

# The Loving Shepherd

## LSI Brief



### Christian organization endorses Loving Shepherd

The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability approved Loving Shepherd International for membership this year, demonstrating another way that LSI stays accountable with the donations it receives.

ECFA requires its members to receive an annual audit, maintain truthfulness in communication, create realistic donor expectations and more. Organizations such as "Focus on the Family" belong to ECFA.

"ECFA helps each one of us to honor our calling by ensuring that our stewardship is above reproach," said James Dobson of "Focus on the Family."

Loving Shepherd also belongs to the Joint Council on International Children's Services, National Association of Christian Child and Family Agencies, and North American Association of Christians in Social Work.

## Who we are

*Loving Shepherd International* is a Christian, not-for-profit adoption organization providing no-cost services to families. While we do not place children, we do help families in the pre-adoption, adoption and post-adoption phases of international, domestic and foster care adoptions.

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Jadon and Kiahna Agler enjoy the comforts of their new home at Jim and Pam Agler's, their adoptive parents. According to Pam, Loving Shepherd International was on hand in the beginning to help them through the adoption process.

## Milestones and happy endings

Loving Shepherd International has been providing unbiased and objective adoption information to families from every state for more than two years. We helped 136 new families in August, the most we have ever served in one month.

Families who contact LSI want guidance in several areas: whether to adopt, whether to adopt domestically or internationally, which of the 52 countries with available children is the best option, which of the 326 international adoption agencies in the United States is the best option, how to deal with post-adoption issues, and more. LSI is blessed to be a strategic part of such intimate and gratifying experiences.

Here are a few of the many hundreds of stories we have received.

**Louisiana** – "I have a friend who wants to give her child up, and I told her I would take it. So how would I go about doing so, and how much would it cost?"

**Texas** – "We are trying to start adoption in steps for financial reasons. There are so many choices. I'm really glad I found you to help give me straight facts. Thank you and God bless you."

**Florida** – "I am 34 years old, and I have experienced 12 miscarriages. We are so longing for a bundle of joy to make our lives complete. We have a lot of love to offer a child and are hoping that with God's help and yours, our dreams will finally come true. Thank you and God bless."

**Wisconsin** – "We have been married for 30 years and have four grown children and are looking to adopt. We are both 52 years old and are looking for the best way to pursue this."

Loving Shepherd has also recently heard from other families who have finished or are nearing the end of their journeys.

**Indiana** – We used Loving Shepherd during our adoption process, especially while



LSI will soon move to a new home at 112 N. Marion St. in Bluffton, Indiana. Currently, LSI operates out of two offices, but with a central location, we can more effectively coordinate our efforts and communication.

Like other endeavors, God has guided LSI through the acquisition process, and again, a very generous donor has made this dream a reality.

The building will need renovations, and LSI is asking anyone who would be interested in lending a hand to contact Alan Ringger at 260-565-3386. You don't need to be a master builder, just a willing servant.

Anyone interested in helping to financially support the renovations should send a gift to Loving Shepherd at P.O. Box 375, Bluffton, IN 46714. Thank you for your support and prayers.

## From the Word - By Ed Schwartz

At three orphanages recently in India, I looked into the eyes of young boys and girls – eyes that were bright and twinkling windows into hearts, souls and minds of great potential. I wondered if these children had hopes for families full of love, warmth and opportunity.

Regardless of where or how you live, life unleashes many uncertainties. For little children without parents, life seems especially uncertain. Fortunately, the Bible gives clear direction and examples of how people can provide safety, stability, love and families to God's little ones.

In Exodus 2, we read about Moses, who was sentenced to death by the Pharaoh's edict, but God protected him and had the Pharaoh's daughter adopt him. In Esther 2, we read of Mordecai taking Esther as his own daughter.

There is no greater encouragement toward adoption than thinking about our relationship with God. He invites us to join His family by adoption. He paid the price of adoption so we could become a part of His family.

One of the most beautiful word pictures in the Bible is found in Isaiah 43:11 – "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." Can you imagine the emotions flooding the minds and hearts of non-parented children when first held by the safe and loving arms of their new adoptive parents? The sense of warmth, safety and love would be almost impossible to grasp. Adoption is a wonderful opportunity to share God's love with a child.

## LSI Board

LSI is very fortunate to have diverse members on our board, including

**Sue Gratton** – A licensed counselor with a master's degree in social work.

**Tony Crowell** – A practicing attorney.

**Mark Gerber** – A pastor and CPA.

**Ryan Fiechter** – He and his wife, Darla, are adoptive parents of two boys.

**Joyce Fischer** – A pediatrician, she and her husband, Steve, are adoptive and foster parents.

## 2004 Highlights

- LSI was honored to be a part of the National Adoption and Foster Care Recruitment Summit in Washington D.C. on July 15-16. Approximately 1,000 foster care professionals as well as clergy from around the country attended to learn more about foster parenting and foster care adoption. Ed Schwartz, the president of LSI, was asked to be a speaker at the summit regarding how private, not-for-profit agencies can work with the government to help non-parented children find permanent homes.

- LSI provides adoption information and educational material to the adoption arena, families and government agencies. We also are searching for grants that will permit LSI to broaden our impact. Therefore, we were privileged to hire Chet Baumgartner as our resource development specialist. Chet comes to LSI with a journalism degree from Ball State University as well as experience at two Indiana newspapers.

## Seven Christian groups recording new Christian album to raise money for LSI

Loving Shepherd International is working with seven Christian groups from the Bluffton, Indiana, area to record an album of hymns. The album, due in the spring of 2005, will feature two to three songs from each group. Each song will help tell the ultimate adoption story: God's love and mercy toward us. Revenue from album sales after expenses will go to the mission of LSI to help more families with their adoption questions.

## Happy Endings: Loving Shepherd International measures success by helping families choose whether to adopt

*(Cont. from page 1)* we were still learning and deciding which way our adoptions would take us. Loving Shepherd's staff was on hand to allow us to talk about our options and listen to our concerns. Their loving, kind opinions were given and applied. We appreciate that they were there for us emotionally and spiritually during this long, difficult process

**California** – “We will be bringing home our Christmas present, our new daughter, on Dec. 22. We definitely would not have felt as comfortable using this agency had we not heard from your organization. It is a vital service that you provide. I have already referred a friend to LSI to help her narrow down an agency.”

**Florida** – “We have a wonderful, ‘fairy tale-ish’ adoption story. After searching the Internet for four very frustrating months, I finally contacted LSI because I was totally overwhelmed with all of the information on adoption I had found. We were considering a Russian adoption with an agency, but after contacting LSI and finding some negative information regarding the agency, we decided to adopt domestically ... You certainly did help guide us in the right direction.”

LSI measures success by our ability to assist families to adopt. It is also measured by our ability to help some families understand that adoption is not in their best interests. Success is measured in the role LSI can play nationally with adoption legislation and education. Success is measured in helping families complete the safest, most economical and most successful adoption possible.

## 2004 benefit auction a great success

LSI was blessed at our second annual benefit auction on June 15 with more than \$78,000 in revenue. We are humbled and very thankful that so many share the vision of LSI in helping children find loving and God-fearing homes. Among the more than 200 items sold were:

- A weekend trip to Marco Island
- A hog roast
- An hour of entertainment by a local gospel quartet
- A fishing trip to Louisiana
- Several volunteer hours donated by local youth

**SAVE THE DATE:** Next year, we will hold the benefit auction on **Friday, April 8.**



## Both government, private agencies helping as interest in adoption grows

Interest in adoption is growing significantly here in the United States. More families are looking to domestic and international adoption as a ministry as well as a way to grow their families. The Bush administration has helped bring faith-based, not-for-profit organizations alongside governmental agencies to create an adoption-friendly environment. Likewise, in the private sector, organizations and agencies are developing to encourage adoption and make it possible for families to finally adopt.

TMG (The Manna Group) in Gridley, Illinois, founded by Gary and Marla Ringger, has created a foundation that financially assists families in adoption.

Gateway Woods Children's Home in Leo, Indiana, is providing quality, affordable and family-focused adoption home studies for both domestic and international adoptions. Its pricing structure reduces the cost of adoption for families.

LSI is pleased to work with organizations around the country like TMG and Gateway Woods in furthering the interest of adoption.

## Opportunity

Thousands make the decision every year to adopt a child. Millions more have a heart for these hurting children but are not in a position to adopt. For those in the second group, a donation to Loving Shepherd will allow our ministry to help connect those pursuing adoption with children. We thank all of you who have supported this work and those choosing to do so now.

- Please send your tax-deductible gift using the enclosed envelope.

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Shepherd International*

PO Box 375  
Bluffton, IN 46714

Phone: 260-824-9000  
Fax: 260-824-9002  
Email: [Info@loving-shepherd.org](mailto:Info@loving-shepherd.org)

**Visit our Web site at:  
[www.loving-shepherd.org](http://www.loving-shepherd.org)**

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### **Mission Statement**

The mission of *Loving Shepherd International* is to bring honor to God by providing objective, no-cost advocacy, resources and direction to the entire spectrum of the international and domestic adoption field for the direct benefit of families and children.

This is accomplished by following the example of Jesus Christ as the loving shepherd in Isaiah 40:11: *"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."*



PO Box 375  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
(260) 824-9000

ADDRESS LABEL

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