

An Expansion for Hope

New facility at Lutherwood Residential Treatment Center will help more abused and neglected children

INDIANAPOLIS – The smell of fried chicken wafting through the new chapel at Lutherwood Residential Treatment Center might stop visitors in their tracks. But for the staff at the Indianapolis facility, it's the welcomed sign of completion. It means eight more hurting children are having fun downstairs while learning vital cooking skills in a new kitchen.

For 125 years, Lutherwood has been a physical and emotional refuge for children and teens needing to overcome their damaged childhoods. This June, a new residential building will open, creating room to help even more children heal and successfully rejoin their families or stay with a foster family.

“We are thrilled for what this new facility means to our city and the state of Indiana,” said Michael Johnson, executive director of Lutheran Child and Family Services. “Lutherwood Residential Treatment Center is a place of hope for Hoosier children to recover after the devastation of abuse, neglect or abandonment and our new building is an expansion of the hope offered here.”

The new building will help kids like Maggie.

Saving Maggie

Only in middle school but bearing scars unknown to most adults, Maggie was referred to Lutherwood after suffering sexual abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Maggie could not return to her family, but she wasn't ready to stay with a foster family yet. Her hurts ran deep, wiping out her self-esteem, and she struggled with trust, abandonment and boundary issues.

Living at Lutherwood provided just what Maggie needed: structured days, caring experts, intensive therapy and individualized learning. It offered a safe environment to heal and thrive.

While focusing on Maggie's complex emotional needs, the staff made sure her educational progress didn't suffer as well. She attended Lutherwood Education Academy, an on-site satellite program of the Indianapolis Public School system, and enrolled in “Read 180,” a computer-based literacy program in which 85 percent of its participants' improve their reading skills by two grade levels.

Maggie also received additional attention from her mentor Michelle who visited her at school and cheered during her basketball games.

“Along the way, I taught Maggie how to carry herself as a young lady and control her anger,” said Michelle. “But she taught me to have a positive outlook on life. Despite all the hurdles she had to jump, she always had a smile on her face.”

After 15 months, Maggie had come a long way in her recovery and was finally ready to live with a foster family. She was prepared to step back into a public school system, properly interact with family and friends and succeed in life with newly-found confidence.

New building, new beginnings

Opening on June 25, the new residential building will increase Lutherwood’s capacity by 60 percent, allowing 85 children to live on campus. The building includes 6 residential treatment centers, private rooms for therapy sessions or family visitations, a kitchen for cooking classes, two classrooms, staff offices and an ethereal, light-filled chapel.

Every one of the new rooms has been desperately needed. For years, the cafeteria served as an eating space, a family visitation area with no privacy, chapel space and occasionally a classroom.

Now, children know exactly what is expected when they enter a room. The chapel offers rest and meditation. The classroom requires learning. The private rooms allow families to enjoy their short times together. And the kitchen is a place to cook fried chicken.

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Lutheran Child & Family Services (LCFS) is a multi-service, nonprofit 501(c) (3) member agency of United Way of Central Indiana and provides services that strengthen vulnerable youth and families. LCFS’s services include: Lutherwood Residential Treatment Facility (providing specialized treatment for youth in crisis); Lutherwood Education Academy (a satellite partnership with IPS); Trinity Group Home (where young men transition to independent living); Mentoring, Parenting Instruction, Family Preservation Initiatives; Adoption & Foster Care Services; and the Sharing Place Food and Clothing Pantry. LCFS serves approximately 30,000 people annually.



*Michael Johnson, Executive Director
Lutheran Child & Family Services*