

"They made an enormous difference"

Adopted by a same-sex couple in 1992, West Point senior Max Lenox is defying expectations

When Max Lenox was born in 1992, it's probably fair to assume that expectations were low for him. His mother, an alcoholic for more than a decade, had been addicted to crack, and Max tested positive for cocaine at birth.

Still, Sandy Deutsch, the social worker who did the home study for Max's adoption through Lutheran Family Services (now Lutheran Services Carolinas) hoped for the best. She felt confident that the man adopting Max would give the child a stable, loving home, although she also assumed Max would face lifelong challenges.

Fatherhood was something Dave Lenox had long aspired to. His own father died when he was a boy, and Dave shouldered a lot of responsibility at an early age.

"I had always kind of felt that I was supposed to be a parent," Dave said. After his marriage to his high-school sweetheart broke up when he was 26, Dave thought about entering the priesthood. He realized that wasn't his destiny but decided that fatherhood just might be. He knew, however, that pursuing that path might be complicated by one stubborn fact: he was gay.

Dave found a committed partner in Nathan Merrells, and after about five years together, both men were ready to start a family. "Why can't we be like everyone else?" Dave wondered.

At the recommendation of friends, Dave applied to Lutheran Services to adopt as a single parent. Then he waited, growing increasingly frustrated. He finally called Joyce Gourley, director of adoptions at the time, and told her he sensed she believed he might be gay. "I am," he told her, "but the reality is that we're going to have a child in our lives, and the question is whether you're going to be part of the process. If not, then let's just move on."

Gourley had been waiting for Dave to lay it all on the table, and when he did, the process began in earnest. As an unmarried couple, Dave and Nathan could not legally adopt a child as a couple, but Dave could apply as a single parent, and that's what he did. Lutheran

Services understood that while he would not technically be an adoptive parent, Nathan, too, would be serving in a parental role. The important thing was for Max to find a stable, nurturing home.

Deutsch gives credit to Bill Brittain for his compassionate, forward-thinking leadership of Lutheran Family Services. Brittain believed that kids deserved homes, Deutsch said, and he made sure the people who worked for Lutheran Services believed that

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Max Lenox, a senior at West Point, is the captain of the Army basketball team.

Who's in for some PB?

Let's focus on prayer and vision in 2015



My focus for this new year is PB. Not peanut butter, but Prayer and Bifocals. Prayer is pretty self-explanatory. I want to do more of it, and I want people to pray for our ministry unceasingly! Every time I pray, I include our ministry and the LSC family, which includes each person touched in any way by our ministry, whether it be clients, residents, families, staff,

volunteers, donors, or visitors. Won't you add your prayers? And please add LSC to your church prayer chain and any other prayer opportunities you find.

Now let's talk bifocals. Not the glasses, but the vision. This year I plan to practice bifocal leadership, which we'll define as the ability to focus on the near things and the far-off things.

Near vision includes communication, customer service, and waste. No organization works harder than LSC at communicating with everyone, but it's never enough. My goal is for everyone to know everything about everything. While that's impossible, we can strive for it!

The LSC family can treat each other as we want to be treated. That friendly smile is also part of our security plan. If we all smile and make eye contact with a stranger in the hall or a person standing in front of a group home or in front of our offices, they are aware they have been identified. We can easily welcome the friend and warn anyone bent on doing harm.

Waste should be the enemy of each of us. Ben Franklin is still right: "A penny saved is a penny earned." We can all save paper, turn off lights, recycle old file folders and paper clips, commute together to meetings, recycle plastic, buy only absolutely necessary office supplies, and on and on! I'd rather spend money caring for people than on office supplies!

Bifocal also refers to the long vision. Although we have to keep an eye on the little things, we also have to keep our eye on the horizon. Our country and our profession are in the midst of great turmoil. In that turmoil and crisis there exist danger and opportunity. Prayer will allow us to weather the danger and take advantage of the opportunity. LSC has to keep one eye on the long view to survive and thrive.

So when you hear me talking about PB as we move into the new year, join me in prayer and vision.

Building Independence receives Wheat Ridge grant



Participating in the Wheat Ridge check presentation are, from left to right: Duane Ischer, Serving Cup chairman; Betty Kuhn, LSC chief development officer; Rebecca Brandt, Wheat Ridge Ministries board member; Kevin Campbell, president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Wake County; and Jeffrey DeMagistris, eastern region executive director for LSC child and family services in North Carolina.

Lutheran Services Carolinas has been awarded a grant of \$47,935 from Wheat Ridge Ministries to support Building Independence, a collaborative project between LSC, Habitat for Humanity of Wake County, and The Serving Cup, a Raleigh-based nonprofit. Building Independence will provide new, supportive housing in Raleigh, NC, for nine low-income adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD). A groundbreaking ceremony was held this past October at the building site on Lake Wheeler Road in Raleigh.

The Wheat Ridge funds will be used to provide furnishings for three adjacent homes and provide a

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too. Other agencies wouldn’t have touched Dave Lenox as an adoptive parent, Deutsch added, but Brittain valued a child’s well-being above traditional notions of what an ideal family looked like.

The organization did an amazing job of talking them through the adoption process, Dave says.

He and Nathan were concerned when they realized that their son, who was African-American, had been exposed to drugs in utero – Max’s mother had abused both alcohol and crack cocaine. When baby Max joined their household and the reality of parenting set in, however, Dave and Nathan were simply too busy to worry about anything other than getting through the days.

Things went well, and a few years later, Deutsch helped Dave and Nathan adopt an African-American daughter, Erin, through Lutheran Services.

Almost 20 years later, in November of 2014, Deutsch saw the family again – on the pages of Sports Illustrated. Deutsch herself was part of the story, written by S.L. Price, that chronicled Max’s unlikely path to West Point, where he had earned the honor of being voted team captain of the basketball team two years in a row.

When Deutsch heard through Price what Max had achieved, she was incredulous. “I practically burst into tears,” she said.

Not long after the story was published, Deutsch got to see Max play basketball when Army traveled to Deutsch’s home town of Raleigh to compete against Duke. At the game she reconnected with Max’s parents, who now live in Seattle where Dave directs the state’s Special Olympics program. She hadn’t seen them in years.



Erin, Dave, Nathan and Max pose for a family photo.

Nathan and Max did an extraordinary job raising Max and Erin, said Deutsch, who became director of adoptions for Lutheran Services in 1995 and continued in that role until 2002. “They just wanted to be a family,” she said. “They wanted to go to PTA meetings. They are just incredibly normal. And they made an enormous difference.”

Lutheran Services Carolinas continues to do adoption work, finding permanent homes for 26 children in 2014, says Kimberla Burrows, who heads up LSC’s adoption program. Most of LSC’s adoptions are done out of the foster care system through the state of North Carolina.

Same-sex couples have the same chance to adopt through Lutheran Services Carolinas as any other couple, Burrows says, and must meet the same criteria.

“We are proud that our organization’s history of adoption has been one of inclusion,” said LSC President Ted W. Goins, Jr. “The story of the Lenox family shows what a profound difference a good home can make in a child’s life. It also shows that good homes don’t always look the same.”

You can find the Sports Illustrated story at <http://www.si.com/college-basketball/2014/11/11/max-lenox-army-basketball>.

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portion of the salary for an on-site staff person who specializes in supportive services for adults with I/DD.

Wheat Ridge Ministries provides start-up funding and resources to leaders in congregations and nonprofit organizations beginning new and innovative human care initiatives. The organization’s focus is improving wellness of body, mind, and spirit for individuals and communities.

Currently, more than 70 Lutheran-affiliated ministries around the world are receiving assistance through Wheat Ridge. To learn more, visit www.wheatridge.org.



Guests at last year’s groundbreaking for the Building Independence project tour the home sites.



Lucille Crowell, left, enjoys water exercise class with instructor Deana Burris, right. Lucille had never been in a pool until she came to Trinity Oaks.

Come on in - the water's fine!

Trinity Oaks resident takes the plunge at 92

Growing up in Oakboro, Lucille Crowell never had access to a pool.

She was always "scared to death" of the water, Lucille says.

But after she moved to Trinity Oaks assisted living, Lucille's friend Coreta Loflin pestered her, telling her that she'd enjoy exercising in the heated pool at Trinity Oaks.

"I kept aggravating her," Coreta admits.

Deana Burris, director of life enrichment for Trinity Oaks, also begged Lucille to give it a try. "I promise I won't let anything happen," Deana reassured her.

When Lucille got in the pool for the first time, at 92, Lucille's children couldn't believe it, Deana says.

"I couldn't believe it myself," says Lucille.

That was a year and a half ago. Now, Lucille, who is 93, looks forward to exercising in the pool twice a week. Lucille – and all the water exercise participants – benefit by working on their core strength and improving their balance, says Deana, who leads the exercise sessions.

"I like the water – if she's close," Lucille said, referring to Deana. Because Lucille is legally blind due to macular degeneration, the interplay of the sun and water can make her dizzy. For that reason, she appreciates having Deana in the pool looking out for her.

Lucille is one of those special people who inspire her as an instructor, Deana says. Lucille could also be the poster girl for the Trinity Oaks motto: Never Slow Down!

NC foster care expands

Because of an unmet need for foster parents, Lutheran Services Carolinas is expanding its foster care program into Catawba County.

Joye Fullwood, a licensing and recruitment specialist for the LSC foster care program, is holding public meetings in the Hickory area to provide information about the program and to recruit potential foster parents.

Prospective parents must be at least 21 years of age and have a stable source of income and a high school diploma or GED. Foster parents can be single or married. They must be able to provide a healthy, loving, and nurturing home, including a separate room for the child, and pass a background check.

Qualified foster parents receive training and a monthly stipend based on the child's needs. Parents receive support from LSC staff members and the opportunity to meet with other foster parents.

Those in the Hickory area who would like to schedule an informational session for a group, whether it's a church, business, or civic organization, are encouraged to call Joye at 704-412-8811.



LSC foster care licensing and recruitment specialist Joye Fullwood, left, talks to Trinity Village employee Ashley Morrow about foster parenting.

IAFT foster care expanding to Wilmington

LSC is also expanding its Intensive Alternative Family Treatment foster care program into southeastern North Carolina and will co-sponsor a recruiting event for prospective treatment parents in Wilmington on Thursday, March 12, 2015, from noon to 1:30 p.m., and again from 6 to 8 p.m., at Coastal Care, 3809 Shipyard Blvd. Lunch and dinner will be served. For more information, contact NCfostercare@LSCarolinas.net.

An answer to a prayer

Harmony House allows family to get closer to their special-needs daughter

The Rev. Dr. Pat Riddle and his wife, Jan, had always wanted to care for their special-needs daughter, Savannah, themselves. When Savannah was young, having her at home – along with her twin sister, Victoria, who does not have a disability – was not an insurmountable challenge.

The situation became much more difficult when Savannah, who has autism that is complicated by a seizure disorder, entered the teen years and became prone to sometimes violent outbursts. Several years ago, the Riddles moved Savannah from their home in Lexington, S.C., to a facility in Florence, S.C., because they could no longer care for her. She later moved to a psychiatric residential treatment facility in Kingstree, S.C.

Those living situations were less than ideal. The places felt institutional, Pat says, and did not facilitate close family relationships. Rules prohibited them as parents from even going into Savannah's actual living area, and they felt locked out of her life, Jan says.

The Riddles' prayers for a better home for Savannah were answered when Harmony House opened last November in Columbia, S.C.

A coed group home that can accommodate four adults with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities, Harmony House is "exactly what we needed for Savannah," Pat says. "It couldn't be a better environment for her. She feels safe and cared for there."

Operated by Lutheran Services Carolinas, Harmony House is a ministry and not an institution, says Pat. Jan and Pat see themselves as partners in Savannah's care now, and they enjoy getting involved, whether it's helping to set up their daughter's bedroom, outfitting the kitchen, or donating items for the home's residents.



Savannah Riddle is a resident of Harmony House in Columbia, S.C.

Kenya Summers, manager of Harmony House, says her goal is to make the house "as close to home as possible" for the residents. Savannah, she says, is adapting and making good strides. She even allowed Kenya, a licensed hairstylist, to cut her hair – not a big deal for most people but a situation normally full of stress for Savannah.

Visiting their daughter used to require a whole day for Pat and Jan, since Savannah lived 2 ½ hours away from her parents' home. Now, with Savannah only a half hour away, the Riddles — including Victoria, a junior in college — can reincorporate Savannah into their lives. Savannah has more interaction with her parents

than she used to, and she especially loves going on car rides with her father.

The Riddles have been through some difficult transitions recently, including the loss of Jan's father and serving as caregivers for Pat's visually impaired mother. Harmony House has given them some peace of mind where Savannah is concerned, Jan says, and that has been a comfort and a blessing.



Bame retires from LSC boards

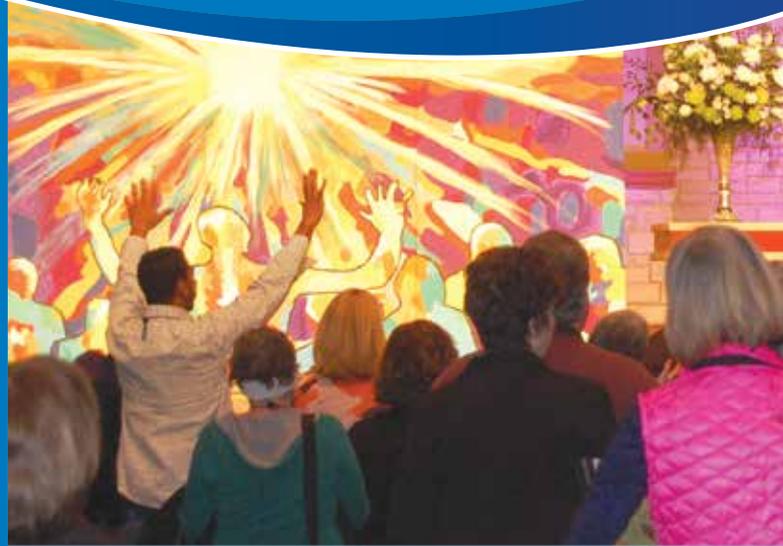
The Rev. Susan Bame has resigned from the LSC boards effective September 9. "I do this most regretfully after years of grateful service to both boards of Lutheran Services for the Aging and Lutheran Family Services," Susan said in her letter of resignation. A good and faithful board member, Susan will be missed but has promised to continue as a strong advocate for LSC.

Moving forward together

What better way to move forward together than to rock it out together? That's what representatives from North Carolina ELCA congregations did in Charlotte in January when they gathered at Christ Lutheran Church for a three-day experience of art, music, learning, and prayer called Forward Together.

Providing the art was Stephanie Burke, a performance artist whose huge paint-by-number mural created a visual and participatory activity for the event. The music was provided by Christ Lutheran's very own house band, SpiritSong, in addition to a special concert performance by singer songwriter Peter Mayer, son of Lutheran missionaries and lead guitarist for the Jimmy Buffet band. The learning was provided by the Rev. Dr. David Lose, president of Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia and Dr. Andrew Root, professor of youth and family ministry at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. The prayer was provided by more than 300 conference participants, as well as those supporting them from across the state.

NC Synod Bishop the Rev. Dr. Leonard Bolick, conference convener and emcee, said he hoped that the event would speak to the heart



Performance artist Stephanie Burke helped participants create a huge paint-by-number mural at the Forward Together conference.

and soul of those present and that everyone would walk away with a plan for renewal and engagement.

LSC was well represented at the gathering with more than a dozen staff members in attendance.

The year of the heart

LSC launches heART wellness initiative



It's shaping up to be the year of the heart for Lutheran Services Carolinas.

LSC's new heART program will promote total wellness, encompassing mind, body, and spirit. The initiative will focus on LSC's senior living communities and incorporate

physical wellness, creative arts, and education with the goal of enhancing resident, staff, and community wellness.

The program was developed by the life enrichment team and spearheaded by a committee that includes Sharon Benfield, Deana Burris, Brenda Zimmerman, Deborah Snyder, Lydia Johnson and Jill Nothstine. Each month there will be a different focus on health and

wellness with related educational events, physical activities and art projects, including music, drama, writing and painting. Health topics covered will include heart health, nutrition, hearing, vision, stroke recognition and prevention, safety, falls, balance, pulmonary conditions, mental health, bone and joint health, dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The heART program will be a community effort, with schools and community organizations getting involved. Healthy competition among LSC communities will be encouraged, with a point system based on programs offered.

In February, the Salisbury office joined the effort by offering two CPR classes and doing blood pressure checks for employees. Trinity Glen in Winston-Salem had residents create heart art and heart poetry and hosted sessions on heart health. Trinity View hosted a Valentine's Day luncheon with cardiologist John Vavalle from the UNC-Chapel Hill Division of Cardiology as guest speaker. These are just a few of the heART activities that have taken place. Stay tuned for more!

Staff Briefs

Batts to head western region for child and family services



Nakia Batts has been named the new executive director for child and family services' western region of North Carolina. Batts was an internal candidate with extensive experience in children's mental health services and additional background in residential services.

Scherer to lead business development for LSC child and family services



Kelly Scherer of Charlotte joined the LSC team Jan. 5 as a new business developer for child and family services. His role will be to expand business opportunities through organic growth, as well as mergers and acquisitions.

Scherer was most recently the chief operating officer for Alexander Youth Network, a large children's behavioral health agency. Scherer helped the agency grow 12 percent annually during the eight years he was there.

"My first goal is to learn our organization as well as I can: who we are, the services we provide, and the reason we provide the services that we do," he says. "I'd like to learn what works well and what's a struggle." Scherer wants to encourage all LSC employees to be on the lookout for fruitful partnership opportunities.

Scherer, who is originally from New York, earned his undergraduate degree at Guilford College and then studied clinical psychology at Xavier University.

Skobel named administrator at Trinity Grove



Bonnie Skobel has been named the new administrator at Trinity Grove, LSC's skilled care nursing home in Wilmington. Skobel, who was previously a social worker at Trinity Grove, will be taking over for John Frye, who has accepted a new position with LSC.

Skobel returned from maternity leave on February 14 to begin the transition into her new role.

"I love skilled nursing, and I love the geriatric population we serve," says Skobel. "I know this is what I'm going to do the rest of my working career."

Skobel lives in Wilmington with husband Jeff and their two children, 7-year-old Evan and baby Taylor.

Frye moves into business development role for senior services



This spring, John Frye is taking on a new role with LSC as director of business development for senior services, a new position. Frye began his career with LSC in 2009 in

Wilmington, where he oversaw the development of Trinity Grove. He has served as administrator of Trinity Grove since it opened in 2011. Before being hired by LSC, he spent 17 years as the administrator of a skilled care nursing home in Lumberton.

As the director of business development, Frye will be responsible for seeking out new business growth and enhancement, researching and evaluating industry trends and opportunities, evaluating LSC's current operating position, and assisting with implementation of new projects.

Trinity Senior Living Communities

Trinity Elms
(Assisted Living)
3750 Harper Road
Clemmons, NC 27012
336-766-2131

Trinity Elms
(Health & Rehab)
7449 Fair Oaks Drive
Clemmons, NC 27012
336-747-1153

Trinity Glen
849 Waterworks Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27101
336-595-2166

Trinity Grove
631 Junction Creek Drive
Wilmington, NC 28412
910-442-3000

Trinity Oaks
(Health & Rehab)
820 Klumac Road
Salisbury, NC 28144
704-637-3784

Trinity Oaks
(Independent Living)
728 Klumac Road
Salisbury, NC 28144
704-633-1002

Trinity Place
24724 South Business 52
Albemarle, NC 28001
704-982-8191

Trinity Ridge
2140 Medical Park Drive
Hickory, NC 28602
828-322-6995

Trinity View
2533 Hendersonville Road
Arden, NC 28704
828-687-0068

Trinity Village
1265 21st St., NE
Hickory, NC 28601
828-328-2006

Adult Day Services

Trinity Living Center
1416-A S. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave.
Salisbury, NC 28144
704-637-3940

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Learn more about LSC

by following **Lutheran Services Carolinas** on Facebook,



by following LSC President Ted Goins on Twitter at **TedGoinsLSCPrez**, or by visiting the LSC website at **LSCarolinas.net**.

Return Service Requested

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"Empowered by Christ, we walk together with all we serve."

We Believe employee giving is making a difference

Sometimes, residents of LSC's senior living communities and clients of LSC's child and family services programs need some extra help meeting their personal needs. Thanks to its generous employees, Lutheran Services Carolinas is showing compassion through two "We Believe" funds, one for child and family services and one for senior services.



Nasir Khurshid and his wife, Nasreen Nasir, are shown here at a World Refugee Day celebration in Raleigh.

The We Believe fund recently helped cover funeral expenses for a refugee client. Nasir Khurshid, a 50-year-old journalist from Pakistan who

had been persecuted for his Christian faith, suffered a massive heart attack, which he did not survive. The We Believe fund contributed \$1,000 to his family to help cover funeral expenses.

A young man with cerebral palsy in South Carolina was able to continue to attend school because of the fund. A We Believe grant allowed Damien McCoy to arrange to transport his electric wheelchair to the college he attends.

Another LSC client was having so many problems taking his medication correctly that the next step was for him to enter an assisted living residence. Through We Believe funds, he was able to buy a battery-operated medication dispenser that helps him take his medication in a safe and timely manner – which allows him to maintain his independence.

Other We Believe grants have been made for new clothing, eyeglasses, a security deposit, tuition fees for a client to pursue becoming a certified nursing assistant, and a crib for a medically fragile child in foster care. At Trinity Living Center, a participant was given a grant to pay for an alternator for his car so that he could have transportation to the center.

Thanks to the LSC employees whose giving is making a difference!