

SOUTH DAKOTA **CARES**

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ANNUAL WEEK OF GIVING  
APRIL 24-30**

WELCOMING

A Family's  
Adoption  
Journey

MILES



For six years, Kim and Pierre held onto the dream of becoming parents. Through every update to their home study and each passing season, they remained hopeful, trusting that the right moment would come. Life stayed busy, but their hearts remained open, ready for whenever their family would grow. Then, in April 2024, everything changed.

Five weeks before her scheduled C-section, Miles' birth mother chose Kim and Pierre to be his parents. The couple met her, formed a connection, and then, to their surprise, little Miles arrived earlier than expected. Just twelve hours later, Kim and Pierre held their son for the first time.

"We stayed the night at the hospital with him and brought him home the next day," Kim recalled. "It was surreal. After so many years of anticipation, suddenly, we were parents."

The first few months were a whirlwind of adjustment, bonding, and joyful exhaustion. "We had prepared for adoption for years with LSS training and mentally putting ourselves there, but when the moment finally arrived, we felt like we had so much to do—setting up a nursery, gathering all the essentials, adapting our schedules, and sharing the news with those closest to us," explained Kim.

"But everything came together smoothly with the support we give each other as a couple and the generous support we received from others."

Their adoption was finalized in December 2024, marking the official beginning of their new chapter. Throughout the process, they found support and guidance through LSS. "We wanted to work with an ethical agency that prioritized birth mothers and truly supported them through their decisions," Kim shared. "LSS felt like the right place for us, and we are so grateful for how they were there whenever we needed them or if we had questions."

Today, Miles is a thriving ten-month-old, a fast crawler with a love for fruits, vegetables, and chatting up a storm. "His first laugh was an unforgettable moment," Pierre said. "And just watching him grow, interact, and become his own little person—it's incredible."

Their adoption is open, allowing Miles to maintain a connection

*(cont'd)*



with his birth family, including half-brothers and extended relatives. "It's been a really positive experience," Kim shared. "We appreciate that Miles will have the opportunity to build relationships within his birth family. We hope our open adoption will help him with the questions he has about his adoption as he grows."

Looking ahead, their focus is on cherishing each moment. "We're just soaking it all in—being parents, watching him explore. He's changed how we see our future. We

think about things differently now, from schooling to family trips. This is our life now, and we wouldn't have it any other way," Kim explained.



**Kim and Pierre's story is one of love, patience, and the power of hope. And thanks to generous donors, more families like theirs will experience the joy of adoption.**

**Your donation today, is matched, doubling your impact for children and families.**



**BREAKING BARRIERS TO ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH-CARE FOR YOUTH**

**"Seeking out services when struggling is a strength."**

That's what Michelle Wiegand, Clinical Associate Director of LSS Behavioral Health Services, reminded Stella, an 8th grade student, and her family when they reached out for support.

"Stella had been withdrawing from school and losing interest in activities in the weeks leading up to her mother's deployment," Michelle shared. "Every child processes deployment differently, and it's important for kids to understand they 'have permission' to feel multiple emotions at once—that they can miss their mom while still allowing themselves to have fun."

PATH (Providing Access to Healing), is a school-based counseling program made possible through a partnership between LSS, the Sioux Empire United Way, and several local school districts. By offering counseling directly in schools, PATH eliminates common barriers to accessing mental health care, such as transportation challenges, scheduling conflicts, and long wait times for services. With support available in a setting where students already feel safe and supported, they can get the help they need—without missing school or requiring parents to take time off work.



With a staggering 1 in 6 youth ages 6-17 experiencing a mental health disorder each year, programs like PATH are critical in helping children develop emotional intelligence and resilience—skills that will serve them throughout life.

"When kids learn to regulate their emotions, it boosts their self-confidence, strengthens relationships, and helps them navigate challenges."

Throughout her time working with Michelle, Stella learned to express and process her emotions in healthy ways—leading to fewer outbursts and more healthy conversations. With support from her school, her family, and Michelle, she grew more confident handling difficult feelings.

"Stella's transformation was remarkable," said Michelle. "By the time she was finished with the program, she was interacting with her family, socializing with friends, and finding joy in extracurricular activities. She had the skills to manage difficult emotions—and that made all the difference."

PATH's impact extends far beyond one student, serving more than 400 students in the 2023-2024 school year alone, helping them build



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emotional understanding, improve academic performance, and strengthen relationships at home and in school.

“The power of community, and a support system, cannot be overstated,” Michelle emphasized. “Programs like PATH exist because people believe in investing in our

youth. By removing barriers like transportation, scheduling conflicts, and access to providers, we ensure kids in our community get the mental health care they need.”

“Every donation, every show of support, helps create a stronger future for our state. The next generation is worth it.”

## DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

Now through April 30, every donation to LSS Behavioral Health Services is matched dollar for dollar, doubling the impact of your support. Donate today to ensure more children and families get the support they need to be healthy, safe, and accepted.

# ONE PIECE



# AT A

A FAMILY'S JOURNEY  
FROM CRISIS TO  
CONFIDENCE

# TIME

**Beth never thought she would need help.** As a mother of four—two teenagers and younger twin boys with significant disabilities—Beth was doing everything she could to advocate for their care and education. But the obstacles were coming faster than she could overcome them.

After a particularly challenging time, the school called Child Protective Services (CPS), leaving Beth at a loss to determine the best way to move forward. “When CPS got involved, because of the level of disabilities of the twins, they gave me this huge packet of resources,” Beth recalled. “One of those resources was the LSS CARES Wraparound program.”

## FINDING THE MISSING PIECE

The first of its kind in South Dakota, the LSS CARES Wraparound program is an evidence-based, family stabilization program that collaborates with families to identify needs, establish a comprehensive care plan and connect them to resources necessary to meet the needs of each individual family member.

During a time when they need it most, families find guidance and support from Wraparound Specialists who walk with them, to help them navigate challenges, set goals, and build a network of support. Most importantly, they step in before crises escalate, preventing issues like out-of-home placements, truancy, and law enforcement involvement.

## A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Haley and Cassidy, two LSS CARES Wraparound Specialists, became Beth's advocates and cheerleaders. They offered guidance for Beth as she worked through the myriad of exhausting details to secure the best education and care for her children. With their help, Beth was able to sort through the scattered pieces of the puzzle and see where they fit.

“In our communities, people are often given resources but they're not guided through those resources,” Haley shared. “Beth came in and was at a loss for what to do next. Once we started meeting and pointing out her strengths—

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“And now,  
I know  
I can finish  
the puzzle  
myself.”

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she's a good mom, a strong advocate, a hard worker, and very knowledgeable with her kids and their medical needs—her confidence came back and things started to change," added Haley.

### A NEW PICTURE OF STABILITY

Little by little, the pieces of Beth's life started to fall into place. She moved from rural South Dakota to Watertown where she had more job opportunities and a school district with more resources. The change rippled through every part of her life. "It was like a domino effect," she smiled. She even started making friends—something she once believed was out of reach. "I remember walking into LSS and saying, 'I have a friend,'" she laughed. "That was a huge moment for me."

Once hesitant to leave the house, Beth has found ways to participate in the community and build friendships. The twins are getting the education and care she fought so hard for. Her older children are thriving. And she, a mother who once felt completely alone, is surrounded by support. "I'm not even the same person who walked in that door initially," she said. "I was so strung out I was almost suicidal at that point and now, I have people to talk to when I have a problem. They may not be able to solve the problem, but at least there is someone to hold my hand during those dark moments."

### THE FINAL PIECE: A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE

Reflecting on the program that changed her life, Beth has a message for both those who make it possible and those who may need it. "Contacting that program was one of the best things I ever did for my children and my family," Beth shared.

**"God is a blessing through donors. I can't thank them enough. They gave us the chance to put the pieces of our lives together. Because of them, I have peace and stability, and my children are getting the care and education they need..."**

**And now, I know I can finish the puzzle myself."**

**When crisis scatters the pieces, LSS' Family Stabilization Program helps families put them back together. Today, you can be the missing piece for another family like Beth's. Thanks to a generous donor match, your gift will go twice as far in providing stability, hope, and a path forward for families facing challenges.**



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Please use my gift for greatest need, or specify LSS service:

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How  
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Nurtures  
Hope

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What you choose  
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real difference.

Donate before April 30,  
and your gift will  
be matched dollar  
for dollar, doubling  
your impact.



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**Wyatt and Erica** always knew they wanted to make a difference in the lives of children. As high school sweethearts, they often talked about adoption, but everything changed the day they heard a powerful message during a church service—one that planted the seeds which opened their hearts to an unexpected calling: becoming foster parents.

“We felt this pull—like this was something we were meant to do,” Erica reflected.

They chose Therapeutic Foster Care with LSS, equipping them with resources and training to support children healing from trauma. Their preparation became reality when they welcomed two brothers, carrying an unimaginable history of neglect and abuse, into their home.



Despite their young ages, the boys had learned to survive on their own. Left home alone for days at a time, they relied on each other to get through. The oldest took on the role of caregiver, doing his best to comfort his younger brother and tend to their baby sibling, even when

there was no food in the home, or when “home” was nothing more than a car.

Things changed when they entered Wyatt and Erica’s home, where, for the first time in a long time, they didn’t have to be the ones in charge, they didn’t go hungry, and they had safe adults they could rely on.

With patience, love, and guidance, the boys began to heal. The older brother, once forced into a parenting role, learned it was okay to be a kid. The younger, emotionally withdrawn and guarded, blossomed, learning to navigate the world—and kindergarten—with empathy.

“Even when our kiddos are struggling in school or acting out, at the end of the day, they’re just kids,” Wyatt explained. “They came from such a hard place and are handling life the only way they know how.”



## SEEDS OF CHANGE

Foster care provides parents and children the chance to create new memories, learn important lessons, and change the course of their lives. For Wyatt, Erica, and the boys, those moments include first-time experiences at Disney World, learning to play Skee-Ball, and simply enjoying a stocked kitchen, bunkbeds, and birthday celebrations.

“Watching our youngest run up to give Grandma a hug after being so hesitant at first, seeing his artistic talents flourish in kindergarten, and witnessing our oldest score a soccer goal—then turn to us, beaming, and say, ‘Did you see that?!’—those moments are unmatched,” Erica shared.

## SPRING IS COMING

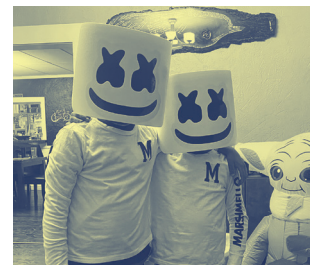
Now, nearly three years later, as the boys continue to heal from their past experiences, Wyatt and Erica await the finalization of the boys’ adoption.

“It’s not just about us,” Wyatt reflected. “The love, patience, and effort we pour in—it’s all part of something bigger. Whether they stay with us or not, we know they will grow up and make the world better.”

Donations to LSS Foster Care help provide training, resources, and support for families like Wyatt and Erica’s—ensuring more children find safety, stability, and love.

The couple finds strength in their shared belief that community thrives when we plant trees whose shade we may never sit in.

**“Our kiddos are healing, and they’re not the only ones. Whether you’re a donor or a foster family—we’re planting those trees, watering them, and watching them grow. The leaves are sprouting, and spring is coming,” emphasized Wyatt.**





LSS OF SOUTH DAKOTA  
705 EAST 41ST STREET, SUITE 200  
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57105

605-444-7500 [LssSD.org](http://LssSD.org)

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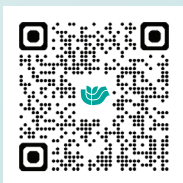
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CELEBRATING  
A LEGACY OF

# Leadership & Service



**Pat Eidsness** dedicated nine years of service to the LSS Board of Directors, contributing to both the Foundation and Governing boards. Her husband, Roe Eidsness, also served as a board member, and together they created a shared legacy of leadership and commitment to the mission of LSS. However, their connection to LSS began long before their board service.

Pat and Roe's journey with LSS started nearly 40 years ago during a time of crisis

when their family sought help for their daughter. Since then, the two have been passionate advocates, volunteering at countless events and playing a vital role in fundraising efforts to further our mission.

We are deeply grateful to have been part of your family's journey—and even more grateful to have you as part of ours.

**Thank you, Pat, for your leadership, dedication, and years of service to LSS.**