

Cornerstone, LSEM Serve Each Other in Long-Term Relationship

Timing and need brought together Cornerstone Schools and Lutheran Special Education Ministries (LSEM) in 1996. Today, it is the unique give-and-take relationship between the two organizations – not a legal document – that reinforces the bond.

“We are following God's lead in helping children,” says Jim Krone, named as LSEM's new president and CEO on Oct. 1. Both Krone and LSEM past president Roger DeMeyere speak of the special relationship between the two organizations as one engineered by providence.

In the early 1990s, the Lutheran School for the Deaf expanded its outreach to children of all special needs, including those with learning disabilities, dyslexia, autistic spectrum, ADD, speech/language impairment and emotional impairment. The ministry changed its name to LSEM and decided to sell the sprawling residential facility at Nevada and Helen in Detroit. Meanwhile, the newly formed Cornerstone Schools needed a home, says DeMeyere, who also was on the Cornerstone board at the time.

“It worked out so beautifully. (Cornerstone)

agreed to buy the property from LSEM and invited us to stay, rent-free, indefinitely,” says DeMeyere, who added that Cornerstone also agreed to keep LSEM's maintenance/custodial staff and invited the Lutheran Braille Workers to keep their existing space.

LSEM started providing services to Cornerstone even before the sale of the Nevada property in 1996. Beyond the Nevada campus, LSEM serves families, schools and churches across the United States. It provides diagnostics, workshops and materials, and partners with schools and churches.

“(We) are here to support any child that has difficulty in the classroom,” says Krone. “We will help to understand what the needs of the child are.”

Krone says the national office team of LSEM is housed at the Nevada campus in what used to be the girl's dormitory at the former school for the deaf. The two LSEM teachers, one full-time and one half-time, have classroom/office space provided in the school. They are trained in the latest testing and evaluation processes to address the

needs of Nevada primary and middle school students; LSEM does not work with Cornerstone's charter schools.

“I hope that this relationship continues for many years and that my successor as well as CEO and Founding Chairman Clark Durant's successor will have the same relationship of cooperation,” says DeMeyere.



LSEM staff members L-R: Tim Winterstien, Director of Programs & Services; Erin Thornberry, Teacher/Consultant; Jan Schneider, Teacher/Consultant & Jim Krone, President/CEO.