts to provide supportive services as we work not only to offer immediate assistance but also foster a sense of connection and empathy, transforming the ways our communities view our most vulnerable citizens.

Our agencies are committed to the value of partnerships as we continue to seek ways to best address the complex needs of those we serve. Serving individuals with developmental disabilities, helping thousands in need of food and nutrition, providing comfort to those experiencing trauma-these programs have been made better through the many contributions and collaborative work of others. The act of working side by side strengthens our agencies and serves to prioritize the well-being of others in effective ways.



Terri Rodriguez President and CEO Lutheran Ministries of Mercy

Just as the Gospel teaches us that true faith is expressed through service, non-profit collaborations and partnerships showcase how, together, we can foster hope and create change. We are truly thankful for the many community partners that join with our agencies in service to others.

In Gratitude

Jew Kodriguez
Terri Rodriguez

Terri Rodriguez
President and CEO



Gifting the "leftovers"

Planned giving is a gift that requires more than a check or credit card. As the recipient of donations, our ministries receive gifts from donors during their lifetimes and after the donor has passed away. We are grateful for the generosity of those who are able to remember our clients and residents as they make donation decisions. In the coming months, you might be wondering how to include your family, your church and your friends with gifts at Thanksgiving and Christmas. We want you to know that after you have done that, we would be honored to be the recipient of what we like to call the "leftovers."

Leftovers are wonderful gifts. After those you love are cared for, and you find that there is just a little more to give, remembering Filling Homes, Luther Home of Mercy or Lutheran Social Services with a small donation lets us know that you love us too!

Please contact Jeanette at 419-972-4373 or email her at jhrovatich@luthmin.org if you have other questions related to types of giving or would like more information making a year-end donation.

Every gift is special, because every gift makes a difference.

Jeanette Hrovatich Director of Planned Giving



Lutheran Ministries of Mercy, founded in 2013 in partnership with Filling Homes, Luther Home of Mercy, and Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio, continues to find new ways to meet the demands of our clients and residents. Administrative services, information technology, and planned giving services are combined, shared and designed. Together, our organizations impacted 31,874 lives during 2023 and we look forward to working together in the years ahead.

A Message from Carol Slight Vice President, Filling Homes

The crisp air of fall is settling in and the seasons colors are beginning to unfold. We've had a remarkable year celebrating our 65 years of service, and we are reminded that at our core, we are more than just an organization. We are a community built on faith, family, and partnership—three pillars that guide everything we do in enriching the lives of those we serve.

Faith is the foundation of our mission. It fuels our commitment to ensure that those we serve are not only cared for but cherished. It provides us with the resilience to face challenges and the hope to keep moving forward, knowing that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, a part of something Carrie Filling Vajen brought to life 65 years ago.

One of the most remarkable aspects of our work is witnessing the deep bond that forms between family members of those we serve and the dedicated staff that care for them. It is more than a professional connection – it is rooted in trust, compassion, and shared commitment to the well-being and happiness of those we care for.

Whether you're a donor, a volunteer, or a friend of our organization, your support enables us to continue our mission. Your partnership matters, as does the partnership between Filling Homes, Luther Home of Mercy and Lutheran Social Services of NW Ohio, who 11 years ago united under Lutheran Ministries of Mercy (LMM). Bringing these ministries together was not just about efficiency; it was about building on shared values of faith, service and compassion.

Through faith, family, and partnership - we are able to change lives! Together, we are making a difference one life. one family, one community at a time. Thank you for being a part of the difference.

Blessings,

Carol Slight Vice President





Leadership Team



Carol Slight Vice President



Amy Krassow Director of ICF Services



Jenny Borgelt Director of Community Services



Jean Cohrs Director of Mission Advancement

Forever Faithful Love

March 20, 1964 in Dayton, OH, Glenn and Pat Alexander welcomed home their newborn daughter, Geri. Just 9 short months prior, Glenn found himself in the same situation as many other men, receiving a military draft letter the very same day Pat found out the news a baby was coming, earning him a deferment. Focusing on their new family, Glenn worked two jobs to provide for his family while Pat committed herself to motherhood at home with Geri.

As new parents, the Alexanders eagerly watched for Geri's first milestones – first words, first steps – but as time passed, they began to notice concerning behavior and developmental delays. The weight of uncertainty set in and it was an emotional time, filled with both unconditional love and concern for the future. As a family, they continued on this adventure together living as families do, striving to teach Geri all they could. As time passed, through nearly a decade, they found themselves in and out of hospitals with different health concerns, but always back home where they did their best to care for Geri and her increasing needs. Glenn and Pat's love and concern for Geri kept them seeking out different doctors, medications, answers and relief for Geri. As she grew, Pat and Glenn began to realize the extent of the daily, physical care that was needed. Though they enjoyed their days together in one home, their realization of the need to place her outside the home enabled them to face the situation realistically and positively.

Parallel to the time the Alexanders were navigating their way through the twists and turns of becoming parents and learning of Geri's developmental disabilities, Filling Home of Mercy was growing. It was May 1966 when construction of the first addition began. The South Wing was added due to the excellent care given to residents and the constant requests to admit others. Filling Memorial Home of Mercy in Napoleon, Ohio, the dream of Mrs. Vajen, had come true and was growing, being sought out by those not just locally, but throughout the state. By 1967, the home had grown to serve 22 children and 14 adults.





It was July of 1971 when Geri, described as pleasant a little girl with reddish hair, hazel eyes and full of spirit, moved into the Filling Memorial Home of Mercy. The Alexanders reflect on the decision "moving Geri in to the Filling Home was an experience we can barely put into words. We'd visited the home before moving Geri in, we knew the distance, but we also knew it was the right place for Geri and we committed to making it her home. From the moment we arrived, the staff welcomed us with open arms and compassion that began to ease our fears. They didn't just treat us like another family – they made it clear that they wanted to truly understand who our daughter was, beyond her disability".





"As we look back on these past four decades, our hearts are filled with deep appreciation for everyone at Filling Homes. Geri has made beautiful friendships and has been shown so much love from all of the staff over the years". Geri has had the extraordinary gift of having nurse Sue Funchion care for her over the past 46 years. "There is a strong bond between us, one built on trust. The Alexanders are special people. I look up to them. They give so much to Filling Home. They support staff. Again, their love is never ending. I am THANKFUL AND BLESSED to have the opportunity to care for Geri over the last 46 years. Geri is my best friend!!!! Geri, Pat and Glenn are part of my family. Just think of three hearts on a chain that are all interlocked together. The unity continues forever". – Sue Funchion.

Filling Home staff reflect on their journey with Geri; "One of the sweetest memories is years ago Geri would say "joy, joy" and her love of cheese. I also am touched at how much Glenn and Pat love their daughter. She is their shining pride." – Barbara Resendez. Bev Sharp recalls Geri helping with new staff orientation "she was my help for personal care training. With her help and fun-loving personality, the new staff felt comfortable and believed they could enjoy the job as much as I did".

We are forever grateful for the love and care Filling Homes has provided, and we know that they will continue to be a place of hope and happiness for many more families in the years to come. Oh the memories we have from the past 54 years, and we are still making more! " – Glenn and Pat Alexander.

Stories like this remind us why we do what we do – and inspire us to continue building a future where every individual is embraced with dignity, respect and love. The Alexanders story is a testament to the lasting impact of being rooted in faith, compassionate care, the power of relationships built over time and the commitment Filling Homes has made to making a true difference.



Glenn, Geri and Pat Alexander enjoying a Christmas visit. Geri loves to dress up for visits with her parents.!



Geri and her Mom, Pat, enjoy Wendy's at a park along the Maumee River during a visit - so much Geri raises her arms in excitment!



Sue Funcheon and Geri have a special friendship that spans over 46 years!

Retirement Spotlight



Join us in wishing our friend and colleague, Mike Short, countless blessings in retirement!

When Mike started his 24-year career with us there were only a handful of people that had computers. We were just in the beginning stages of getting our network going. Once on-board, Mike fully expanded our services not only here but as we grew into other locations, so did Mike's area of responsibility. 13 years into his career, Lutheran Ministries of Mercy (LMM) was formed, consolidating our services and sharing resources with our fellow ministries, Luther Home of Mercy and Lutheran Social Services of NW Ohio. With his extraordinary work ethic, he was elevated to the position of LMM Director of IT over all three agencies and has been the driving force behind the innovation and technological advancements that have shaped our success. We are grateful for Mike's passion about the Filling Home mission, ensuring that our technology has always supported our ability to provide the best of service to those in our care.

Not only has he been the driving force behind our tech success, but also the first in line when a box of donuts appeared. If there was a sweet treat within a 100-foot radius, you could count on Mike to be there. Mike's love for IT and sweets will be fondly remembered and we can't thank him enough for his many years of dedication.

6

E FILLING HOME FOUNDA

We sincerely thank our friends who generously support our ministry.

In Memory of

Dan Shininger

The Andersons, Maumee, OH Rob & Renee Timbrook, Perrysburg, OH

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Mary Warren, Rocky River, OH

Bill Behnfeldt

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Wauseon Women's Guild Of Filling Memorial Home, Wauseon, OH

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Julie Graf, Washington, DC

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James Chen, Amherst, NH Weng Lih Wang & Joy C. Wang, Temecula, CA

Bill Rehbeck

Larry Baker, West Jefferson, OH

Rebecca Lynn Eddington's 44th Birthday

Audrev Sutton, Clyde, OH

Mary Jo Moden & Vicki Miller's 70th Birthdays

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In-kind Gifts

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Grants

Zions Lutheran Church, Defiance, OH The Martin and Helen Fahncke Memorial Fund, Powell, OH Tom and Ellen Noneman Foundation, Harbor Springs, MI

Zion Lutheran Church, Waterville, OH

Tonya Wagner, Napoleon, OH

Jesus Loves Me

At the core of everything we do is a simple yet powerful truth: **Jesus loves me.** This message forms the foundation of our teachings and guides our care for those we serve. It reminds us that each person is deeply loved and valued, not for what they can do, but simply for who they are.

Pastor Denise Brown explains "I am like the Sower, I throw the seeds (which is the gospel) and He will see where it takes root, that is God's job – it all circles around Jesus Loves Me. God created us to be in relationships, because he does not want us to be lonely, and look at the wonderful relationships we have at Filling Homes, we are surrounded by people who love us and care for us, provided to us because. Jesus Loves Us".



In every interaction, every act of service, and every relationship we build, we strive to reflect unconditional love. It's this belief that drives our mission and has sustained us for 65 years, as we continue to serve with faith, compassion, and commitment to showing love in action.

One beautiful way love in action is demonstrated within our community is through the heartfelt gifts you see on these pages. Each contribution reflects a deep commitment to our mission and a lasting legacy of love.

Gifts listed were received from July 1, 2024 through September 28, 2024.

If you have failed to list your name or have listed your gift incorrectly, please accept our apologies and contact Jean Cohrs at 419-599-6901 or jcohrs@fillinghome.org.



Festival of Tables 2024

The 2024 Festival of Tables, presented by the Women's Guild of Filling Homes, was held on Septebler 28th and was a wonderful success again this year, raising nearly \$6,000.

Seventeen creatively decorated tables filled the gynmasium with themes like "Hello Fall", "Lovely Lanterns", "The Hen House" and many more. Micky Baker, Chair of the event offered welcoming remarks and explained that the proceeds from this event will benefit the Filling Homes Community Center kitchen remodeling

project. This is a much needed renovation to allow the space to be more handicap accessable, making the kitchen much more beneficial to the clients participating in the Adult Day Services program. Guests enjoyed lunch and dessert, a music and commedy program by Walter Hallett IV and Simon Franz, 65th Anniversary remarks by Jean Cohrs, a game and door prizes. Mr. Andrew Kelleher spoke on behalf of the event corporate sponsor, Hylant. For this annual event, the Guild provides the venue, meal and entertainment and the generous hostesses take it from there. They design the table in a theme of their choosing and invite seven guests who each donate \$15 for a seat at the table.

"This years Festival of Tables went very well." states Micky Baker. "The local talent for the entertaiment was well received. We raised more funds than we anticiapted. We are all looking forward to next year's event on Saturday, September 27, 2025!"



Janet Meyer happily accepted the People's Choice Award for her wining table, "Root, Root, Root for the FIlling Homes Team".



Simon Franz and Walter Hallett IV entertaining.



"Lovely Lanterns" designed and hosted by Jenny Borgelt was enjoyed by Filling Home staff.



Table Hostess Carol Slight and her guests spent the event Cheering for Filling Homes 65th Anniversary!



Hostess Denise Etzler with the table "Happy 65th Birthday, along with her guests and party hats.

Join or Renew Your Membersh

Guild Membership Drive

The annual membership drive of the Filling Homes Guild is now underway. The Guild has been a great support of Filling Homes since its inception in 1965. Membership is open to any person interested in

supporting the ministry of Filling Homes. Dues are \$1.00 minimum (or more - free will donation). This membership drive is for active Guild members as well as for those that wish to be monetary supporters only.

If you would like more information about the Guild please call 419-267-3453. Membership dues can be sent to Cathy Aschemeier, 01610 Walnut Grove Rd., Defiance, OH 43512. The membership drive will run through November 15, 2024.

Art at Trinity Place

An Adult Day Service program located in Williams County, Trinity Place of Filling Homes offers an art program in collaboration with Soaring Arts Studio. We're continuing to grow and expand and offer this amazing art experience", Jenny Borgelt commented. The art program is an extention of Soaring Arts Studio located in Napoleon, which has blossomed into an amazing program not only for clients but for the community as a whole. It's exciting to bring this opportunity to Williams County.

An Open House was held in September to celebrate the opening of the new art program that included tours of the facility and art space, an amazing gallery with art for sale, live music and interactive art, food trucks and much more! Trinity Place and Soaring Arts are now working on a collaborative Monster Exhibit through October.













DSAGT Buddy Walk

Team "Filling Family" hit the pavement in October as over 1,200 people came together to celebrate their loved ones with Down syndrome who make our lives so extra special. The Down Syndrome Association of Greater Toledo (DSAGT) Buddy Walk raised over \$117,000 to help fund DSAGT programs and services!

Our team of 6 cleints, 5 staff and a family member spent the day enjoying vendors, food trucks, educational displays, inflatables and the honorary walk around Owens Community College campus.









INSIDE THE









































11

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Please clip and return this form, if you or someone you know has changed addresses. Thank You!

Name Adress City State Zip Phone email

Please make address/name correction I am receiving two copies

I would like to receive the newsletter via email

Return form and address label from this newsletter to: **Filling Homes** N160 State Route 108 Napoleon, OH 43545

maggieburt@fillinghome.org

Email concerns to:



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2 11 AM - 3 PM **N160 ST. RT. 108, NAPOLEON**

Presented by: The Women's Guild of Filling Homes

Free-Will Offering Lunch Hot Chicken, Brats & Homemade Pie

Entertainment

1st - Whole Hog w/processing! 2nd - Recliner from Ken's Furniture 3rd - \$300

Bake Sale, Live & Silent Auctions

Free Admission! Proceeds to Filling Homes Transportation Fund

> Join us in the Hanson Aquatic Therapy Center Gymnasium

Questions? Please contact: 419.599.6901 or jcohrs@fillinghome.org





Filling Home of Mercy a Ministry of **Lutheran Ministries of Mercy**

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A DAY FOR GIVING BACK

12/3/24





RAY & MARIE COX WILL MATCH DONATIONS UP TO \$7,000

Please make checks payable to Filling Homes GivingTuesday or use our online giving portal.

Funds raised for Giving Tuesday, 2024 will be used to provide quality care and support to every single individual we serve.