

SHARING

newsletter

Malaysia Women's Center

By Sarah Schafer

The Women's Care and Counseling Centre in Port Klang, Malaysia, is venturing into uncharted territory. With a start-up grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia (ELCM) opened a one-of-a-kind center for women in need.

"Intense, social pressures in Malaysia often leave unmarried, pregnant women fearful of family and cultural repercussions," said Maggie Karner, director of LCMS Life and Health Ministries with WR-HC. "Often these women experience pressure to simply abandon the baby and leave it to die (baby dumping)."

Between January and August 2010, there were 149 cases of baby dumping in the Asian country. The ELCM chose the center's location because of the high incidence of baby dumping and prostitution, and the lack of supportive resources.

Because the center is the first of its kind, leaders have faced challenges as it works to establish itself in the community.

"They have had a problem securing volunteers because they haven't done anything like this before," said Ed Szeto, special projects coordinator for LCMS Life Ministries with WR-HC. "The community didn't fully understand what it is."

Volunteers also do this work of mercy in a challenging climate: in a country rife with racial segregation and religious differences.

The new center will offer medical care, housing and material goods, adoption services, support groups, counseling and training to women without regard to ethnicity or religion.

"These are hurdles they will have to overcome," said Tamara Anderson, executive director of the Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC) in Salt Lake City, which "adopted" the start-up center in Malaysia.

Because WR-HC strives to walk beside its partners building their capacity by offering expertise and resources, Anderson and Szeto traveled to Malaysia in December to share their knowledge in life ministries.

Szeto taught about the Lutheran theological motivation for works of mercy. Anderson covered what a center does: how to communicate and counsel clients, how to educate on abstinence, fetal development and abortion, and providing material needs.

"They were very receptive," said Anderson, who also commented on the strength of the management committee.

"They were really soaking it up. They asked tons of questions," said Szeto. "I could have spent an extra two or three days there."

Anderson did spend a few extra days in Malaysia to work one-on-one with Elizabeth, the sole employee who serves part time as supervisor.

"Now that we've been there, it will be much easier for them. The management committee



Ed Szeto of LCMS World Relief and Human Care visits with a young Malaysian mother and neighborhood children at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Port Klang, Malaysia, where The Women's Care and Counseling Centre was opened to assist women in need. The church reaches out to its low-income neighbors offering a free meal after Sunday worship services.

has a better idea of what they need to do," said Szeto. "Now they are ready to share that message both in service and in Word."

ELCM Bishop Dr. Solomon Rajah wrote to Anderson shortly after her trip: "We are still young in this ministry but we are prepared to learn and serve the community with special needs. ... Thank you for your guidance, support and encouragement. At least now our people are more prepared for serious work."

"It's always challenging to start a new enterprise of any kind, but the dedicated, professional Malaysian Lutherans that are involved in this project will ensure its success," said Darin Storkson, Asia regional director with WR-HC. "We chose this partner for this pilot project in Asia because of their documented capacity and commitment, and we have not been disappointed."

For more information about LCMS Life Ministries, visit www.lcms.org/life.

You Can Help!

- Please keep this new centre in prayer as volunteers begin reaching out to the community.
- Additional funds are needed to support life ministries in Asia. To make a gift, write a check payable to "LCMS World Relief and Human Care," and mail it to LCMS World Relief and Human Care, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861; call toll-free at 888-930-4438; or visit <http://givenowlcms.org>.

Give God Glory...

...for the 2010 summer campers and staff at Camp Lakeview near Seymour, Ind., who chose to give their extra snack money to assist the work of LCMS World Relief and Human Care! Campers put money in an account to spend on snacks during their week at camp, and at the end of the week, they were given the opportunity to donate their remaining snack money to help those who do not have enough food, let alone snacks.

"Our camp has done this for many years, so parents and campers know to add extra to the week's snack account and can be sure the money is going to a good cause," said the camp's executive director Tom Franke. "[The snack money] is an extra for them, but for someone else it's a need." A total of 1,906 summer campers donated \$4,158.86 to reach out in mercy to those who need it most!



How Your Gifts Support LCMS World Relief and Human Care

You can help make projects like these possible with your continuing or new gifts to "Where Needed Most." Please use the envelope provided in this issue to send your gift to help LCMS World Relief and Human Care continue to reach out with Christ's mercy around the world. (Note: Thanks to your generous gifts, this publication may occasionally feature projects that have been fully funded.)

The mission of the church through LCMS World Relief and Human Care is to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, motivated by Christ and His Gospel, according to the Lutheran confession of the faith.

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Building Healthy Families

By Kim Krull

Instead of struggling to scrape together money for a crib, Kayleigh earned that crucial piece of baby equipment by taking part in parenting classes and other activities aimed at helping her build a healthy family.

"I don't really know what we would have done if we had not had the ability to do that," Kayleigh said of the Center for Healthy Families, a popular program sponsored by Lutheran Family Services (LFS) of Nebraska. Parents like Kayleigh earn points for positive behaviors (getting prenatal exams and well-baby check-ups, for example) to purchase children's necessities (diapers, strollers and coats) at the center's "boutique" store.

Since the first center opened in Council Bluffs, Iowa, the program has grown to include locations in Fremont, Neb., and the newest in North Omaha, Neb. Originally called "Building Families Boutiques," the new program name reflects the centers' expanded behavioral health services. Each center serves "at risk" parents. Kayleigh became pregnant in high school. Many parents have low incomes and high-stress situations. Other homes are headed by single parents or struggle with substance abuse and domestic violence. All the parents have children under age 5.

"Studies show that from birth to five is when a child's brain develops more than at any other time," said Justin Dougherty, LFS Young Families Initiative program supervisor. "The services we provide are meant to improve the life and success of that child, giving the child as many positive experiences as possible. We help parents and caregivers become less stressed and more educated about parenting."

While the healthy family centers may not immediately bring to mind a "pro-life" ministry, LCMS Life and Health Ministries Director Maggie Karner calls them "a perfect example of how our Lutheran churches have come together through an LCMS Recognized Service

Organization (RSO) to support this witness of life in their community." Karner has visited the newly renamed Rupert Dunklau Center for Health Families in Fremont, which shares a parking lot with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and is located at the site of a former Lutheran orphanage.

Over the years, LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC) has provided financial support to LFS, most recently a \$1,200 grant for a food and nutrition education class. The Synod's mercy ministry also helped facilitate a \$6,000 grant to LFS from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League's North Nebraska District for the RSO's "boutique" program.

In 2009, the Council Bluffs and Fremont centers served nearly 700 families. The North Omaha center officially opens in early 2011, but already has served more than 50 families. Parents often are referred by the Women, Infants, and Children federal food assistance program and hospitals. "We're seeing more people needing our services and taking advantage of the boutique program," Dougherty said. "Even two-parent, two-income households are feeling extra stress because of layoffs and other economic challenges. With stress, behaviors can get more negative."

Along with strengthening positive behavioral health, the LFS centers encourage families to make a religious connection. Members from local LCMS congregations volunteer at the centers and host diaper drives for the boutiques, which depend largely on donations.

When Kayleigh's husband lost his job, the couple used points from the healthy families incentive program to buy diapers. Along with the financial boost from the LFS center, Kayleigh said she enjoys participating in parenting classes and getting to know other mothers. "It gives me confidence," Kayleigh said.

To learn more about LFS, visit www.lfsneb.org.



Mothers and children participate in a structured play group led by Bi-Lingual Family Life Educator Kelli Kleckner-Silva (left, standing) at a Center for Health Families sponsored by Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska.



A mother-to-be shops at a Center for Healthy Families boutique. Through the Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska incentive program, parents earn points for childhood necessities such as diapers and cribs.

"Let Us Show Mercy to Our Neighbor"

The Gospel lesson for the fourth Sunday after the Epiphany is a portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which is commonly known as "The Beatitudes." The nine Beatitudes contained in this sermon of Jesus are really a mirror image of who He is: the Holy Son of God, the One revealed by God as the promised Savior, who gives life through His life and restores a proper understanding of what it means to live out new life in humble service to God and others.

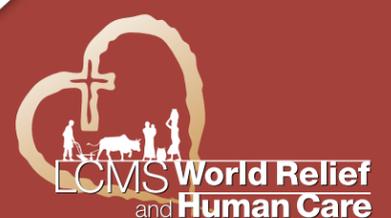
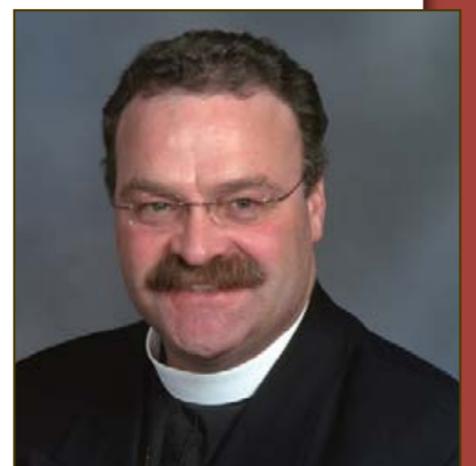
Jesus reveals in His words and works the God who cherishes and sustains life. Jesus also reveals in His words and works the God who desires that those who belong to Him through faith in His Son also cherish and sustain life. Through the Church's office of holy ministry, He gives you the gift of life in Jesus through the waters of Baptism, the kind words of Absolution, and the nourishing body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion. Through the Church's priesthood of all believers, the gift of life is cherished and sustained in a life of mercy to all.

A verse from the accompanying Old Testament lesson for this same Sunday is Micah 6:8, "He (God) has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Luther notes in his commentary on this verse, "Being justified by faith, we neither can nor should offer anything to God other than the sacrifice of praise; that is, that we bear witness with our preaching of the grace we have received, that we magnify God, that we preach His glory, and do this preaching through the Gospel. These are the 'fruits of our lips' (Hos. 14:2). Then let us show mercy to our neighbor, that is, let it be our pleasure to help a neighbor, to seize every opportunity to help a neighbor. Let us also stir up others to perform the responsibilities of love, so that in this way our entire life yields to the good of our neighbor, since we owe nothing to anyone, except that we love him" (Rom. 13:8).

This issue of *Sharing* highlights two of the ways LCMS World Relief and Human Care cherishes and sustains life through mercy to our neighbors through a local neighborhood and across the world. That wouldn't be possible without the rich blessings of God through your prayers and gifts. Thank you so very much for your prayerful support and generosity, even in the midst of economic uncertainty.

Peace be with you in Christ,

Rev. Matthew C. Harrison
President of the Synod



Mercy forever.