



January 2008 Story Eight New Lutheran Blind Mission Outreach Centers

More than 55 million people in the world today are blind. In the United States alone, there are 12 million blind and visually impaired children and adults. Of these 12 million people:

- 95% are unchurched
- 50% are unemployed
- 60% are single and isolated
- 82% do not read Braille

Since 1999, Lutheran Blind Mission has established 40 Outreach Centers. The goal of an Outreach Center is to create a mission station based at a congregation to reach out to isolated blind people to demonstrate God's love. Outreach Centers use the social and physical needs of the blind community as an opportunity to share the Gospel. The blind outreach director, who knows where to find other blind people, facilitates regular gatherings including:

- Monthly fellowship meals
- Bible studies
- Braille classes
- Computer training
- Guide dog support
- Grief counseling
- Dress for success classes
- Job application reference and referral.

Center volunteers, many of whom are women from the LWML, help with daily living tasks such as banking, reading the mail and shopping.

Setting a goal to reach more blind people by the "blind leading the blind" is a clear witness for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Blind people trust other blind people because they know and understand firsthand the problems confronting them. Through the Outreach Centers, potential leaders are identified and connected with the Lutheran Blind Mission for training. On average, thirty new people are touched and receive the Gospel at each center in a year's time. The Lutheran Blind Mission Ministry plans to have 75 Outreach Centers open by the end of 2008.

The mission grant of \$40,000 will be used to open eight new Outreach Centers and provide training for the Outreach Directors.