



Who is my neighbor?

Stories of social ministry in action

In answer to the question “And who is my neighbor?” in Luke 10:25, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, an outcast traveler who stops along the road to give assistance and sustenance to a victim of violence. Every day, the staff of Lutheran Community Services Northwest reach out, reflecting the compassionate face of God, in service to our neighbors and our communities. Here is the story of one of the thousands of lives touched each year through our ministry.

Meet our neighbor, Angel*

A journey from despair to stability and hope In her own words

I left home when I was 16. My mother worked very hard, raising four children alone. I was a latch-key kid for as long as I can remember and I had to grow up very fast. After leaving home, I found the world full of excitement... for a while. Then I started to realize how it really was out there on the streets, where I had chosen to be.

Scared and alone, and already addicted to Meth, I knew I had to learn to survive. I lived with strangers, drug dealers, in cars and even in parks. There was no way I could afford to get an apartment – finding affordable housing was impossible. At the age of 18 I got married, thinking the man I married was my knight in shining armor. I was wrong. Both of us addicted to drugs, we went our separate ways. Now I was alone with a new-born daughter, facing a whole new set of challenges. Making only \$5.00 an hour and with no help from my child’s father, how were we going to survive living place to place?

After many years of learning to survive on the streets, doing whatever it took to stay alive, I wanted so badly to learn something

different about life, but felt hopeless. But I had no idea what to do or how to do it. My now five-year-old daughter kept asking me when we were going home. HOME?! We had no home. That was it. Looking into her beautiful eyes, it was then that I asked God for help. That is when I knew what I needed to do.

I put myself into detox and then into a residential treatment program for women with children. From there I was accepted into Lutheran Community Services’ HopeSpring Program that helps single mothers with housing and daycare so they can work to become self-sufficient. Not only did HopeSpring give me the support I needed to financially get ahead, I was also surrounded by a supportive group of other low income women with children who had been in similar situations.

We are now going on two years in the same apartment, and I have a job doing something I love - gaining experience for the future and earning scholarships for college. Today, thanks to HopeSpring we have stability, structure and a nest we call home!

***Client names have been changed to protect their confidentiality.**

Angel* is a former client of LCS’ HopeSpring program in Washington County, Oregon. The program provides transitional housing services for homeless women and children who are victims of domestic violence or drug/alcohol abuse. Thanks to HopeSpring Director Judy Werner for providing this story.

“Who is my neighbor?” presents the many faces of social outreach ministry, as carried out by our agency in communities across the Northwest.

For more information about the programs of Lutheran Community Services Northwest, and to learn how you can help support our ministry, contact your nearest LCS office or visit our web site at www.lcsnw.org

