

ANNUAL REPORT
23



"It was one of the biggest impacts of my young life! I had counselors who helped me through healing and believing in love and hope for my future. I was very happy there. Pray for all the children who are blessed to have lived there...past and future! Thank you so much...you will forever have a very special part of my heart."

-G.S.

Dear Friends,

As donors, volunteers, participants, and stakeholders in our great work, you will be pleased to know that 2023 was a record-setting year for Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services. In pursuing our Mission to guide children and families home to experience God's love by following the teachings of Christ, we provided more care to more children in more places than in any previous year in our organization's 121 years.

Louisiana is a difficult state for any nonprofit organization seeking to care well for children. Restricted and underfunded, child welfare and behavioral health providers throughout the state struggle to meet standards, find sufficient staff, and grow new programs to fill the obvious gaps.

Despite the difficulties, we seek to strengthen Louisiana by collaborating with and advocating for other providers, using resources to identify the gaps our expertise can fill, and pushing for sound state offices and regulations to ensure the safety and well-being of Louisiana's children.

Even more exciting than sharing our work in 2023 is telling you about our ministry work. Of course, we continue improving our intensive residential and therapeutic foster care programs. In addition, the exciting Methodist Aftercare Service is opening new doors to strengthen the families of children in our care. Our advocacy work on behalf of Louisiana's children effectively educated Louisiana's legislators about Louisiana's need for an Office of Children's Ombudsman, which was created in 2023. Today, our advocacy work continues to gather strength. Because Louisiana lacks essential pieces of Child Well-being Infrastructure, we are deeply committed to making Louisiana better for children.

In 2024, our transcendent Mission calls us to do more, grow more, improve more, and care more. We guide children and families home to experience God's love by following the teachings of Christ.

As you read this annual report, please feel our heartfelt gratitude for your support and encouragement, which makes our work possible. We invite you to engage with us through volunteering, donations, or advocacy on behalf of Louisiana's children and families!

No doubt, Louisiana is a hard place for children. Only by working together can we make our state a place of kindness, support, care, and compassion. Our investment in child well-being today provides the surest return for Louisiana's future health, stability, and prosperity.

Sincerely,



Rick Wheat
President and CEO



2

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

The Louisiana Methodist Children's Home is a remarkable story that spans in excess of 100 years of service to its community. However, as rare as that length of tenure may be, the extraordinary thing about the Children's Home is the people who work there and the culture that permeates the organization. They are unconditionally committed to some of the most grueling work any Christian is called upon to perform, and they do it in graceful style with a loving countenance for those they are called on to serve.

I love everything about this story, and I am very proud to be a member of the "second team" that provides moral and financial support to help these wonderful people as they perform their work. The "second team" is a statewide community of supporters who lend their time and resources to support this ministry. It is easy to become an active supporter by contacting our public relations staff and expressing your desire to become involved and how you think you might help.

I regularly see firsthand the impact of "second team" support on the scope of services offered by the Children's Home statewide. We are not the Children's Home of twenty or even ten years ago. Today, the Children's Home operates three residential treatment facilities strategically located to serve the entire population of Louisiana. The recently completed Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility that anchors our 126-acre development in Southeast Louisiana completes a long-term plan to serve every major population center in Louisiana with a convenient residential alternative. Our Therapeutic Foster Care families are geographically dispersed throughout the state and are supported by TFC offices woven conveniently into many communities throughout the state.

The Children's Home offers a continuum of care that is extraordinarily rich in benefits beyond contractual obligations so that the children in our care are offered the highest quality of care possible. I hear these stories from "second team" members regularly, which makes me proud to understand better why people think we are different. This extra level of care is only possible because our annual budget includes charitable contributions that fund this extra level of care. Without these funds, we would face the same financial constraints as other providers. I hope the impact of charitable contributions on the operation of the Children's Home is clear.

Community support and charitable contributions have risen over the past three years. More people than ever are aware of the Children's Home story. Contributions we receive are dispersed throughout the state to support our exceptional service. I expect to see this trend continue. I hope this message inspires you to take a closer look at the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home and make it more relevant in your life.



Billy James
Board President

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

REGULAR MEMBERS

CLASS OF 2024

Mrs. Jeanne Browning
Dr. Dennis Dillon
Mrs. Joanna Hauser
Mr. Billy James, *Chair*
Mr. Don McGehee
Mr. Matt Vincent

CLASS OF 2025

Mr. Gordon Bartage
Mrs. Marjorie Franklin
Mr. Bill McIntyre
Dr. Bryan Sibley
Mrs. Cindy Surles
Mr. Robert Temple,
Secretary

CLASS OF 2026

Mr. John Allen
Dr. Ramonalynn Bethley,
Vice Chair
Mr. Steve Burkhalter
Ms. Babs Mollere
Mr. Curtis Pellerin
Ms. Betty Rowell

CLASS OF 2027

Mr. John Fetzer
Mr. Bill Goforth
Mr. Richard Lewis,
Treasurer
Rev. Brian Mercer
Mr. Austin Robertson
Rev. Bill Willis

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

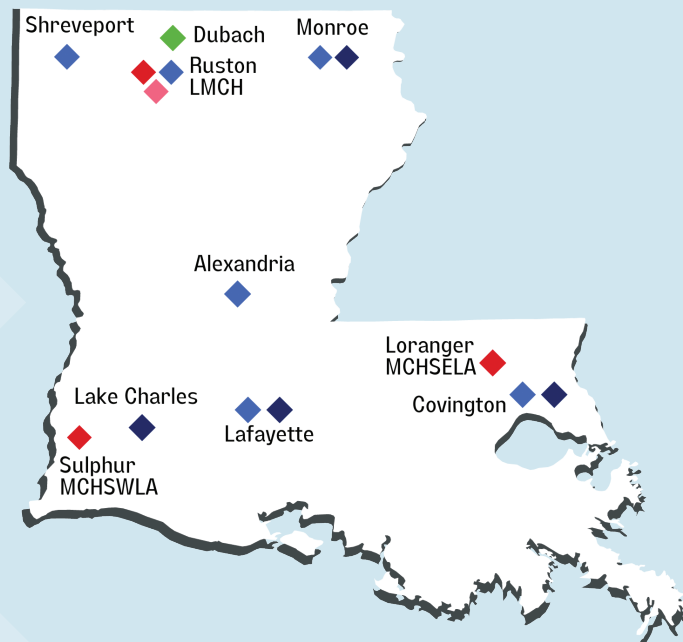
Rev. Delores J. Williamston
Mrs. Jennifer Swann
Mrs. Margery Manuel
Rev. Mark Lubbock
Rev. Tom Dolph
Rev. Karli Pidgeon
Rev. Francis Hooton
Rev. Kevin Smith
Rev. Doug de Graffenried
Mr. Rick Wheat

LIFE MEMBERS

Mr. Chris Andrews
Rev. Bob Burgess
Mr. Terrel DeVille, *President Emeritus*
Mrs. Rosemary Ewing
Dr. William "Bill" W. Hutchinson
Mr. Jimmy Love

See Our Footprint Across The State

- Children's Home
- Foster Care
- Life Skills
- OWL Center
- Family Counseling Center



2023 IN REVIEW

**JANUARY**

We were honored to have the 105th Judith's Reading Room's library established on our Ruston campus. Judith's Reading Room is a nonprofit founded in 2010 to enrich lives and societies by proactively encouraging freedom through literacy. Our Ruston campus library received 124 brand-new books directly from our kids' wish lists.

JANUARY

We launched Methodist Aftercare Services, a new program of support for children and families to help children transition from intensive residential care back to their homes, reengage in their communities, and find the community supports necessary for continued progress.

**MARCH**

The Louisiana Tech Kappa Delta Annual Shamrock 5K Run was a huge success. This local sorority hosts a community-wide 5K run every year to benefit the Methodist Children's Home in Ruston, LA. We are excited to share that this year's Shamrock 5k raised over \$40,000.

**MARCH**

We established the new Dorothy Dupree Culinary Arts Center on our Ruston campus.

Dedicated in memory of Dorothy Dupree, this facility features a dedicated space for our kids to learn and cultivate essential culinary skills. The brand-new classroom and kitchen area feature teaching and learning stations designed explicitly for culinary instruction.

**MAY**

We dedicated the O.K. "Buddy" Davis Memorial Ball Field at the Louisiana Methodist Children's Home in memory of a local sportswriter committed to serving the community. Local supporters, staff, and volunteers came to the Home to celebrate Buddy's legacy. The new baseball field will support crucial recreational therapy for children receiving care.

MAY

Circles on a Mission is a biking and walking fundraising event held by First United Methodist Church DeRidder to benefit the Methodist Children's Home of Southwest Louisiana. The first annual event held in 2023 was a wonderful success.

FEBRUARY

We wished a big "Happy Birthday" to our Methodist Children's Home of Southeast Louisiana. We celebrated one year since opening the doors of our new Home in Loranger.

APRIL

The Louisiana Methodist Children's Home's Howard School scored in the highest category during an Alternative Education Site Review by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). Because of our high performance, LDOE designated Howard School an "Exemplar" among Louisiana's alternative schools.

**MAY**

May is National Foster Care Month, a time we use to show support for our network of foster families, foster children, volunteers, and staff. Methodist Foster Care (MFC) makes a significant difference in the lives of these children, offering them a safe and nurturing environment. Many extraordinary individuals step up daily to care for foster children in need.

JUNE

Our campaign to educate leaders that Louisiana’s children required a Children’s Ombudsman found success when Louisiana’s Legislature passed Senate Bill 137 on June 7. Two weeks later, on June 21, Governor John Bel Edwards signed SB 137 into law as Act 325 of the 2023 Legislature, creating the Louisiana Office of Child Ombudsman.



SEPTEMBER

We are excited to share a new model of care we designed and implemented on our three Children’s Home campuses. Now an integral part of our personalized treatment structure, the Community Model of Residential Care equips our boys and girls with the tools they need to become engaged community members.

DECEMBER

We love celebrating the Christmas season with our community at the OWL center at Christmas on the Farm. Families from all over participate in crafts, horse riding, petting zoo, maze, and much more! All proceeds directly support our mission.

JULY

The Bull Buteau Foundation’s Annual Sporting Clay Shoot raised funds to benefit our mission in north Louisiana. The event was made extra special with wooden items designed and handmade by our youth.



OCTOBER

The 43rd Annual Golf Classic,

presented by Argo Fine Imports and the MacMaster family, was held at Beau Chene Country Club in Mandeville, Louisiana. Proceeds from the Tournament benefit the children of the Methodist Children’s Home of Southeast Louisiana.



DECEMBER

Every year, community support of our angel tree program to ensure our

children have the best Christmas season. By purchasing toys and gifts from each child’s wishlist, our supporters make Christmas morning extra special for the youth in our care.

OCTOBER

Louisiana Tech’s Kappa Deltas hosted the inaugural KD Klassic, which benefitted the Methodist Children’s Home of Ruston.



6 |

RESIDENTIAL CARE

SERVICES: Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services (LUMCFS) provides comprehensive, intensive residential services to children ages 11-17 with emotional and behavioral needs in our three Children's Homes: Ruston, Sulphur, and Loranger. Youth in our care receive therapeutic, recreational, and educational opportunities to grow and heal.



"I am thankful for MCH because they took me in when I had nowhere to go. When I had no one who cared, they gave me family. They have given me the help I need to prosper and succeed."





412,687
days of care
over 10 years

44,746
days of care

237
youth served at
the Methodist
Children's Home
in Ruston, LA

381
number of youth
served statewide

81
youth served at the
Methodist Children's
Home of Southeast
Louisiana in
Sulphur, LA

63
youth served at the
Methodist Children's
Home of Southwest
Louisiana in
Loranger, LA

8

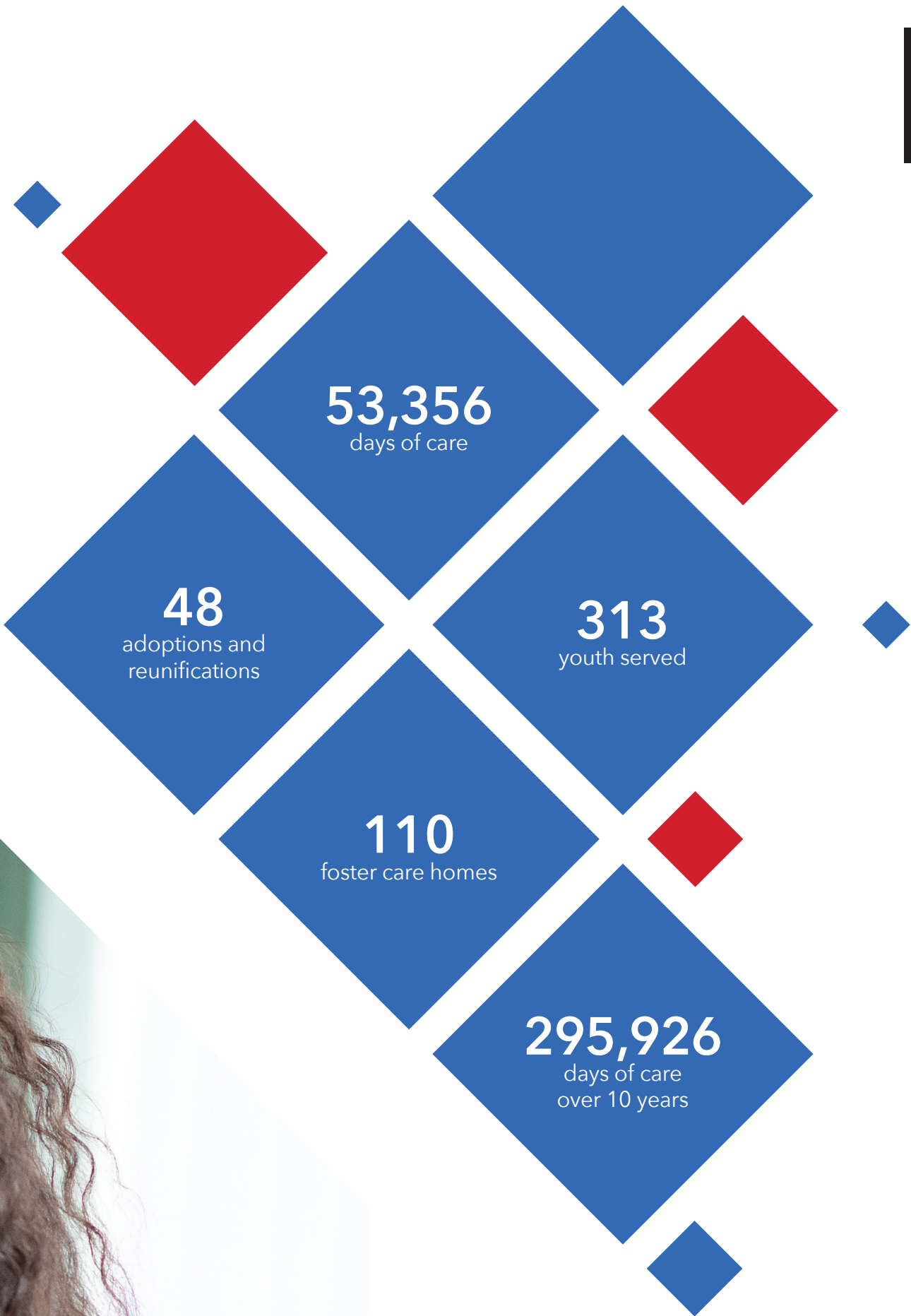
METHODIST FOSTER CARE

SERVICES: Methodist Foster Care (MFC) is Louisiana's largest therapeutic foster care provider. We care for children in desperate need of unconditional love and shelter. The MFC program recruits, trains, certifies, and actively supports a statewide network of families providing intensive foster care to 150 children. Our offices are in Alexandria, Covington, Lafayette, Shreveport, and Monroe.



"Methodist Foster Care was another avenue for me to share my love for children. I have not had a moment of regret because it makes me feel good knowing that I'm helping somebody. So many children need the love you share. If you have room in your heart, there is a kid who needs you. Methodist Foster Care is the way to go." - Linda Taylor, MFC Parent





(OWL) OUTDOOR WILDERNESS LEARNING CENTER

SERVICES: The OWL Center offers 800 acres of rolling hills and beautiful facilities for teamwork, family bonds, education, and fun. Our recreational, educational, and therapeutic activities utilize nature and outdoor experiences. Originally serving the children in our care, we welcome churches, schools, businesses, community groups, individuals, and families. The OWL Equine Center promotes health through horse interactions in a peaceful setting. It serves clients of all ages and backgrounds, including those with cognitive, physical, or behavioral challenges. As part of LUMCFS, we support at-risk youth and their families. Screamin' OWL Salsa and Jelly, made by LUMCFS staff and volunteers, helps fund OWL programs.

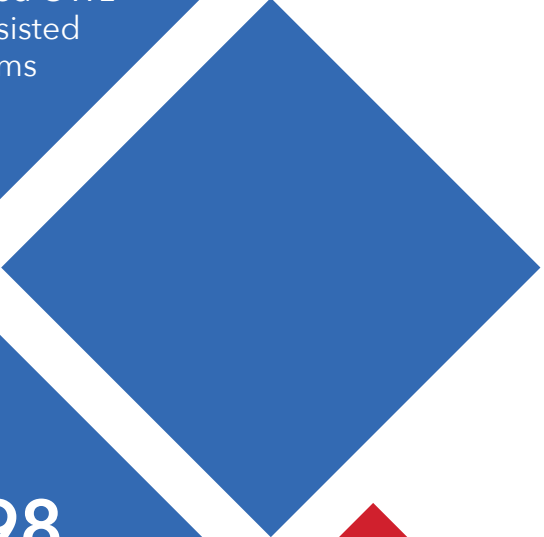
Isabella is a spunky, ambitious 13-year-old who loves horses and has dreamed of riding a horse her whole life. Despite being partially paralyzed and having cerebral palsy, Bella's passion for riding has grown. Through OWL Equine therapy, Bella's dream finally came true. Once she was finally on a horse, Bella couldn't believe what was happening. "I'm living my dream!" she exclaimed.

Her Grandmother Lauri shared, "Thanks to you, a dream has come true...because the OWL Center exists...Because of you, a dream continues."



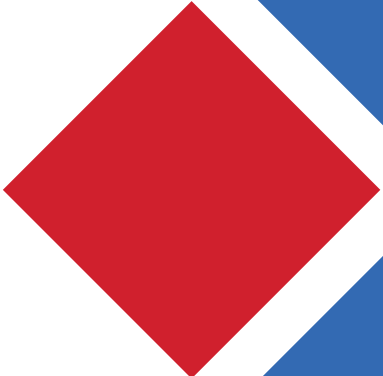
1,209
children and families
were provided OWL
equine-assisted
programs

11,782
individuals impacted
by OWL programs



88
groups served

7,498
hours of OWL
equine-assisted
programs



5,507
hours of OWL equine-
assisted and other
programs for
LUMCFS youth

3,858
number of volunteer
hours dedicated to
the Equine Center

118
individuals volunteered
at the OWL Center

Over
9,000
Screamin' OWL Salsa
and Jelly jars sold



12

LIFE SKILLS

SERVICES: Our Life Skills Training Centers offer a solid foundation for older children in foster care who are navigating the transitions into young adulthood. Tailored to meet teens where they are, Life Skills staff members guide them towards self-sufficiency. The journey to independent living can be daunting for young adults. Life Skills supports older children under LUMCFS care, as well as those in group homes and foster care in the Monroe, Covington, Lake Charles, and Lafayette regions. To enhance our impact, we collaborate with various community-based initiatives, including churches, transitional living facilities, and schools.



"All the people from Life Skills really care. They stay in my life, and I know that I can call them when I'm going through something. They are the only family I have that I can always count on." - R.B.



498
number of youth
served statewide

33
Summer/Holiday
classes and youth
engagement
activities

132
youth served
in Monroe area

114
youth served
in Covington area

152
youth served
in Lafayette area

100
youth served
in Lake Charles area





FAMILY COUNSELING CENTER

SERVICES: The Family Counseling Center (FCC) is deeply committed to our community. With over 40 years of service, we support individuals and families through life's challenges, offering help, hope, and healing for various issues, including depression, anxiety, grief, relationship conflicts, trauma, and more. Additionally, we provide divorce mediation services and diagnostic testing for individuals up to age 21. Our prevention activities include providing community education on mental health. Our goal is to see clients leave feeling better, wiser, and more confident.



"I am now living the life I've always wanted. I feel hopeful and positive right now. Within a couple of sessions, my therapist was able to bring out my confidence and positive energy."
- FCC client

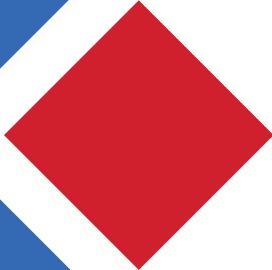


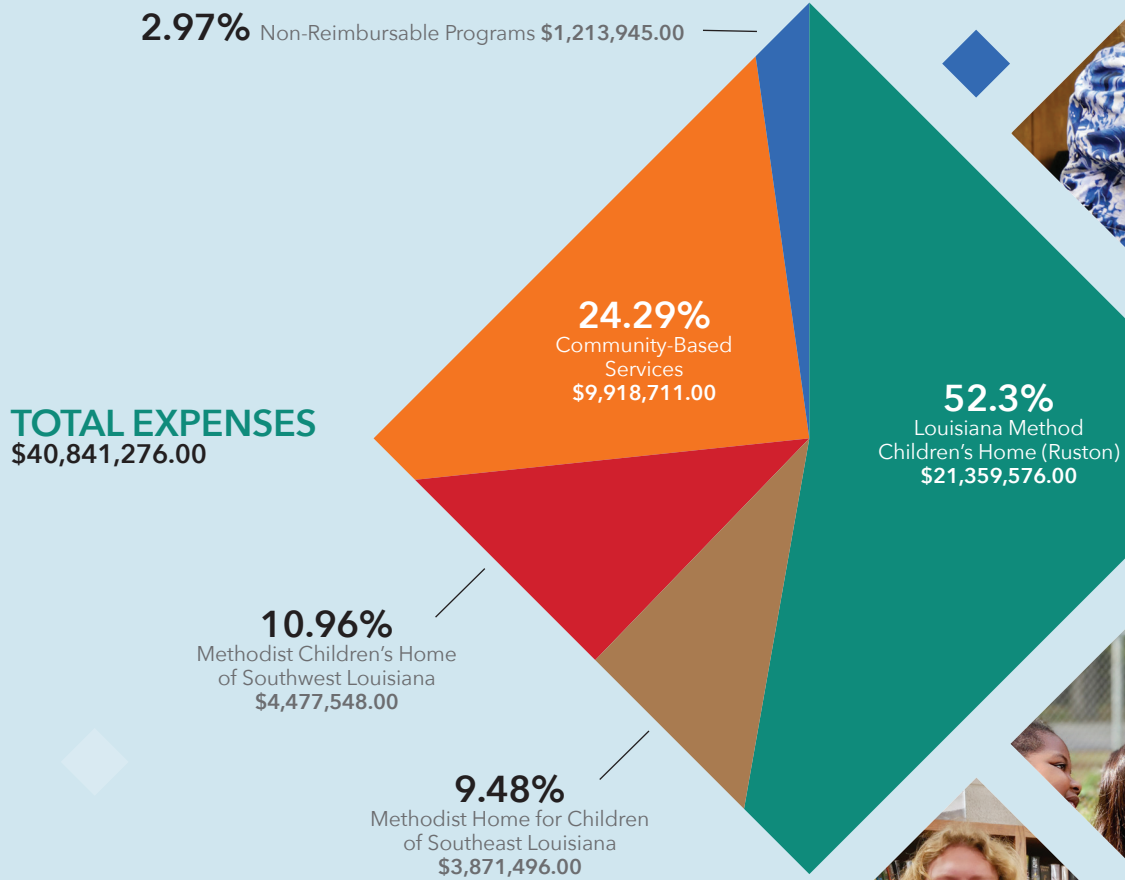
118
individuals served

1,507
sessions

609
sessions helped with
United Ways Grants

18
grief counseling
groups





YOUR IMPACT

Your support is crucial to our mission's success. With your help, we can provide high-quality care to children and families who need it most.

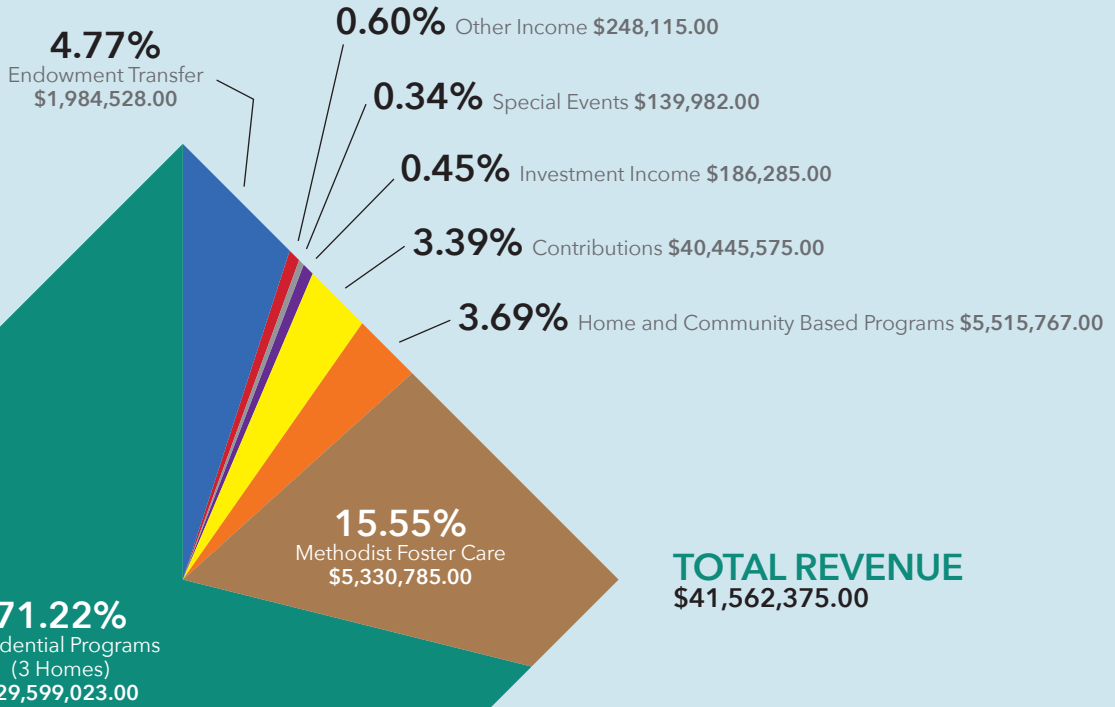
At LUMCFS, we go beyond offering a safe haven for children in crisis. We provide a comprehensive range of therapeutic services tailored to each child's unique needs.

From pastoral care, recreational care, and education in our Methodist Children's Homes to therapeutic foster care and equine therapy in the community, we aim to equip and empower every child in our care for bright futures.

Your charitable contributions play a vital role in making hope and healing possible.

You step in and bridge the gap where the payment we receive for services falls short, ensuring we can provide each child the comprehensive care they need. Howard School on our Ruston campus requires over \$800,000





in charitable funding annually to fill the gap and provide high-quality education to our children. Pastoral Care services in our Children's Homes are entirely funded by charitable support.

Together, these integrated efforts create a holistic approach to healing, breaking down the barriers children have built to protect themselves and fostering trust and growth.

Your ongoing support makes a profound difference in the lives of those we serve. Thank you for standing with us in our mission to help Louisiana's children thrive.

COMMUNITY MODEL OF RESIDENTIAL CARE

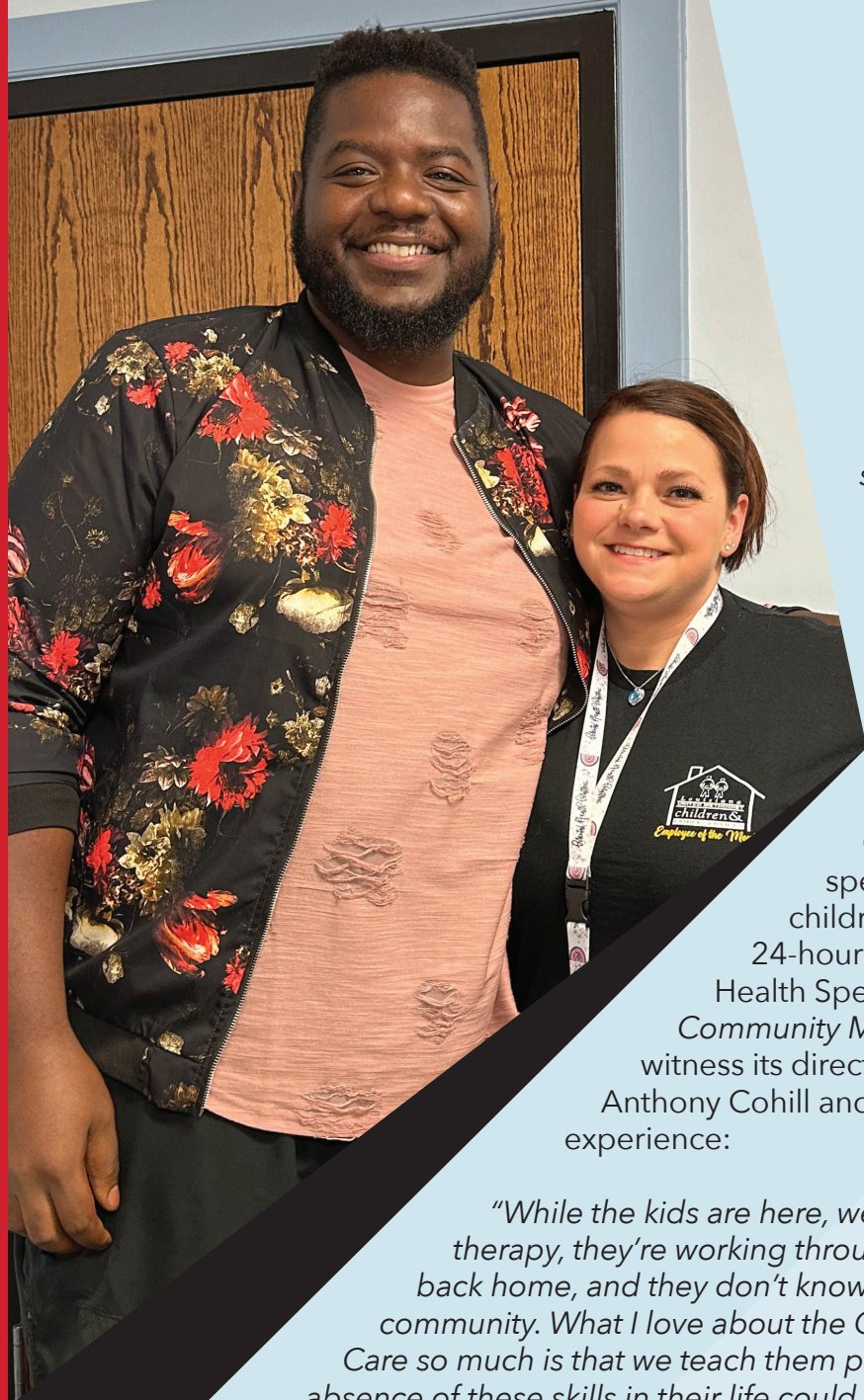
We meet our children where they are. We desire that our entire approach to healing will transform their lives.

We are very excited to share a new model of care we designed and implemented on our three Children's Home campuses. The *Community Model of Residential Care* equips our boys and girls with the tools they need to become engaged community members. Personalized treatment planning is foundational and assures individual growth and development. These personal experiences are crucial, but children must also establish themselves in communities after they leave our care. Living in a community is vital to their flourishing as young adults.

Dr. Wheeler, our Staff Psychologist, reports, "For the past couple of years, we've been developing our Model of Care...to teach the youth skills for being effective in a community. One of the six skill areas is Conflict Resolution, which is also a struggle for many adults. This skill group includes how to express our disagreement in a way that lowers others' defensiveness, how to respond when someone is upset with you, and other skills. Learning and applying skills like these could transform the lives of our clients, as well as ourselves."

"The Community Model of Residential Care is a program founded on Christian principles that therapeutically teaches basic everyday skills. During a community model event, a youth preparing to be discharged expressed how utilizing the skills had helped her during her stay here. When she shared her testimony, the smile of pride and empowerment was encouraging to other youth,





*staff, and myself.” - Jualevia Potts,
Clinical Clerk*

Dr. Wheeler and Ms. Jualevia collaborated to produce workbooks for staff and kids and traveled across the state to implement the Model at each Home in 2023.

Our Mental Health Specialists spend the most time with the children in our care. They provide 24-hour care and support. Our Mental Health Specialists are trained in the *Community Model of Residential Care* and witness its direct impact on our youth. Coaches Anthony Cohill and Kayla Woods share their experience:

“While the kids are here, we know that they’re getting therapy, they’re working through trauma ... and then go back home, and they don’t know any practical skills to use in a community. What I love about the Community Model of Residential Care so much is that we teach them practical things they will use. The absence of these skills in their life could send them back to a place like this, and we don’t want that.” - Kayla Woods, Mental Health Specialist, MCHSWLA

*“One of the great moments with one of our kids happened after we had a session of the Community Model of Residential Care ... one of the kids stayed back, and he looked at me and said, ‘I feel like I’m at home.’”
- Anthony Cohill, Mental Health Specialist, MCHSWLA*

The *Community Model of Residential Care* is already changing lives, one child at a time. Our children have their entire lives ahead, and community-building skills will aid them from childhood to young adulthood and beyond.

GUIDING OUR MISSION

For over 120 years, we have pursued our Mission. “We guide children and families home to experience God’s love by following the teachings of Christ.” We stand in the gap for children by providing the most comprehensive, intensive residential care for children based on treatment plans personally designed to meet their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. We serve children in communities, provide Methodist Aftercare Services, and advocate for the well-being of Louisiana’s children.

In 2023, LUMCFS served over 13,000 children, families, and individuals across the state. Our work would be impossible without the efforts of so many caring people. We are thankful to all who join our mission and help those in need.

How can you get involved?

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

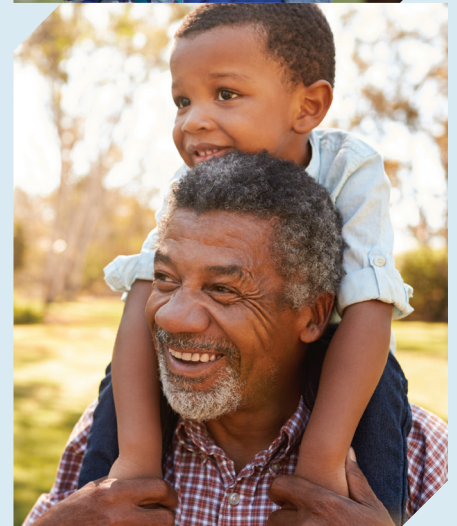
Every contribution advances our Mission. Whether you make a one-time donation, set up a recurring gift, or leave a legacy, your generosity sustains our intentional efforts to care for Louisiana’s children and families. Your support helps us break cycles of abuse and hardship, changing generations to come..

SUPPLY A CHANGE

A significant number of the children in our care arrive with limited belongings. We ensure they have shelter and all the essentials for healthy growth during their stay. Donations are crucial in maintaining well-stocked libraries, classrooms, activity rooms, and more, aiding in our children’s well-being. Holidays hold special significance for us, and support is essential to creating meaningful experiences for children who may have never celebrated them. Your practical gifts demonstrate the love and care these children deserve.

CONNECT YOUR COMMUNITY

We want to share our Mission with your community. Invite us to visit and share stories of our impact at your church, organization, or community gathering. Visit our website at LUMCFS.org or contact us at 318-242-4638.



CONTACT:

Phone: 318-242-4638

Email: dpr@LMCH.org

Location: 904 Deville Lane,
Ruston LA

Link: LUMCFS.org

Social Media: @LUMCFS

My therapist showed me that I didn't have to walk around with the weight of the world on my shoulders anymore.

I can honestly say that I'm alive today because of the staff at LMCH."

- A.R.

LOUISIANA UNITED METHODIST
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

904 DeVille Lane

P.O. Box 929

Ruston, Louisiana 71273-0929

p: 318.255.5020

www.LUMCFS.org

