

# SHARING

## newsletter

## Brazilian Training Center Transforms Lives

By Sarah Schafer

When Carbone Berenice da Silva, 51, of Esteio, Brazil, lost her job as a teacher, she looked to the Learning Center, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, to strengthen her professional skills.

While taking a computer course at the center, Berenice made and sold snacks at schools and parties to help support her family financially. Her cooking caught the attention of Learning Center leaders, and they invited her to teach a cooking workshop.

“We could not have [a] better result, the workshop was a success,” wrote Renata Helena da Luz Bristoti, project coordinator. She added that Berenice showed her gratitude for the opportunities she was given at the Learning Center many times.

Berenice is one of the many unemployed people living in Esteio who would be unable to afford professional and personal development if it weren't for the Learning Center.

“We believe that shar[ing] Christ's compassion, through the acts of our faith, to the forgotten people in our society is to show the Gospel message to the world,” wrote Bristoti. To carry out its mercy work, the center received a \$10,000 grant in 2009 from LCMS World Relief and Human Care. The local

community provided an additional \$90,560.

Lead by Bristoti, a social worker, a psychologist, a teacher and a variety of instructors, the Learning Center offers classes in artisanship, cooking, sewing and computer skills, and entrepreneurial skills such as budgeting. The team also helps participants address topics such as health, family, education and citizenship.

“We understand that [by] giving people the right tools, people will be able to develop conditions to transform their social, professional and family situations,” wrote Bristoti. “The project does not aim at giving ready-made answers and material help, but at creating a place in which people will be able to develop skills and competences to find the solution to their own problems — and then transform their reality. We want to act as agents of transformation.”

In 2009, the center served 284 men, women and teens who attended 24 classes in five topics. The center showed the people of Esteio the kinds of services it can offer and proved the importance of the center in serving the needy people of the city to the town's social welfare commission.



The Learning Center, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, teaches a group of women to make handcrafts that they can market and sell to make a living.



The Learning Center, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, offers an artisan class to local women, young and old, so that they might make an income to support their families.



### Mercy Work in Brazil

LCMS World Relief and Human Care began supporting mercy work in Brazil in 1989. The first grant helped special education students finish their high school studies. Since then, dozens of grants from Synod's mercy arm have contributed toward disaster response and human care efforts in the Latin American country.

To learn more about how LCMS World Relief and Human Care supports international Lutheran partners carrying out mercy work, visit [www.lcms.org/worldrelief](http://www.lcms.org/worldrelief).

## Give God Glory...

...for the individuals and congregations around the country who gave Christmas gifts for the work of LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC)! We received many Christmas cards accompanied by donations to various WR-HC programs, including Veterans of the Cross and 1001 Orphans, plus donations for “where needed most” that enable us to reach out to unexpected needs and opportunities. We send a heartfelt thank you to our many donors who celebrated Christ's birth by contributing to mercy work in His name around the world!



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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### 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.)

# Lutheran Organizations Offer Support to Military Families

By Sarah Schafer

More of the 11,000 Air Force personnel at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota are being deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. "It's a stressful time for families," said Gene Kaseman, president of Minot-headquartered Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization (RSO) since 1968.

The ranch is best known for its work with at-risk youth and their families, but the RSO is making efforts to not just be an institution, but a living and breathing part of the community.

"Minot Air Force Base is part of our community," said Kaseman. That's why Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, which employs a number of retired, second-career military and spouses, formed a relationship with military families in Minot.

One military family stands out in his memory. Their high school-age son "had a lot of things going on and it was doubtful he would graduate. It just was a really bleak forecast," said Kaseman.

The youth entered a Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch high school that reaches out to students with Christian love. "We want to let each student know they're accepted," said Kaseman. The youngster flourished and just over a year later family members flew to Minot to attend his graduation.

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is just one LCMS Recognized Service Organization (RSO) that ministers to military families. Others include:

- Lutheran Counseling Services of Florida: collected coffee cups for a chaplain in Afghanistan for an outreach project
- Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska: operates a post-traumatic stress disorder program

- Lutheran Church Charities in Illinois: hosts events to support military
- Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Retirement Services in Ohio: sends cards and items to troops
- Wheat Ridge Ministries in Illinois: provides books and resources for veterans, their families and churches
- Lutheran Mission Society in Maryland: work with Navy volunteers
- Concordia Lutheran Ministries in Pennsylvania: Patriot Award to CEO for employer support of Guard and Reserve
- Lutheran Social Services of Northern California: works with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to develop programs for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom vets; hopes to develop housing for veterans and their families.
- Lutheran Counseling Center in Minnesota: provides counseling for military personnel and their families
- Augsburg Lutheran Home and Village in Maryland: hosts Memorial Day celebration, displays memorabilia from wars that residents fought in; provides a flag-folding ceremony and program

"I see our Lutheran organizations as a mission ministry, serving and reaching out to those in need. Our Lutheran organizations have a wonderful opportunity to show the mercy and compassion of Christ to those who serve in our Armed Forces," said Deaconess Dorothy Krans, interim director of Social Ministry Organizations with LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC).



A new program offered by Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch based in Minot, N.D., teaches at-risk youth to ride and maintain motorcycles. Structured as a social club, the program is open to military dependants at the nearby Minot Air Force Base. This is just one way the ranch supports its military community.

The ranch's residential and educational services are available to military dependants. A unique program, made possible with one of 20 grants awarded by the Honda Corporation, teaches youth to ride and maintain motorcycles. The program will be used primarily as an incentive for youth to improve behavior, but will be structured as a social club and open to military dependants.

"Not only is Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch able to offer services to military families, as they provide professional counselors and educators, they also provide an opportunity for military members and families to volunteer," said Krans. As part of a leadership program, airmen and women volunteer in Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch's thrift stores. And for years, a local chapel women's group has provided cakes each month for youth celebrating birthdays.

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch received two grants from WR-HC for professional church worker assistance and leadership training. For more information, visit [www.dakotaranch.org](http://www.dakotaranch.org). To learn more about WR-HC partner RSOs, visit [www.lcms.org/handsofmercy](http://www.lcms.org/handsofmercy) or contact Krans at 800-248-1930, ext. 1636 or [dorothy.krans@lcms.org](mailto:dorothy.krans@lcms.org).

## Sharing Mercy with Hearts of Gratitude

*What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me?  
I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call on the name of the Lord.  
I will take the cup of salvation and will call on the name of the Lord.  
I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people,  
in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.  
Divine Service, Setting One and Two  
Lutheran Service Book*

These words of the Offertory in the Divine Service are taken from Psalm 116. What are the benefits that the psalmist is referring to? The first 11 verses of Psalm 116 form a litany of the blessings the psalmist has received from God's merciful care. (I encourage you to read and reflect upon them as well.) In short, the psalmist thanks God for delivering him from death. Thanks be to God for delivering us from death, once and for all, through the blessed cross of Jesus! He bore our sin and death in His own body for the forgiveness of our sin, giving life and salvation through faith to all. How marvelous is that!

The Divine Service gives us the benefits of the cross (forgiveness, life and salvation), through Word and Sacrament, time and time again. Sinners are absolved through Holy Absolution. The dead are brought to life through the washing of regeneration in Baptism. The Word of God is proclaimed through the public reading of the lessons and through the preaching of the pastor. And those who hunger for righteousness are fed with the body and blood of Jesus in His Supper. It is no wonder that the congregation joins with the psalmist of old with a heart of gratitude "for all His benefits to me."

God's merciful acts naturally produce hearts of gratitude, marked with a desire to serve Him through showing mercy and compassion to others. This issue of *Sharing* illustrates two living examples that capture the essence of showing mercy "even as your Father has had mercy on you." The lives of military families are positively changed through services and volunteer opportunities provided by Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, an LCMS Recognized Service Organization. And across the hemisphere, a woman who was directly helped by one of our international projects returns the kindness by teaching others.

I know that you continue to support so generously LCMS mercy projects out of grateful, heartfelt response to the spiritual and physical blessings that you have received from our Lord. He is blessing your gifts.

Thanks be to God!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Harrison".

Pastor Matt Harrison  
President of the Synod

