



# Sharing Jesus With His Children

*by Deaconess Kris Blackwell, Voice of Care Executive Director, with Cheri Fish*

"Often God touches us deeply through our work with those that society views as 'the least of these.'"

Voice of Care's ministry to people with disabilities, their caregivers, and the congregations reaching out to them has seen God's timing at work through mite offerings from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. Voice of Care's recent media overhaul, most evident in the new website at [www.voiceofcare.org](http://www.voiceofcare.org), was funded by an LWML Mission Grant. "We were very excited about presenting our fresh, new media image to the world," explained Deaconess Kris Blackwell, Voice of Care's executive director.

This unique ministry serves over 600 people with developmental disabilities who reside and work in secular facilities designed for this population. Each week, volunteers travel to 18 such facilities and share the Bible through lessons, singing, and prayer. In turn, the residents witness of the joy Christ has given them to all the staff.

During a year of financial struggles, the Voice of Care board of directors restructured the organization and continued the ministry as a volunteer-only organization, laying off its ministerial and support staff. "Faith in God's timing as well as the presence of the LWML

grant gave us the freedom to make hard decisions," reflected Blackwell. "In retrospect, the situation helped drive Voice of Care closer to its true mission of equipping and training the Church and God's people to love and serve our neighbors with disabilities."

God has been faithful to Voice of Care, which has been operating since the beginning of 2014 with volunteer leadership and one-day-a-week office administration. "The future looks bright," explained Blackwell, whose own position is now primarily a volunteer post. "We are steadily building up financial reserves and soon will be able to retain a paid staff. In the meantime, both ministry professionals and lay people are coming forward to be trained, something we will continue to encourage. We are working with several new churches to set up disability outreach and inclusion programs. Voice of Care continues to fundraise throughout the rebuilding process," she assured, "and will continue to minister to people with disabilities through its volunteers at facilities, in camp settings, and congregations. We still remain committed to equipping the Church to nurture

people with disabilities and their caregivers in their walk with Christ.”

Volunteer Pat McKinley, who helps in a weekly Bible study for adults with disabilities, recently took an iPhone to the study and took pictures of participants. Pat reported, “They loved seeing pictures of themselves coloring or singing with us. It was an easy way to bring a smile, and it didn’t cost a thing!” Voice of Care has been able to use images of those who sign photo releases in LWML-funded media outreach. This helps further the ministry, allowing more churches and residential facilities to offer Bible studies such as the one with which Pat is involved.

Valeria is a third grader at St. John Lutheran School in Elgin, Illinois, who originally accompanied her pastor grandfather on Voice of Care chaplaincy visits. Her grandpa is now serving in Guadalajara, Mexico, but Valeria continues as part of the St. John congregation team. Led by Voice of Care volunteer Chris Bishop, these faithful parishioners regularly visit the Little Angels residential facility for children with disabilities. The LWML Mission Grant has allowed Voice of Care to introduce more congregations to the Christian growth opportunities they can offer people with disabilities.

Amanda Van De Kamp, a student in the Deaconess program at Concordia University Chicago, is performing her service, learning fieldwork as a Voice of Care volunteer. After helping at a recent event, Amanda shared that it was an uplifting time for both staff and participants, “Those we were there to serve truly ended up serving us!”

That reaction is not unusual, explained Blackwell. “Often God touches us deeply through our work with those that society views as ‘the least of these.’” She added that a facility visit by a Voice of Care volunteer to lead devotions or share Bible stories might be the only exposure to Jesus and the Gospel for some people with disabilities.

Voice of Care’s new LWML-funded work with a media consultant, a redesigned website, print materials and tabletop displays, have all been instrumental in introducing the ministry to its newest supporters and volunteers. “These resources have allowed Voice of Care to expand its reach in fresh ways. You can now find Voice of Care on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Social media offers a great opportunity to demonstrate daily and in real time how God is using this ministry to love and serve His children.” *Q*

## Current Mission Grants Highlighted in This Issue

### Preparing Leaders for a Diverse World – Concordia College, Selma, Alabama — \$50,000

The need for African American pastors, teachers, and deaconesses is critical in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Currently, over 60 percent of churches serving majority African American communities are without a black pastor. A grant of \$50,000 helps Concordia College in Selma, Alabama to provide scholarships to deepen the education programs for men and women who enter full time ministry and meet the needs of providing a diverse workforce for tomorrow.

### Training Indigenous Pastors and Deaconesses – Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana — \$100,000

Scholarships to foreign students from partner churches will provide much-needed sustainable mission efforts in their countries so that many are equipped to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. An LWML grant will enable indigenous people to be trained to a level where they can teach in the seminaries and schools.

### Christ-Centered Tutoring Through Rebecca’s Garden of Hope — \$100,000

Many urban congregations are seeking an outreach model that can successfully be used to bring families to Christ. Through Rebecca’s Garden of Hope, tutoring and mentoring ministry can be utilized to advance the Kingdom of God. Through this LWML grant, thousands of children can be reached for Jesus each year by developing safe relationships with them and providing monetary supplemental support to improve the whole person, empowering these youth to succeed.



## 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](http://www.lwml.org).