

# Creativity helps kids heal

## Lutherwood showcases students' work

Submitted by Anne Majewski

Whether it's through poetry or art, many students at Lutherwood Residential Treatment Center and Educational Academy are using their creativity to transform their lives. By offering a creative outlet to express their frustrations and fears, students at the Eastside Indianapolis campus have become more productive with fewer discipline problems.

"Children who have experienced crisis or trauma in their lives are searching for ways to express themselves, and creative writing and the fine arts provide a positive, acceptable means to accomplish this goal," said Sven Schumacher, chief executive officer of The Foundation for Lutheran Child and Family Services, which provides funding support for programs in the agency.

Schumacher was so impressed with the students' creativity that he worked with program staff to compile a collection of poems and artwork. The full-color collection will be given to guests who attend the foundation's second annual women's luncheon on Nov. 1, featuring Meg Irsay as the keynote speaker. Proceeds from the luncheon will benefit Lutheran Child and Family Services' residential and community outreach programs.

Nurturing creativity is one of the many ways Lutherwood has helped meet the needs of children who have experienced traumatic events, or have been removed from public school because of



Photo by CLIFF RITCHEY, provided by Lutherwood

Language arts teacher Brenda Zweig discusses a reading assignment with students at Lutherwood. She recognizes how creativity has made a difference in the lives of her students.

the severity of their behavior problems, over its 125-year history.

Nestled on a 19-acre wooded campus, the residential treatment center can house up to 77 children, all of whom take part in the daily education programs and other services led by a team of clinical, health and education coordinators, along with certified teachers from Indianapolis Public Schools. The agency also offers individualized academic and counseling services to students who continue to live at home by having them attend daily classes at Lutherwood.

"Our goal is to reunify students with their families and communities, facilitating spiritual growth along their journey," said Michael Johnson, executive director of Lutheran Child and Family Services. "We strive to provide a structured environment for children to successfully live, attend school and interact with others in the community."

### If you go . . .

>> **What:** The Foundation for Lutheran Child and Family Services Second Annual Women's Luncheon.

>> **When:** 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov. 1

>> **Where:** Riverwalk Banquet Center and Lodge, 6729 Westfield Blvd., Indianapolis.

>> **Keynote speaker:** Local author Meg Irsay will share from her poetry collection "Messages to Me: Words Collected on the Road to Silence."

>> **Cost:** Tickets are \$100 per person.

>> **For more information:** Contact Amanda Baker at (317) 359-5467, ext. 361.

The student also won a \$150 savings bond, which he gave to his mom to start his college fund, an option he never would have considered before attending classes at Lutherwood.

Since winning the contest, Zweig said, "He's been so bubbly and warm towards others. He realized that poetry continues to be a great way to express feelings that are sometimes too difficult to say out loud."

Writing poetry has allowed the student to be cognizant of the good in the world, she added.

Lutherwood hopes to have more stories like this in the future. The facility is also planning for growth by opening a new residence hall in spring 2008.

"Lutherwood will continue to support children in all facets of their lives," Johnson said. "And as the growing continues, our hope is to see each child become a functioning member of our communities."

★ Anne Majewski is a staff member at Lutheran Child and Family Services.