

Big Spring Senior Center remembers veterans

It began as a suggestion to help service men and women spending Christmas in Iraq. But before long, members of the *Big Spring Senior Center* advisory council found themselves channeling their holiday spirit into the form of help for hospitalized veterans.

“It was the result of [an] advisory council meeting,” says Rausa Roscinski, manager of the Diakon-sponsored center, located in Newville. “We talked about sending cards to servicemen in Iraq, but you had to have specific names. Somebody

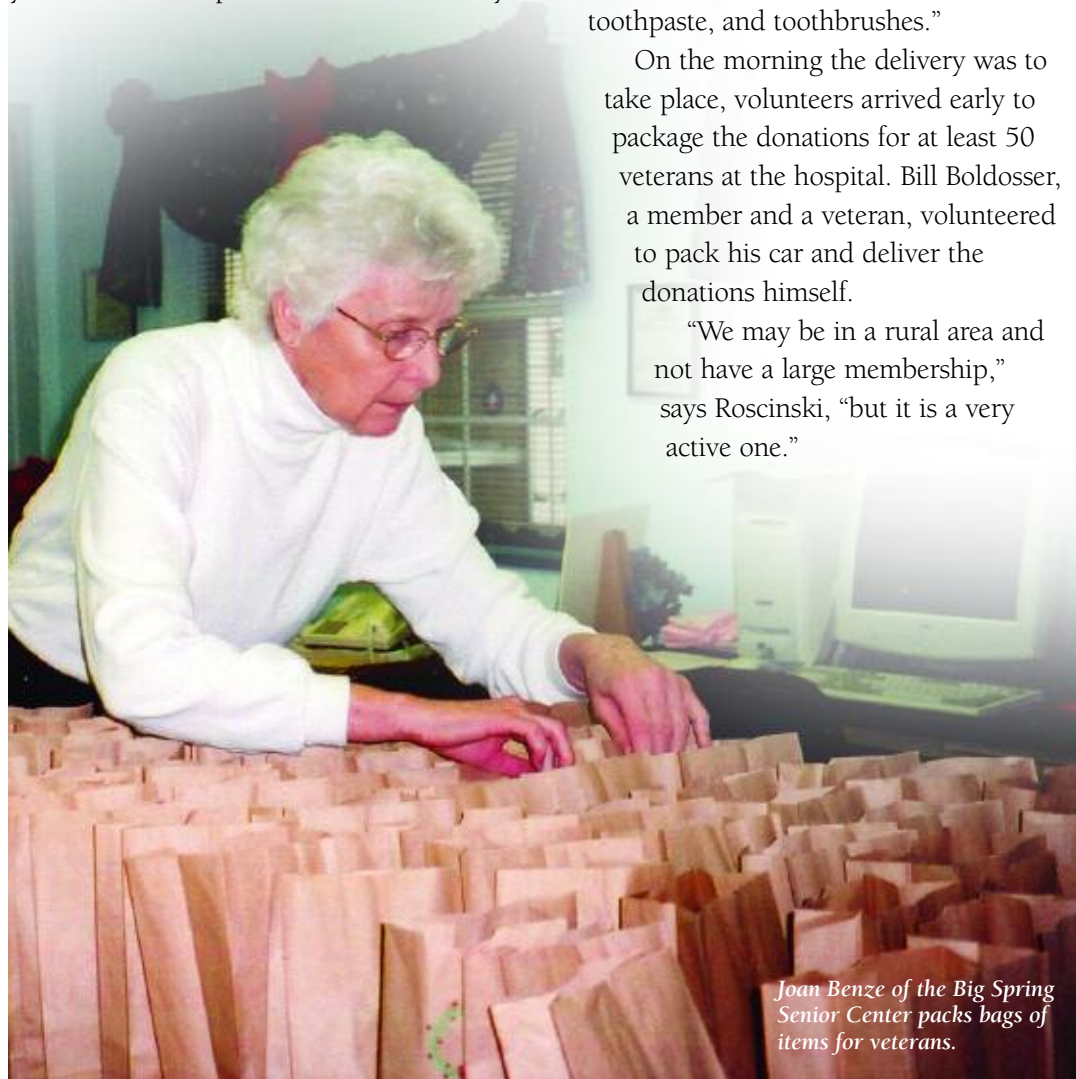
suggested that we remember the veterans. It snowballed from there.”

In two weeks’ time, members had mobilized and hundreds of baked goods and personal-care items were delivered to the center for distribution to the veterans hospital in Martinsburg, Va. Residents of local communities also supported the effort.

“The American Legion in town came to me with a \$100 check to buy items,” Roscinski says. “I got in touch with the VA hospital and they said they needed things like underwear, playing cards, notepaper, toothpaste, and toothbrushes.”

On the morning the delivery was to take place, volunteers arrived early to package the donations for at least 50 veterans at the hospital. Bill Boldosser, a member and a veteran, volunteered to pack his car and deliver the donations himself.

“We may be in a rural area and not have a large membership,” says Roscinski, “but it is a very active one.”



Joan Benze of the Big Spring Senior Center packs bags of items for veterans.

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HEADLINES

Greenhouse teaches

more than gardening 4

Sports Day

a hit with residents 5

Frey chapel paintings

draw many visitors 5

Seniors move

into electronic age 6

Donor’s forethought

provides enjoyment 6

Memorial gifts

aid Diakon ministries 6

Wilderness Center Horticultural program teaches more than planting

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 some 70,000 persons annually in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware through adoption, foster care, counseling, retirement communities, volunteer home care, congregational ministries, hospice services, and more.

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The 15-year-old boy had trouble listening. When he became stressed, his temper would flare. But when he was planting or weeding in the *TresslerCare Wilderness Center's* greenhouse, he had no problem keeping emotions under control.

That's because the new horticultural program offers a hands-on experience that may engage some students more effectively than a strictly academic setting, says Nina Poe, program manager. The Wilderness Center's programs serve at-risk youths from across the state.

"It doesn't just teach them about plants and horticultural processes," she says. "It teaches them about being responsible, taking direction, and working in a group."

The boy who found a way to control his emotions while working in the greenhouse believes the outlet had a positive influence for him.

"I'd come into the greenhouse, and I might be mad. Nina would ask me how my day was. She would talk to me about my problems while we were working," he says, adding that he enjoyed the physical work.

"Planting, weeding, anything that had to do with the greenhouse, I wanted to try. As time went on, I got into it. I always wanted to be here."

Poe agrees that the boy's fascination with the program helped his progress.

"He liked working with his hands. He liked the individual attention, and he liked feeling successful," she says. "It wasn't

beyond what he felt capable of doing. It was a very relaxed learning experience for him."

The physical activities and horticultural-learning processes are only part of what youths who participate in the Boiling Springs-area center's newest program can learn, Poe believes.

"The horticultural program is only a means to reach other goals," she says. "Learning to put tools away and handle them properly, as well as take direction, helps to teach the youths principles for living—being responsible on a job, taking care of things. Teaching how to treat plants translates into how to treat people."

WISH LIST

TresslerCare Wilderness Center 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 advancement office at 1-877-DIAKON-7, ext. 1219. Thank you!

- Funding for sleeping bags
- Graduation t-shirts for each student who successfully completes the program
- Funding for follow-up care such as therapeutic reminders to send with graduates, mailings, possible former-student reunion in summer
- Room air conditioners (window insert) & dehumidifiers
- Batteries (D, AA); Mag-style flashlights
- Undergarment—men's boxer (M, L, XL) and women's underwear (size 5, 6, 7)
- Hygiene products (toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, soap, small shampoo bottles, towels)
- Sponsorships for private referrals (for families needing financial assistance)
- Television (25-inch) – used is fine but with VCR/DVD hook-up
- Monetary donations for resource library



Sports Day a ‘slam-dunk’ with residents



Rene Portland

Penn State’s women’s varsity basketball coach Rene Portland made a “slam-dunk” speaking to residents of *Diakon’s Cumberland Crossings* at the retirement community’s first Sports Day this fall.

Portland has coached at Penn State for 24 years. Recognized as one of the finest women’s basketball coaches in the nation, she has won more than 600 games and led Penn State to 20 NCAA tournaments. She was named 2004 National Coach of the Year by the Women’s Basketball Coaches Association, as well as the 2004 Big Ten Coach of the Year.

Cumberland Crossings resident Stuart Kines, a Penn State graduate, arranged the Sports Day event. A member of the Penn State Booster Club in Carlisle and a longtime friend of Portland, he also arranged to have Leslie

Poolman, athletic director of Dickinson College and a former neighbor, speak.

“Some of the residents know me as ‘Mr. Penn State,’ so having Rene at this event was an obvious choice. Les Poolman was an old neighbor of mine so I knew he would do me the favor of visiting our facility,” says Kines.

In her hour-long presentation, Portland discussed her upbringing as one of seven children, her coaching career, the perks and hardships of being a Lady Lion, and her family. She is the mother of three and has also been a foster parent to several children.

Portland detailed recruiting efforts and the scholarships her athletes may receive. Her players are expected to pass all of their classes and at the same time volunteer in the community throughout the year. In fact, while Portland was speaking at Cumberland Crossings, her team was taking part in the “National Day of Care” by painting a care center within the community. “To whom much is given, much is expected, and that’s what my team needs to understand,” she says.

Earlier in the day Poolman, who grew up in England, spoke to residents about the challenges that Dickinson, being a small college, faces within its athletic department, including attendance at sporting events.

“Since Dickinson is a NCAA Division III

school, athletes are not given [athletic-based] scholarships. Unlike the Division I schools, we don’t get a chartered plane to take us to games; we get vans and buses,” says Poolman.

“It was great to have this event here. It was something different from our usual activities, and I believe the residents truly enjoyed it,” says Kines.

WISH LIST

Cumberland Crossings and Frey Village 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 advancement office at 1-877-DIAKON-7, ext. 1219. Thank you!

- New fitness equipment
- Pool lift (Cumberland Crossings)
- Furniture for nursing care center solariums and decorative borders for nursing care center resident rooms (Cumberland)
- Electric hi-low beds (Frey)
- Landscaping for courtyard area (Frey)
- Garden benches (Frey)
- Activity supplies (paper, paints, glue, Bingo prizes, and games)

Chapel paintings draw visitors to Frey Village

Residents and their families sit in front of them and discuss which one they like best.

The colors make the difference in this one. The intricate detail in that one shows natural talent. Choosing the best one just gets harder every year.

The topic of discussion? Christmas paintings that grace the chapel windows at Diakon’s *Frey Village* in Middletown. For more than 10 years, members of local youth groups and students from Diakon’s TresslerCare Wilderness Center have been showcasing their artistic talents with the support of the Frey Village Auxiliary.

“In September I send out letters inviting them to participate,” says Kathy Nelson,

volunteer coordinator. “They come in right after Thanksgiving” to begin the paintings.

In addition to prompting numerous conversations, the windows bring members of local congregations to the village. “They carol in the halls and come to see the artwork,” says Nelson, adding that seven youth groups participated this year, each receiving \$25 toward the cost of their supplies. “It is a great way to have more people involved.”

When voting ended just before Christmas, the top vote-getter was Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of Hershey, which received \$100 for its five-panel depiction of the nativity. Second place and \$75 went to St. Peter Lutheran Church of Middletown. St. Peter Lutheran Church of Highspire took home



One of Frey Village’s chapel windows as decorated by a youth group.

third place and \$50. Other participants included youth groups from Seven Sorrows School and Evangelical United Methodist Church, both in Middletown, as well as the youths from the wilderness center.

Center members move into digital age with computer lab

Two times a week, members of the *Mechanicsburg Area Senior Center* gather in their computer lab, jostling for position at one of six workstations.

Although the opportunity to learn the workings of a computer wasn't an option at the center just a year ago, these older adults are now learning the thrill of "surfing the web" and other benefits of the electronic age, thanks to a state grant.

"This is an exciting new venture for us," Susan Bratton, manager of the Diakon-sponsored center, says of the beginner and intermediate classes now offered. "When we learned of the \$5,000 grant through Senator Hal Mowery, I requested that part of the money be used to put together a computer lab with six workstations."

Although the workstations were completed by the end of 2003, Bratton had only two computers. A grant from the Office of Aging brought an additional computer, but it took negotiations with AARP and a machine donated by the West Shore Senior Center in New Cumberland to fill all six workstations with computers.

"October 15, 2004, was the first class, and we had nine people attend," Bratton says. "They had to take turns at the computers."

Comcast Cable taught the popular class

as part of its Seniors Surf the Net program. Comcast also has donated Internet service for the center, making the classes possible.

"Comcast offers the class throughout the year in different senior centers and libraries in our area," explains Kristen Grossnickle, the Comcast representative who taught the initial class. "It is an introductory course that shows seniors the information that is available [on the Internet] and how to find it."

With the introductory class under their belts, center members quickly began taking the beginner and intermediate classes, which run in four-week increments.

"Most people in the beginner class roll over into the next class, because you don't really learn everything you need to know in four weeks," says Bratton. "The intermediate class is working on skills that are a little more sophisticated such as creating cards, banners, and more."

Janet Reinbrecht has taken the beginner class, even though she has worked on a computer since the late 1980s. "I have a computer, and I am frustrated all the time," she admits. "I thought this [class] would help fill in the blank spaces in my knowledge."

No matter what their motivation, Bratton points to one characteristic that every participant has in common: "They all share a healthy curiosity and willingness to learn something new."



Jack Schmidt leads an introductory computer course at the Mechanicsburg Area Senior Center. An active volunteer, Schmidt says he enjoys teaching the class because it reinforces his computer skills and gives him an opportunity to interact with others. From left to right are Millie F. Burger, Theodore R. Carty, Schmidt, and Harold R. Sherman.

The following regional memorial and honorary gifts were received from Sept. 23 to Dec. 31, 2004. Diakon programs in the Lower Susquehanna Synod thank these donors for their generous contributions.

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Donor's forethought provides years of enjoyment for residents

Each year, residents of Diakon's *Frey Village* at Middletown enjoy a variety of cultural and recreational programs, thanks to the generosity of the John and Blanche Smarsh Trust.

In fact, residents have been serenaded by musicians using antique instruments, they've kept time to bell choirs, and they have laughed their way through musical comedy.

Formed in the early 1980s, the Smarsh Trust supports the village's Friends of the Arts program and also designates funds to support staff-training projects, educational grants, and additional recreational offerings for residents.

"The John and Blanche Smarsh Trust enhances our program for residents," says Deanna Noble, director of residential services. "It provides entertainment that we

would not be able to provide otherwise."

For the 20 years the fund has supported village events, Friends of the Arts performances have included entertainers such as the Grandview Heights United Methodist Church bell choir, Still Simple Gifts, bagpipers, harpists, and actors presenting plays.

While the Smarsh Trust supports the village's cultural and recreational programs, other donors also have had a significant impact on village life, contributing to the general fund or helping to subsidize care for assisted-living residents who have exhausted their own financial resources.

For additional information on charitable giving, readers may contact Diakon's Office of Advancement at 1-877-DIAKON-7 (877-342-5667), ext. 1219.