



Care and Compassion for All of God's People

by Tim Hetzner, President, Lutheran Church Charities, with Cheri Fish

Maybe you have a dog, had a dog, like or don't like dogs. All the same, there's one thing President Tim Hetzner wants you to know about the Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry: "It's not about the dogs."

The LCC K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry "has been one of the most effective outreach tools I have ever worked with," says Tim Hetzner. Specially trained Golden Retrievers are placed in our LCMS churches, schools, universities, and ministries. God has definitely been growing this exciting outreach ministry that brings the mercy and compassion of Christ to others!

Quite simply, the LCC K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry is about people and what we are called to do as Christians. Although you have seen them on Good Morning America, CNN, NBC, and other media outlets, unless you look and listen closely, you might be missing the message, or more specifically, the *messenger*.

The truth is that dogs are just an instrument to bring His mercy, compassion, and the proclamation of Jesus Christ to individuals everywhere in every circumstance. The dog handlers are the ones who let the Holy Spirit lead and guide their conversations with the person on the other end of the leash, the one who is petting the dog. The handler's mission is clear: show up and listen and be attentive to a petition to pray. For people who have experienced a crisis or disaster in their life, one of the most important healing things is for them to talk about it. In that talking, the door opens for Christ to be shared with those who suffer.

Rev. Mark Hein, pastor at St. Paul Lutheran in Lockport, Illinois, is also Fire Chaplain for the Lockport Fire Prevention District. Fire Chaplain Hein is not alone in his role, as he is accompanied by his K-9 Comfort Dog, Samuel. Together they have responded to dozens of calls for help to the scenes of accidents and tragedies. In September of 2013, Rev. Hein and Samuel, along with two other K-9 teams, joined the Oak Lawn, Illinois, Fire Department after responding to the murder of an infant.





Almost a year ago, Immanuel Lutheran in Joplin, Missouri, responded to a public school in Warrenton, Missouri, after the death of a beloved teacher. Recently, Pastor Gregory Mech accompanied teams from Immanuel, Joplin, and St. Paul, Concordia, Missouri, when the K-9's teams were invited back to Warrior Elementary to be with students and responders as they grieved over the deaths of victims as result of a domestic murder.

In the upcoming, new edition of *Why School Communication Matters* by Porterfield/Carnes, Newtown Schools Superintendent Janet Robinson offers an observation. "It was the dogs that brought the children through," recalled Ms. Robinson of the days following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. "People came with their dogs from all over the country. They would go into the classroom and just sit. The kids loved it."

There is no denying the dogs are a powerful bridge in helping people of all ages during times of loss or crisis. With the support of the LWML mission grant of \$30,000, this powerful ministry will continue to assure that the message of His mercy, compassion, and never-ending love will never be lost. **Q**

Current Mission Grants Highlighted This Issue

Mission Church at St. Paul Community Lutheran Church, Pontiac Michigan — \$65,559

St. Paul Community Lutheran Church has been blessed with exciting beginnings and rapid growth through the work of Pastor Dietrick Gladden and his wife, Rebecca, who are sole staff members of this mission. Urgent resources are needed for the development of youth ministry, outreach, and the staffing critical for reaching and discipling the community around St. Paul. This LWML grant will be used to provide hope to the people in the city of Pontiac, Michigan, and in the immediate community of the St. Paul church, where twenty percent live below the poverty level with only this Lutheran presence to minister to them.

Building Homes and Hope in Haiti — \$100,000

In partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (ELCH) and the Lutheran Church of Haiti (LCH), the LCMS is building Lutheran Villages of 300 homes in five Haitian locations in the clear name of Jesus Christ. A grant from the LWML provides financial assistance to build these villages, which will include a chapel, a school, an orphanage, a guesthouse for volunteer builders, and a medical clinic.

I CAN — Serving At-Risk Children with Learning Needs — \$99,000

Through the work of Lutheran Special Education Ministries, Lutheran churches and schools are mission outposts in urban and rural areas for children who are at-risk or have special learning needs. This after-school and summer program, structured to address academic deficits and enhance brain development, also provides an outreach opportunity for sharing God's saving grace, through Jesus Christ, among community families in need of spiritual healing. This LWML grant provides opportunities to bring the love of Christ to at-risk children and their families.

Mission GRANTS

Mission Goal: \$1,830,000.00 | 2013–2015

1. Training K-9 Comfort Dogs for LCMS Chaplains.....\$30,000
- 2. Lutheran Children's Books for Southeast Asia\$72,000
3. Training Indigenous Pastors and Deaconesses – Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana\$100,000
- 4. Rebuilding Nord Est Haiti Lutheran School.....\$100,000
5. Jesus Our Savior Lutheran Schools, Winnebago Tribe, Nebraska\$58,553
- 6. I CAN — Serving At-Risk Children With Learning Needs.....\$99,000
- 7. Bible Story Books in Sign Language and Written Text\$100,000
8. Native American Outreach Training Center – Fairbanks, Alaska\$95,000
9. Strengthening and Expanding Campus Ministry\$100,000
- 10. Worship for Shut-Ins.....\$80,000
11. Preparing Leaders for a Diverse World – Concordia College, Selma, Alabama\$50,000
- 12. Voice of Care Ministry to the Developmentally Challenged.....\$50,600
- 13. Christ-Centered Tutoring Through Rebecca's Garden of Hope (RGOH).....\$100,000
- 14. Student Scholarships for MOST Ministries Mission Trips\$20,000
15. Building Homes and Hope in Haiti.....\$100,000
- 16. Support for Lutheran Public Radio\$40,000
17. Christian Education Support for Children – India\$85,000
- 18. Mission Outreach at St. Paul Community Lutheran Church – Pontiac, Michigan\$65,559

KEY: ● – grant paid in full
 ○ – grant partially paid

Check the latest updates for mites received and grants funded at www.lwml.org.