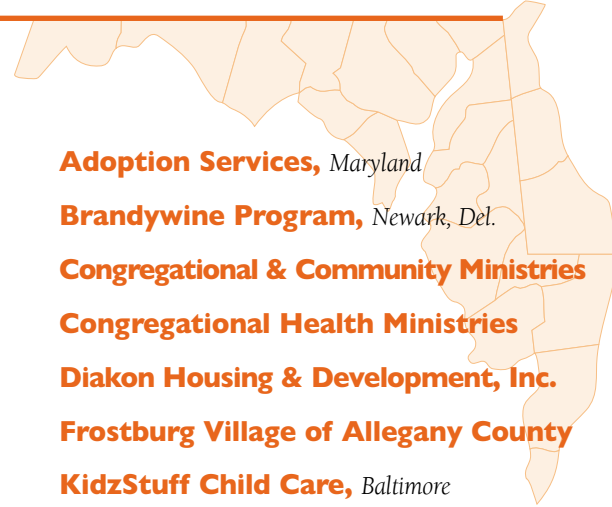


# DIAKONNECTION

SUMMER 2004



## Determination and faith guide recovery

Janet Shockley Elliott spent 42 years as a nurse, but nothing quite prepared her for the personal medical challenges she faced last year.

From the time she first learned her aorta was dilated to twice its normal size, through corrective surgery and a subsequent stroke, continuing through a touch-and-go recovery and rehabilitation still under way, the 69-year-old has had good moments and bad. But from her surgical experience at Cleveland Clinic in Ohio to her eventual rehabilitation at Diakon's *Frostburg Village*, Elliott held steadfast to her determination to recover—and to her faith.

"I am determined to walk again," she says. "The Lord has worked with me,

helping me. I have a wonderful family, a wonderful church family, wonderful care—so much support. It has strengthened my resolve to get better."

A Cumberland resident, Elliott retired from nursing in 1999 and settled in to enjoy retirement. She spent time taking care of her mother and serving as a parish nurse at her church. She enjoyed yard work and visiting with family including two nearby sons and a daughter in Florida. She skied, played tennis, and did water aerobics.

Then came the diagnosis.

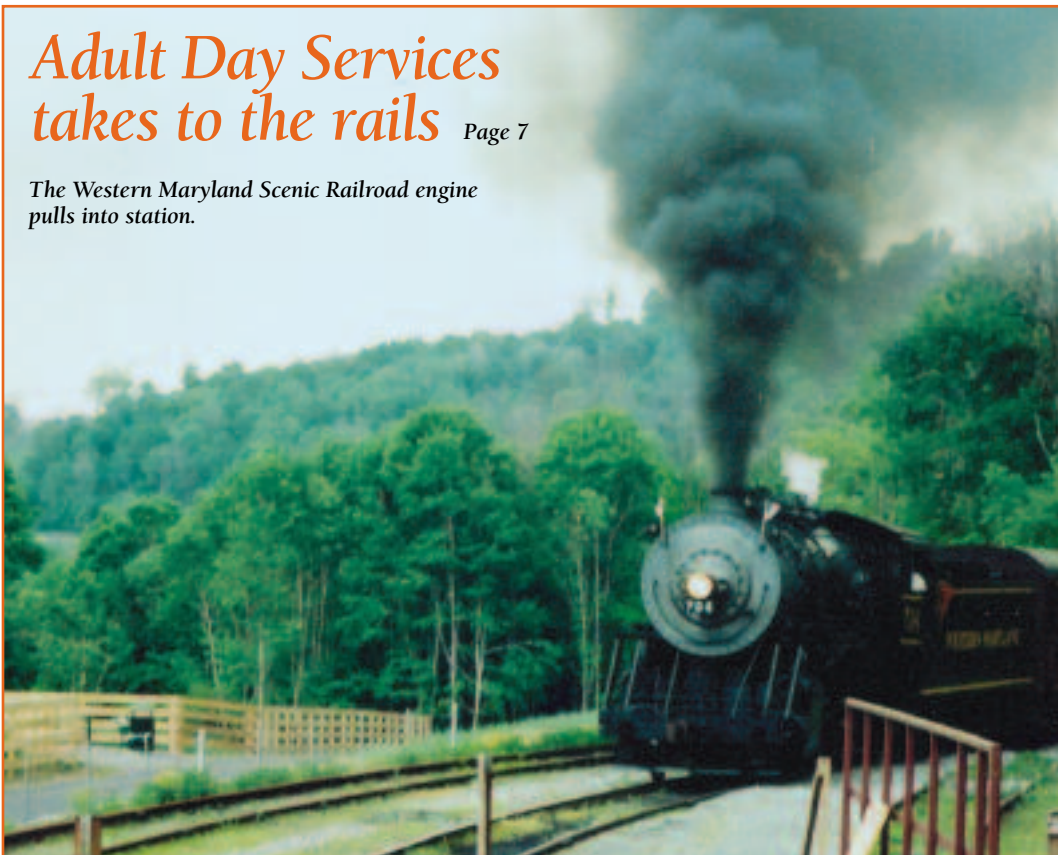
She immediately sought care from a specialist at the Cleveland Clinic. While the surgery went well, she explains, on the fifth

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- Adoption Services,** *Maryland*
- Brandywine Program,** *Newark, Del.*
- Congregational & Community Ministries**
- Congregational Health Ministries**
- Diakon Housing & Development, Inc.**
- Frostburg Village of Allegany County**
- KidzStuff Child Care,** *Baltimore*
- Lutheran Village at Harbor Pointe,** *Salisbury*
- Ravenwood Lutheran Village,** *Hagerstown*
- Refugee & Immigration Services**
- The Village at Robinwood,** *Hagerstown*
- Volunteer Home Care**

### Adult Day Services takes to the rails *Page 7*

*The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad engine pulls into station.*



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# Amazing Grace project Grandmothers find strength in numbers

**Mission:** In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service.

Diakon serves nearly 60,000 persons annually in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware through adoption, foster care, refugee services, volunteer home care, retirement villages, housing accommodations, congregational ministries, hospice services, and more.

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*Dialog*, including the regional *Diakonnection*, is published quarterly by Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries.

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When they get together, they share stories of children and grandchildren, just as grandmothers have always done.

But there's one important difference. These grandmothers are rearing their grandchildren.

For Callie Brown, a Baltimore grandmother, the get-together has been "a stress release. We share relationships and problems with each other," gaining strength through sharing common issues and solutions.

Brown is a member of the Amazing Grandmothers Project, a community program of Amazing Grace Lutheran Church, 2424 McElderry St., which has been nurturing grandparents and the children in their care for nearly three years. Diakon's *Congregational and Community Ministries* program in Baltimore has worked closely with the congregation on such community outreach.

The situation is not unique to Baltimore. Between 1990 and 2000, according to the American Association of Retired Persons, the number of grandparents rearing grandchildren rose 30 percent.

"In our program, grandchildren have ended up with grandparents because there has

been difficulty with the parents, from chemical dependency and incarceration to death," notes Deaconess Kati Kluckman-Ault, Amazing Grace's parish nurse and program coordinator for Diakon's *Family Life Services – Maryland*.

The Amazing Grace Project grew out of the Lutheran congregation's commitment to its urban neighborhood. Attentive to the "whole lives" of her congregation's members, the Rev. Karen Brau continually looks for ways to build community. When she heard that the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute was seeking grant proposals on substance-abuse prevention, she began discussions with a local elementary school about lessening abuse through good parenting.

"From that came the understanding of looking at grandparents who are raising their grandchildren," she explains. "The elementary school saw this as a group that really could benefit from some kind of innovative programming."

Before long, Brau, the elementary school, and the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing created a service model includ-

*Please see Page 3*



The Rev. Dawn E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president, left, and the Rev. Karen Brau, Amazing Grace pastor, second from left, with congregation members during the recent Lutheran Services in America award presentation.

# Network offers access to international adoptions

While *Diakon Adoption Services* focuses on the placement of waiting children in the U.S., its relationship with another Lutheran agency helps to streamline adoption for those interested in international placements.

Diakon is a member of the Lutheran Adoption Network. Through the network, families interested in such adoptions have a direct connection to international resources and need only to work with their local agency, such as Diakon, in the adoption process.

“We want to streamline the whole process for our families, so they don’t have any redundancy in paperwork,” says Ramona Hoyle, Diakon Adoption Services director for Maryland. The streamlining message is one LAN Director Susan Myers wants prospective adoptive families to hear about the network, formed three years ago.

“We have tremendous skills and knowledge, and Lutheran agencies have been doing wonderful work for many, many years,” Myers says of the network’s 30

agencies, five of which operate international adoption agencies in 10 foreign countries: Bulgaria, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine.

“LAN member-agencies can really own international programs through the network,” adds Myers, who visited the Diakon Adoption Services office in Baltimore in April. “They can offer the whole spectrum of international services to their local families without having to develop relationships and contracts with foreign governments because that has already been done.”

While Diakon Adoption Services is pleased with its LAN relationship, international adoption is a small part of the program’s focus. “Our intent is to offer quality services in a holistic way, and have all sorts of adoptions available for families,” says Hoyle. “We continue our commitment to ‘special needs’ adoption and waiting children here in this country. That is our history and a permanent part of our vision.”



Susan Myers, Lutheran Adoption Network director, holds Inga, an adopted child born without arms.

## Amazing Grandmothers project *Continued from Page 2*

ing an eight-week “nurturing program” presented by a facilitator. The weekly meetings began with a shared meal after which the student nurses accompanied the children to another room, where they could read, do homework, or play games. The grandmothers then took part in a program on how to nurture themselves and their grandchildren.

“There also was a spiritual component, reflecting on some kind of spiritual practice each time we got together,” adds Brau, noting that the program then moved to a monthly schedule. “That’s how we put it together, and we got the grant.”

That was nearly three years ago and, although the grant was for one year only, the Amazing Grandmothers Project continues today.

Callie Brown has been a member from the start because the group offers a chance to talk and discuss how to get help. “When we left that first meeting,” she recalls today, “it was like we didn’t have the pressure we

had from the beginning.”

The group has evolved over time, as participants “have shared some of their stories with me,” adds Kluckman-Ault, “and over time we have developed relationships that have made me better able to plan programs and activities closer to what they need. Part of what the programs do for the grandmothers is to decrease their isolation. Having the ability to sit down and have dinner with another grandmother in this situation is energy giving, affirming, and supporting.”

In addition, the program has grown. Kluckman-Ault leads a sister service for grandmothers in south Baltimore, in association with Thomas Johnson Elementary School.

“The common denominator for both groups is they are all grandmothers involved in the life of their grandkids,” she says. “I think they face a unique set of challenges—not the least of which is that this isn’t what they planned on doing at this point in their lives.”

### Lutheran Services in America

recently recognized Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries with a 2004 LSA Award for Excellence in the category of community building.

Because much of that community-building effort occurred in partnership with *Amazing Grace Lutheran Church* in Baltimore, Diakon shared its award with the congregation at the Delaware-Maryland Synod’s recent Celebrate Ministry event.

“The Rev. Karen Brau and members of Amazing Grace recognized the church’s mission to bring healing to members of their ailing community where drugs, violence, fractured families, and hopelessness are prevalent,” says the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president.

“We viewed the partnership between Diakon and Amazing Grace as a natural link in addressing needs holistically in this inner city neighborhood. Through our *Congregational Health Ministries* project, Deaconess/ Parish Nurse Kati Kluckman-Ault came on board to work with the pastor and congregation and engage the community in tangible ways to bring about holistic healing,” he says.

“Such projects are key to building better communities, while also creating tangible partnerships in mission between Diakon and congregations.”

# Residents reach 'Heights' in service

Their service reaches next door and around the world. And while they may have just received an award for that service, volunteerism is a tradition at Diakon's *Frostburg Heights Apartments*.

In fact, in 2003, the 40 or so regular volunteers at Frostburg Heights donated more than 3,500 hours of service—to recipients ranging from apartment neighbors to soldiers in Iraq.

For that service, they received Diakon's President's Award at the Delaware-Maryland Synod's annual Celebrate Ministry event in May. "We were very happy to recognize the tradition of volunteer service that has been part of Frostburg Heights," says the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president. "They are certainly an example for all of us."

Heights volunteers assist with meal preparation and service. They greet visitors, both in person and on the phone, serving as "Goodwill Ambassadors" for the Frostburg Village campus. They volunteer in support of other campus programs, including the nursing care center and adult day services program.

They create crafts to sell at an annual bazaar to benefit the Heights, organize soup suppers for residents, and tend the Heights' gardens and flowerbeds, adding beauty to their surroundings.

And their charity extends well beyond their home.

The volunteers have sewn knotted comforters and blankets for Lutheran World Relief, made baby afghans for a local preg-

nancy center and hospital pediatric unit, baked cookies and then raised funds to ship them to soldiers in Iraq, and made gifts for children served by Diakon's *KidzStuff Child Care Center* in Baltimore.

"Our volunteers are a very dependable, positive group and we are very blessed to work with them and to serve with them," says Rebecca Brown-McCusker, Heights director.



The Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president, recognizes Frostburg Heights volunteers. From left to right are McKee, Virginia Miller, Naomi Grove, Martha McNeil, Margaret Dawson (holding plaque), Alta Piercy, Hazel Kroll, and Anna McGann.

## Recovery *Continued from Page 1*

day of recovery she suffered a major spinal cord stroke.

"There was only a ten percent chance of complications from the surgery and the surgeon thought I was a good candidate because I had a strong heart," she says. But as a result of the stroke, she was paralyzed from the waist down.

Gradually, Elliott regained some feeling in her legs and was able to move two toes on each foot. Intensive rehabilitation over 40 days enabled her to gain more muscle tone and strength and she made plans to stay with her sons, continuing physical therapy as an outpatient.

However, she soon found she was "losing ground," as she describes it, and came to believe that outpatient therapy wasn't the right solution.

That's when Assisted Living at Frostburg Village, along with physical therapy, was

recommended for her. She felt hopeful again.

Yet another challenge came her way when illness struck and she had to transfer to Frostburg's Nursing Care Center. "When I got better," Elliott says, "I settled in at the center and was there for a month, with one-on-one physical therapy every day. Finally I was able to come back to assisted living."



Janet Shockey Elliott credits her faith and the rehab team at Frostburg Village for her continuing recovery.

Since returning to the village's assisted living accommodations in early May, Elliott has made more progress. She is able to bring herself up out of her wheelchair with the help of a walker and can maneuver the length of the dining room three times each try.

She also plans to make Frostburg Village her permanent home, having applied for an apartment at Frostburg Heights.

"My goal," she says, "is to walk again on my own and be independent. I do have some setbacks . . . but I don't get discouraged. I keep a journal of how I honestly feel, and I do my Bible readings."

Her care at Frostburg Village also has been a blessing, she adds.

"The therapists kept encouraging me," she says. "They would not let me give up. As a nurse, I am very impressed with this place."

# Interfaith Good Neighbors Volunteers needed to serve north Baltimore

With a small, but mighty workforce of 15 volunteers, Diakon's **Volunteer Home Care**—known locally as Interfaith Good Neighbors—helps to serve the needs of North Baltimore senior citizens who struggle with daily activities such as shopping, cooking, and cleaning.

And while the program has not grown as quickly as hoped, staff members are heartened by clients' positive feedback.

"We know we are helping people in need in our community," says Terry Langdon, director of Diakon's **Congregational and Community Ministries – Maryland**. The program is funded by a \$35,000 Faith In Action grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"We work with various congregations to recruit volunteers" to provide the supportive services, says Langdon. "We publicize that we are open to referrals through churches

and various community organizations."

Finding committed volunteers to provide companionship and assistance with shopping, light household chores, and transportation has proven challenging, however. "Everybody says there is a need for the program, but a lot of people are too busy and involved with other things to volunteer," says Barbara Ruland, program manager.

"Many parishioners [of the program's church-partners] don't live in their church's neighborhood anymore and drive into the city for church on Sunday. As a result, we are doing outreach to neighborhood groups to find volunteers, people who live where the need exists."

Because the number of available volunteers directly affects the number of people the program can serve, Ruland has adopted creative recruitment strategies. One day, for example, she had no one to transport a client to surgery, so she drove the woman herself.

"I waited with her and brought her homemade soup and biscuits for when she went home. I told her, 'When you have recovered, maybe you will want to help someone out.' She called me later and said, 'Sign me up. I'd like to volunteer.'"

Although not every volunteer will be found this way, Ruland and Langdon are confident the program will grow as awareness builds. In fact, a recent national advertising campaign sponsored by Faith in Action featuring actress Della Reese has attracted attention to Interfaith Good Neighbors as well as other Faith In Action programs in Maryland.

"We've received calls from people who have seen these ads," says Langdon, "and we are hopeful that, combined with our other outreach efforts, they will make the difference."

*For more information on how you can become an Interfaith Good Neighbors volunteer, call Barbara Ruland at (410) 631-0723.*

## WISH LIST

The following Diakon programs can use your assistance! If you or your congregation are able to donate any of these items or provide funding for their purchase, please contact Diakon's Office of Advancement at 1-888-582-2230, ext. 1219. Thank you!

### Adult Day Services of Frostburg Village

- Chairs for activity room
- Monetary donations for activity supplies
- VCR
- Picnic table

### Adult Day Services at Ravenwood

- LP 70 projector
- Projector screen
- Monetary donations to replace cushions on chairs
- Lockable file cabinet

### Brandywine Program

- Computer software for children (learning & recreational)

### Congregational & Community Ministries Congregational Health Ministries

- Blood pressure cuffs
- Stethoscopes
- Health-education materials (or funds to purchase) for parish nurses

### Volunteer Home Care

- Volunteers to provide transportation to

medical appointments or to other necessary errands or visit in person or by phone with homebound individuals in north and northeast Baltimore.

- Three-panel table-top display/presentation board

### Diakon Adoption Services

- Proxima projector
- Digital camera and camcorder
- Color printer
- Overhead projector & screen
- Recruitment posters and free advertising
- Photo albums and scrap books

### Frostburg Village of Allegany County Nursing Care Center

- Indoor garden cart with hand tools
- Patio furniture to include wooden rocking chairs
- Digital camera
- Exercise equipment
- Stereo system for multi-purpose room

### Assisted Living

- Wooden patio furniture
- Computer for resident use
- Digital camera

### KidzStuff Child Care

- Digital camera
- Laminating machine

- Die-cutting machine
- Movement and/or quiet time CDs
- Cot sheets for the classroom

### Mountain Glade Adult Day Services

- Bird seed
- Film for 35mm camera
- Art supplies
- Cordless telephone
- CDs or tapes

### Ravenwood Lutheran Village

- New patio furniture for porch
- Remote-control back-porch awning

### Refugee & Immigration Services

*New or used in good condition:*

- Televisions
- Vacuum cleaners
- Telephones
- Clock radios
- Pots and pans

### The Lutheran Village at Harbor Pointe

- Items for the Chapel Garden
- Sound system for dining room
- Seasonal floral arrangements
- Perennials for courtyard for SpecialCare residents
- Art supplies
- Treadmill

### The Village at Robinwood

- Pool table for cottage residents

# Diakon pursues public ministry with fragile urban community

Barclay sits deep inside Baltimore. It's an older community showing signs of age and lack of economic investment—the streets are not clean, crime has made the neighborhood unsafe, and abandoned homes are gaining ground on occupied ones.

Directly across the street from the community's elementary school is a state parole center. The City of Baltimore's 8,000 parolees—including sexual offenders—must report to this center. In fact, several parolees have been found wandering the halls of the school.

The situation took on special significance earlier this year when Barclay residents learned that the state planned to invest \$19 million in the parole center, solidifying its presence in their community for years.

When word of the plan reached the Rev. Stan Steele, Diakon's senior vice president for housing and community development, he jumped into action.

"We mobilized the community," he says. "Within a 24-hour period, we were able to get enough response through phone calls, faxes, and e-mails to the governor, state elected officials, and the mayor's office that, at the Board of Public Works' meeting, the governor pulled the plan from the agenda for 60 days to give additional time to look for a new site." As time passed, however, it became clear to Diakon that more action would be needed to ensure a long-term benefit for the community.

"I met with legislators from the 40th District. We discussed the issue and negotiated to put language into the state's capital budget so they could not move forward with construction of the new parole center until the state, city, and community representatives formed a working group that would look at the issue as a whole. We also asked them to consider other sites where the parole center would better function within its surroundings," explains Steele.

"Diakon helped people to focus on an issue, organize a response, and find the solution that would make the community



*The Rev. Stan Steele, left, meets with, left to right, Delano Bailey, Kay Biles, and Jane Honeycutt, active in the Barclay-Old Goucher-Midway Coalition that Diakon helped to form to improve Baltimore neighborhoods.*

a participant. That made everyone feel, 'We can accomplish something.'"

Efforts such as this are part of Diakon's recent initiative to play a public role in ministry with the poor and oppressed, says the Rev. Daun McKee, Ph.D., president/CEO.

"There is a lot of poverty in places where Diakon serves, and a large number of people living in these areas don't feel they have power over their lives," he says. "We want to try to empower them, advocate for them, so they become more independent in the way they go about living their lives. We need to determine how we can help people work together in their neighborhoods and confront those institutions—financial or political—that hinder their ability to have a better life."

Steele has been going door-to-door and meeting with residents in Baltimore communities like Barclay to get to know them and their needs, as well as to build trust. Typically, there are several blocks within economically depressed neighborhoods that are stable. These make a good starting point for Diakon's efforts, he says. "We're trying to identify those stronger blocks and focus on them by bringing people together," he notes, adding that efforts can include planting flowers, hanging porch lights, and helping residents to obtain small grants.

"We also identify people in the neighborhood who have skills, such as hanging drywall,

but who never thought about doing things on their own. We're trying to find ways to help them do these things."

Steele also wants to help residents address the problem of vacant housing.

"We need to address ways to secure those units, find a way to rehab them, and put new families in them," he says. Such efforts help to stabilize communities while building momentum and progress.

The Rev. Dale Dusman, pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Baltimore, has been working closely with Steele and has seen the early effects of the efforts.

"A positive outcome of Stan's presence here is that we are getting a lot of people talking who have never met before," he says. Diakon is dealing with a part of the picture—vacant housing—that no one has wanted to focus on, Dusman notes.

"It is great that people are saying, 'Yes, we need to make changes,'" he says. "There is so much to do that it can't fall on just one particular agency to do everything. Diakon can't come in and be the savior of the community, but they can help to make it better."

The City of Baltimore is open to people who have ideas and are willing to help, says McKee, making it an ideal location in which to develop a model for Diakon's efforts. Diakon then hopes to replicate the model in other urban *and* rural areas.

# All Aboard! Adult Day Services of Frostburg participants enjoy scenic train ride

The train ride was a Christmas present, even though it was given in May.

Those taking the ride didn't mind the delay a bit. For them, it was that special kind of day that builds lasting memories.

Sitting comfortably in their private, air-conditioned train car, the passengers—participants of *Adult Day Services of Frostburg Village*, Midland—drank in the western Maryland scenery that rolled by their windows.

Their conveyance was the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, which winds through mountains and tunnels along a 16-mile route from Cumberland to Frostburg.

The adult day services participants delighted in their close-up view of the countryside thanks to the talents and goodwill of masonry students at the Allegany County Career and Technical Education Center in Cresaptown.



Adult Day Services participant Wanda Cline, helped by students who raised funds for the train ride treat, waves as she gets ready to board the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad.



Participants of Adult Day Services of Frostburg Village ride in air-conditioned comfort on their own private train car.

Juniors and seniors in Ed Richards' masonry class, the students had visited the adult day services center in December to help participants celebrate Christmas with games, food, and fellowship.

"For many who spend Christmas alone, this was a very special day full of wonderful memories," says Jan Vogtman, director. "What a rewarding sight to see young and old interact and have so much fun together."

Best of all, the students had a special gift for the participants—an oversized gift certificate for the spring train ride. They had raised the money by raffling off stepping-stones and benches they had made and by selling sandwiches.

Nearly all center participants, along with 10 students and three teachers, took part in the train trip.

The participants snapped photographs along the way and screamed when their car became "pitch black" as they passed through the 914-foot Brush Tunnel.

All complimented the students:

"They helped us willingly."

"They sat and talked with us."

"They were real gentlemen."

**And all agreed they'd love to take the trip again!**

The train ride in which Diakon's *Adult Day Services of Frostburg Village* took part was certainly not the first for many center participants.

In fact, it brought back memories for many.

Wanda Cline, whose father was a train engineer, recalled rides as a child. Dorothea Cutter talked of her father, who was a conductor. And Gloria Kuhn, whose father was a brakeman, described her first solo train ride: "My dad put me on the train by myself at age 12 and told the conductor not to let me off until I reached my destination."

For Erma Sleeman, the ride recalled an important event in her life. "I rode the train from Steubenville to Pittsburgh in 1947," she says. "I was on my honeymoon."

For at least one participant, however, the ride was a first. At age 80, Ruth Hadley wasn't sure she wanted to go, but did and "really enjoyed the trip."

The scenic railroad travels parts of the same route used by the original Western Maryland Railway, which operated in the glory days of train transportation along with the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) and Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) lines.

# Continuum of care helps active resident get back to living

For Shirley Young, her daily trip to the mailbox is one of life's simple pleasures. And while she must rely on a walker to make the trip from her cottage at Diakon's *The Village at Robinwood*, someday, she knows, she'll make it unaided.

Of course, even the excursion via walker is a significant achievement for Young, diagnosed with paraplegia that left her without the use of her lower body. And while neighbors offered to retrieve her mail, she declined the offer. "Just to get to the mailbox was a goal," she says, "and I wanted to do it myself."

Reaching that goal required a lot of determination, hard work, and physical therapy for a person who, at one point, required two people to help her rise from bed.

Young, 83, moved to The Village at Robinwood when she began having trouble with the stairs in her two-story home in West Virginia. The move to Maryland was a sort of homecoming because her family had lived in Gaithersburg for many years.

She was in her cottage less than a month, however, when she broke her ankle.

"I went to assisted living and got therapy, but I was not getting better," she explains. A hospital neurologist discovered a tumor on her spine, with nerves wrapped around it. Suddenly, the problems she had experienced for years with her legs made sense.

Upon her hospital discharge, Young went to Diakon's sister facility in Hagerstown, *Ravenwood Lutheran Village*, for nursing care and rehabilitation.

"The only thing she could do when we first saw her was feed herself with her right hand," says Lori Lavelle, rehabilitation coordinator. "Her technical diagnosis was paraplegia. She needed maximum assistance. She was dependent for everything. But she showed early signs that she would progress, and she overcame every obstacle. After about three months, she progressed to needing minimal assistance."

She relocated to the Assisted Living Community at Ravenwood as she contin-

ued working with therapists. Soon she was able to dress herself, requiring assistance only with her shoes. Within two months, she was using a walker and was able to return to her cottage at Robinwood.

Lavelle points out that Young is unique in that she has experienced just about every type of care available at the Ravenwood and Robinwood villages.

"When she came back to her cottage, we did a home evaluation and recommended some adaptations to make her environment safe," Lavelle says. "She continues to do exercises on her own and to make subtle gains."

Young was so grateful to her Diakon therapists that she threw a party in their honor earlier this year.

"They really push you," she says, smiling. "There were some [residents] in therapy who didn't want to do what they were supposed to do to get better. But not me. I set goals for myself."

These days, Young is seldom idle. She



Since her inspiring rehabilitation, Shirley Young takes pleasure in a simple trip to her mailbox from her cottage at Robinwood.

entertains family and friends, who visit often. She helps out at the Robinwood Country Store. She goes on just about every outing Robinwood sponsors. And she was behind the start-up of bridge and book clubs at the village.

She's busy, she says, enjoying life.

*The following regional memorial gifts were received from January through May 2004. Diakon programs within the Delaware-Maryland Synod thank these donors for their generous gifts!*

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