Dear Friends,

Family caregivers provide valuable and essential support. This demanding role often brings many joys and challenges. In 2019, we continued working alongside caregivers to relieve stress, build skills and prepare for the future.

We continue to explore innovations that match changing circumstances in families and our state, while responding to growing demand. In 2019, we served 390 caregivers and provided 11,128 hours of respite care (a 66.5% increase from 2018). We conducted 1,904 sessions of caregiver counseling or coaching.

In the past year, we launched a new service: Emergency Care Planning for Caregivers. This helps caregivers put a plan in place, so they are ready in case a crisis or emergency happens. With the family, LSS provides an assessment, sets up meetings and outlines a plan for support. We also follow-up on the plan and provide referrals. Thanks to a grant from the Minnesota Division of Veterans Affairs, we also adapted this service to address the special circumstances of military families.

Technology continues to be essential. Through virtual caregiver support groups, we can now reach those who cannot attend a meeting in person. Our popular Powerful Tools for Caregivers course is now available online. Whether attending these classes in person or connecting through their digital device, caregivers can increase their self-care and confidence to handle difficult situations, emotions and decisions.

These supports are part of our menu of services. We also offer in-home respite care, group respite care, training and education, counseling and coaching.

It is a privilege to support our caregiving neighbors who demonstrate extraordinary love, dedication and courage. We are grateful to the volunteers, families, employees, donors, congregations and local leaders who make this possible.

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FINDING CONNECTION AND PEACE OF MIND

Tom and Jeannette Meszaros live on a farm in Hewitt, Minnesota. Five years ago, Tom received a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease. The couple managed at first, with support from their sons and occasional visits from longtime friend, Dave Rokes.

Then one day, Tom went missing for 18 hours. A sheriff found him 100 miles away from home — hungry, confused and experiencing delusions. The incident was traumatic for everyone, including Jeannette, who started to recognize a need for help.

She soon learned about LSS Caregiver Respite service. Through regular volunteer visits, it offers caregivers a break and positive social interactions for older adults needing support. Dave Rokes was invited to become an LSS respite care volunteer for the couple. He received training and now visits each week.

Dave and Tom discuss trucks, dogs and hunting, and like watching football games, combat films and John Wayne westerns. During visits, Jeannette runs errands and recharges through long walks, naps and crafting.

During visits, Jeannette can relax and Dave benefits, too. “It feels good to do something for someone else,” he said.