



Dear Friend,

I'M A HUMAN BEING!! That's how he replied when asked about his ethnic heritage. It was a chilly day in Long Beach, and the gentleman was not wearing clean, warm clothes. He was "edgy" and didn't seem comfortable with the session. He was being asked many probing questions.

You have been a loyal donor to Lutheran Social Services over the years, and your generous support has allowed us to assist so many people. Currently, we have even more to do.

Along with our food pantry, clothing closet, and case management, LSS has added another dimension to what we provide the South Bay community. Working closely with the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), we assess and submit eligible, disabled veterans and marginalized homeless individuals regarding their benefits.

Financial information, medical records, mental health status, employment circumstances, personal background and family histories are all included in a summary for each client. Our staff of specialists then researches to see which benefits might be available to these struggling men, women and children, in order to help them establish a stable income to help pay for housing and other needs.

Our teams hear so many traumatic stories. A college-educated man, who taught court-mandated "life skills" classes, suffered a stroke. Today, he is unable to teach, can barely speak, and has lost his home. His family is now forced to live with relatives.

A woman witnessed numerous murders in her community many years ago, and she was almost killed. She is now so insecure and afraid, she never leaves the small room she rents. She can't even make eye contact with others.

A 21-year-old woman—just a child—has been homeless for 10 consecutive years. Her mother was incarcerated, and the woman lives in the streets, totally on her own. Her eyes are filled with both fear and rage.

At face value, all these individuals—and thousands more just like them—look very much the same. They are financially bereft and emotionally stressed. They wear second- and third-hand clothing that is as tattered as their nerves are frayed. They live each day in proximity to other people, yet they exist on the margins—standing on the outside, looking in at that for which they crave, but satisfying that craving is not an option in their current situation.

Every one of them has a story, which in one way or another, begins with the affirmation, ***I'M A HUMAN BEING!!*** For over seven decades, Lutheran Social Services has worked faithfully and continually to look beyond all the external characteristics of poverty, and connect with the God-birthered human being within every individual we meet.

Your contributions—large or small—enable us to be prepared for every person who walks through our door. LSS will embrace, equip and empower anyone, and everyone, regardless of the trauma they face.

That's true for the young man who looks like the portrait of health, but on the inside is infected with HIV, and haunted with the pain of being raped at the age of seven. It's as specific as the tall woman with large feet who wore flip-flops to our office on a very cold day, but who left wearing tennis shoes we found in our clothes closet. Size 12 in a woman's shoe was hard to locate. LSS made it happen. It's as practical as assessing a senior adult who cannot speak English, or a twenty-something who cannot read English.

Every day, Lutheran Social Services serves all kinds of individuals, people who are wrestling with many difficult circumstances. But we never forget the one characteristic they all share in common: ***I'M A HUMAN BEING!!***

I'm so grateful that your generosity keeps us prepared to respond to whatever situation we face, or child of God we encounter. We pledge to invest every dollar you contribute to come alongside all human beings in a way that addresses their need, but also honors their dignity. God bless you for sharing with those who are in such urgent need.

Ron Drews, President/CEO
Lutheran Social Services of Southern California



P.S. Attached is your LSS reply slip. Please check the box for the amount of your gift. No gift is too small, but please be as generous as possible. Return the reply slip in the enclosed envelope. Thanks, and God bless you.