



LUTHERAN SERVICES OF GEORGIA
REPORT TO THE 2018 SOUTHEASTERN SYNOD ASSEMBLY
September 2018

Organization Update

LSG has been working with the public relations firm Hope-Beckham, Inc. to assess our current brand identity. At the August 16, 2018 meeting, their team presented their findings and suggestions to LSG's board. At the recommendation of these consultants and a steering committee comprised of key employees, board members and other stakeholders, the board voted to update LSG's brand and to change its name. A rollout plan is currently being established, and a name announcement is tentatively slated for January 2019.

LSG has been meeting with the leadership at Lutheran Services in Tennessee to discuss the possibility of joining forces with them to serve populations in need in Tennessee.

LSG recently welcomed Jennifer Williams in the newly created Regional Director–Southwest Georgia position, overseeing our Albany and Columbus offices. Jennifer has a Master's Degree in Public Administration and brings 26 years of leadership and program development experience to LSG. We are fortunate to have Jennifer leading growth and improvement to services in that region of the state.

LSG also welcomed several new board members in May, including Gary Dowell, State Bank and Trust, Evan Longstreth, Thrivent Financial, and Obaid Rasoul, Lutheran Services of Georgia (retired). Three more new board members will be confirmed during this Synod Assembly meeting, Eli Flournoy, Sugarbush Valley Impact Investments, Cindy M. Holler, CHoller RealEstate Services, and Ed. L Ringer, LogistiCare.

LSG hosted its first annual staff retreat at Delta Airlines Museum and Headquarters on September 12, 2018. Staff from all over the state came together for a day of fun, fellowship and team building. Activities included tours of the Delta museum and flight attendant training areas and DISC personality assessments and training. Delta donated the event space and flight attendant tours to LSG, and the entire experience was fantastic.

Program Update

- This summer LSG began disaster recovery work in the Coastal Georgia region for individuals affected by Hurricane Irma. LSG is working with around 50 households in Chatham County to provide disaster case management and is providing construction management for more than 70 homes in Coastal Georgia. LSG was awarded a \$698,000 grant from Lutheran Disaster Response to provide construction management and case management for those affected by the September 2017 storm. Red Cross invited LSG to submit a request for funding for disaster recovery work, which if approved would result in more individuals served.
- Lutheran Services of Georgia recently opened the doors to its new Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) in Clarkston. The FOC provides financial coaching, along with other tailored supportive services, to help people find employment, raise their incomes, improve their credit scores and save for the future. The FOC is starting out working with refugee and immigration populations and will quickly expand to serve low income residents

of DeKalb County. LSG received a renewable grant from Local Initiatives Support Corporate (LISC) to fund this initiative.

- In July, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) asked LSG to provide case management for families who were separated at the border. We are currently serving 10 families who are residing with friends or family in the metro Atlanta area.
- LSG recently hired a behavioral analyst to work statewide across all programs. The behavioral analyst is working hand in hand with our nurses to support our foster parents and host home providers and ensure the safety and well-being of those with behavioral issues.
- Later this month, LSG will expand its nursing staff, adding a second part-time nurse to serve across programs. Having nurses on staff and contracting nursing services when needed allows LSG to provide those it serves with greater access to healthcare, lessening dependence on psychotropic medications and lessening the frequency of emergency room visits. Both the nursing services and the behavioral analyst are being funded by grants from Kaiser Permanente.
- By the end of the third quarter, Healthy Families Georgia programming in Chatham and Liberty Counties has exceeded its projected number of participants served through both First Steps and Home Visiting curriculums; they will continue to positively impact families with preventative services for the remainder of quarter four. Healthy Families Georgia staff in the Coastal Region is gearing up for the Healthy Families Georgia Accreditation process in the fall of this year.
- The Family First Prevention Services Act was signed into law in February. The law aims to reduce the number of children entering foster care by allowing federal reimbursement for mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parenting skill training. It also seeks to improve the well-being of children already in foster by incentivizing states to reduce placement of children in congregate care. LSG continues to meet monthly with Together Georgia and Family Focused Treatment Association to work with other child placement agencies to help inform the state legislators about concerns, needs, and opportunities that will come as a result of this law, with a focus on providing the best services possible to children and families.
- There are four new host homes in the final process of approval in LSG's disability services program. We anticipate approval by the end of the month, allowing us to serve 10 new individuals with developmental disabilities in this program.
- Refugee admissions into the United States continues to be slower than anticipated and well below the refugee admission ceiling set by the administration for the FY2018. The administration is set to announce the presidential determination on refugee admissions for FY2019 this month.

Community Engagement Update

- In August and September, our first two Circle of Welcome teams wrapped up their yearlong commitment to walk alongside newly arrived refugee families. This summer, two new Circle of Welcome teams formed in the metro Atlanta area, and they have both been matched with their families and started working to assist them as they adapt to their new life in Georgia.
- LSG hosted two faith leaders breakfast – one in May and one in August, bringing together pastors and faith leaders from around metro Atlanta from Lutheran churches as well as other denominations for a morning of fellowship and learning. The breakfasts both featured engaging speakers covering relevant and timely topics for today's faith leaders. Attendees also learned more about LSG's work and ways their congregations can get more involved with our programs.

Development Update

- LSG has been awarded the following grants since May: a “Child Wellbeing” grant from United Way of Greater Atlanta and the Promoting Safe & Stable Families grant, along with grants from Emergency Food & Shelter Program of FEMA, Constellation Energy, the EZ Agape Foundation, and the Community Emergency Needs Fund/United Way of Coastal Georgia.
- In August, new board member Eli Flournoy hosted an event “Refugee Challenges Here and Abroad” to raise awareness of refugee related issues and LSG’s refugee resettlement and services program. Attendees also learned ways they could become more engaged with LSG and its refugee services programs.
- In September and October, LSG will host two fundraising events: Sip Savor Support wine tasting event at Watershed Restaurant in Atlanta and the Savannah Classic Golf tournament at Crosswinds Golf Club in Savannah.
- LSG hosted several gatherings of advisors and prospective advisors as continued efforts to engage corporate leaders and pursue opportunities to network and recruit volunteers, sponsorships and advice. In May and August, we hosted advisory meetings to provide a deeper dive (“LSG 102”), for corporate leaders who’d already received basic LSG information and leadership breakfasts (“LSG 101”) to introduce additional contacts to the mission and work of LSG.

Communications Update

- LSG was featured in a *Savannah Morning News* story on refugees, and a news article on the Film Festival benefit for Refugee Services.
- LSG was mentioned in a news story in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* featuring a couple who has adopted children with special needs through LSG. Alix Janke, client empowerment manager in our Refugee and Immigration Services program was interviewed for the news program Focus Atlanta on CW Atlanta.

Operations and Administration Update

- Our Albany and Rome offices relocated at the beginning of September. The new locations are strategically placed in the community for growth and improved service. The new Rome office is located in the SERVE ROME center, the former administrative offices of Rome First United Methodist Church. SERVE ROME is a cooperative venture between Rome First and other non-profit agencies that are sharing space and resources to provide individual community services and accomplish ministry goals. Our Albany offices also relocated to a larger space to accommodate current and future growth. The new space is 1120 W. Broad Avenue, Suite A-1 in Albany.
- Finance has migrated to SAGE Intacct from SAGE MIP (Current since 2001) accounting system for enhanced management reporting, fund/grant accounting and reporting, and budget management. We have completed the first stage of the Intacct implementation.