



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 and volunteers of Lutheran Community Services Northwest reach out, reflecting the compassionate face of God, in service to our neighbors and our communities.

Meet our neighbor, Cassidy* “Backpack of Hope”

Tears and anger filled Cassidy’s face as she packed up the few cherished possessions she owned into her worn-out backpack. During the first four years of her life, Cassidy had already lived in three different homes, with relatives who didn’t have the skill or desire to take care for her. And now, she was bound for a new home, with an unknown family.

Cassidy was born to a drug-addicted mother, who often took her on drug runs, or at other times, left her alone. Cassidy had seen her mother beaten up several times by various boyfriends. She was so familiar with the words “police” and “jail,” she would often act them out during playtime.

Around the same time that Child Welfare was contacting our office about Cassidy, a young couple from Seattle were contacting us about becoming foster parents. Bob and Jenny had a child of their own, but with big hearts and a roomy house, they wanted to make a difference in the life of another child. They attended our orientation class, made a commitment to our foster/adopt program, and began attending trainings and support groups. Then they welcomed Cassidy into their home.

After a week in Bob and Jenny’s home, Cassidy’s behavior became out-of-control. She would demand food, screaming “Eat! Eat!” even if she

wasn’t hungry. Cassidy would alternate between being very clingy and then try to reject her foster mom by poking or pinching her. The social workers at LCS helped Bob and Jenny to understand - and correctly respond to - Cassidy and her behavior, which allowed them to be consistent with her.

Foster children sometimes try to sabotage their relationship with their new family. They’ve learned not to trust, and they expect the new home to fail them. Underneath it all, what Cassidy really desired was for someone to love her, give her secure boundaries, and listen to her hurt.

It’s been over a year since Cassidy came to live with Bob and Jenny, and she’s doing extremely well. She’s learned to ask for a hug, instead of food, when she’s or sad, and she’s now sleeping through the night. The legal issues related to her case have cleared, and Cassidy was adopted by Bob and Jenny in February.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us of our responsibility as believers when he encourages us to do good works, to seek justice, and to defend the orphan. Will you step up to defend the Cassidy’s in your community?

*Client names are changed to protect their confidentiality

Vj g’Rermanency Planning foster care/adoption program places children with foster families, who agree to work closely with birth parents for reunification with their children, but will commit to adopting the child when reunification is not possible.

May is National Foster Care Month, an opportunity to highlight the work of LCS’ foster care programs and to show our appreciation for the dedication of the foster parents, staff and volunteers who work together to provide stable, loving homes to children served by our agency.

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

