

# DIAKON CONNECTION

WINTER-SPRING 2005

## A 'Good' volunteer!

The phrase "it's all in a name" holds especially true for a special **Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village** Cottage resident.

"Pearl Good's name says it all," says Emily Kerstetter, administrative assistant and volunteer coordinator at Assisted Living at Buffalo Valley. "Her name definitely suits her. She is always helping us out."

Thirteen years ago, Pearl Good and her husband, Jack, moved to The Cottages. Since then, she has assumed many volunteer tasks, including answering phones, assisting with activities, serving on the Resident Council Committee, interacting with residents, and lending a helping hand whenever needed.

"I was brought up in a home that taught that we are here to help one another. That's just what we do," says Good. "If you can make someone's day a little brighter, then it is worth it."

Good brings smiles to all she encounters, including assisted-living resident Sarah Ellen Mack, who describes Good as a wonderful person. "She is super. She is willing to do anything to help others."

Good even assists with an activity of which she herself was never fond—bingo. But that didn't stop her from calling bingo because she recognizes the game brings enjoyment to others.

"I was never really interested in bingo—but now I am interested in the people that play bingo. I have gotten to know the ladies, and I enjoy them. It is kind of funny. My first job volunteering was calling bingo, and I am still doing it. I guess that goes back to when you take on a project, you see it through."

That is just the kind of person Good is—dedicated to serving others. As a "cul-de-sac" representative, she often finds herself knee-high in stacks of materials to deliver to the

local cottages. The Goods also open their home to prospective independent-living residents.

"Why not open our home to new people? I like meeting new people and if we can help another person make a decision to move here and be as happy as we are, then it is worth it."

Kerstetter says the village is blessed to have volunteers such as Good. "We have so many wonderful volunteers and Pearl is one of them. We appreciate them all."

Signs of appreciation are something Good frequently encounters in her volunteer efforts. No matter which task she performs, she says she receives satisfaction through helping others—which is why she will continue to volunteer as long as she is able.

"I am convinced that it is not what we do for them, but it's what they do for us. Their smiles...their thank-yous...It goes both ways!"



Pearl Good calls bingo at Buffalo Valley.

**Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village,**  
Lewisburg

**Congregational Health Ministries**

**Diakon Adoption Services**

**Family Life Services**

**Locust Grove Retirement Village,**  
Mifflin

**Ohesson Manor,** Lewistown

**Penn Lutheran Village,** Selinsgrove

**TresslerCare**

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**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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*Dialog*, including the regional *Diakonnection*, is published three times annually by Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries.

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The late Gerry Singer as she worked on one of her mailing projects for Ohesson Manor.

# Resident volunteered as way ‘to stay young’

Gerry Singer could have been considered a postal worker, a baker, a crafter, and a helper—and that was just when she was wearing her volunteer hat.

The 98-year-old, who passed away just before *Dialog* went to print, became a resident volunteer “of many trades” shortly after she moved to Diakon’s *Ohesson Manor* four years ago. “I know it sounds funny, but I wanted to do something to keep my mind active—to stay young,” Singer had said.

To keep active, she assisted with mailing projects, baked and prepared goods for Ohesson’s bazaar, cut quilt squares with the “Patches with a Purpose” group, wrapped silverware for picnics, made table favors, and assisted with other activities when needed.

“She was just a very faithful, gracious lady,” says Kathie Yocum, activities director/volunteer coordinator. “It is amazing all the projects Gerry and our other volunteers have worked on.”

One of Singer’s larger projects was preparing newsletters, announcements, and calendars for mailings. Meticulously assembling the materials, she enjoyed seeing the project through. “This is something I am able to do, and I am willing to help,” she had said.

As the longest continuously active resident volunteer at Ohesson, Singer said she was fortunate that age hadn’t gotten in the way of helping others. “I am very fortunate . . . [and] eager to help. I like to know I am helping,” she told people.

Volunteers are crucial members of the Ohesson Manor team, says Wendy Knouse, director of admissions and marketing. “This facility wouldn’t be able to function at the level it does without volunteers such as Gerry. They are an absolute essential part of Ohesson Manor. All of us will deeply miss Gerry and the role she played in our community.”

## WISH LIST

Ohesson Manor 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!

- Low beds
- Vital signs monitor

# Family Life Services Advisory council vital link to community

When Gregory V. Smith was asked to join the advisory council of *Diakon's Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna* five years ago, he didn't hesitate in saying yes.

Director of TLC, a transitional living center for female offenders in Williamsport, Smith took on the new responsibility because he had seen firsthand the benefits of Family Life Services and knew its worth to the community.

"Very early on, I recognized the vital importance Family Life Services plays in our community through counseling and the use of the sliding-fee scale for families that cannot afford such services. It offers programs such as Girls on the Run, which enhances the quality of life in Lycoming County," he says.

In addition, many of TLC's residents receive addictions counseling, important to their success. "Family Life Services' counselors are helping our women overcome addictions.... They are changing lives and making our community safer as well."

Smith—and approximately 10 other persons—make up Family Life Services' advisory council. "Members are community-minded individuals who come together to represent Family Life Services," says Mark Basinger, program director. "The council is one of the vital lifelines for our organization."

Charged with several important functions, the advisory council secures funding through United Way. Every two years, members prepare a detailed presentation to obtain funding for the organization. "This year we received more than \$93,000 from the United Way," says Basinger.

Jen Lundy, current advisory council president, says the council also assists with fund-raising responsibilities through such events as the annual Spring Fling luncheon.

"This luncheon has really created awareness of Family Life Services and at the same time raised funds," she says, noting that the 2004 event raised approximately \$12,000. Coordinating event details is

## WISH LIST

Family Life Services 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 1-877-DIAKON-7, ext. 1219. Thank you!

- Scholarships for disadvantaged girls for the self-esteem raising/health lifestyle program, *Girls on the Run-Diakon*. The cost is \$25 per girl.

time-intensive, but "we wouldn't do it if we didn't believe in the organization," says Lundy. "I feel Family Life Services does wonderful things for the community."

The efforts are vital to program success, says Basinger. "We have had several years when their ability to raise funds for us has made the difference in our meeting budgetary needs."

Advisory council members also serve as liaisons with the community. Frani Doherty, involved with the council for 10 years, says one of the earliest roles of the council was to promote community awareness. "Life hurts for lots of people in many different ways. Not being able to get help is a real tragedy. The community needs to learn about Family Life Services," she says.

"These are volunteers. There is no monetary reward," says Basinger. "There is not a great deal of recognition for serving on the advisory council. They just do it out of the goodness of their hearts for the mission of the organization. To see these council members helping us do our job is uplifting."

"We know we are helping people, but we really never meet them," says Mary Engel, an advisory council member since 1989. "One time I saw a little girl skipping down the hall after her counselor. You just knew she would have a better tomorrow because someone was helping her today. That is why we do what we can do to help."



*Diakon's Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna collaborated with Lycoming/Canton Head Start to obtain a grant for \$55,000 from the Blue Ribbon Foundation. Entitled "Bridges," the project allows a master's level therapist to work with the families of Head Start children. In photo, from left to right, are Paul Rooney, board member of Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania; Lisa Baker, Blue Ribbon Foundation executive director; Anne Doerr, Head Start director; Mark Basinger, director of Family Life Services; Jen Sobjak, Family Life Services outreach worker; and John Comerford, Blue Cross.*

Photograph courtesy Douglas Minier/Sun-Gazette.

# Volunteer inspires

A simple request 11 years ago blossomed into years of dedicated volunteer service at **Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village**.

As a volunteer reading helper at the Lewisburg village's nursing care center, Janet Marra was approached to facilitate a reading activity for residents of the then-newly opened assisted living center.

"I said I'd give it a try for three months. Here it is eleven years later," says Marra of her program, Reading and Conversation with Janet. "Now it is just something I build my week around."

Most Wednesday afternoons, residents gather to listen to inspirational material read and discussed by Marra. "Most of the time we have a theme, but sometimes we have a 'potpourri day.' Sometimes I read jokes, inspirational material, or beautiful letters. The residents also get involved in the conversations and especially enjoy it when my husband comes in and plays his clarinet. I often joke that they like him better than me."

Mary Shively is one of the faithful

followers of Marra's program. "I look forward to this," she says. "She is so interesting. My eyes are beginning to fail, and I can't read." Shively's daughter, Mary Lytle of Harrisburg, often visits her mother on Wednesdays and enjoys attending the program as well.

"Janet does a wonderful job. She always talks about something current and interesting. It is so nice of her to give of her time. I just think it's wonderful."

"Janet brings the outside in," says Emily Kerstetter, administrative assistant and volunteer coordinator at the assisted living center. "She often tells of adventures that she has been on in her travels. It is very interesting for our residents."

Gladys Butler has attended the program since moving to the village. "I come here because I enjoy it so. Janet does a good job. She always has something different to share. She is exuberant."

The residents aren't the only ones who enjoy the activity. "There is so much wisdom and experience I gain" from the participants, says Marra. "They have



Janet Marra

touched my heart in so many ways. I get so much more than I can ever give. It is one of the best hours of my whole week."

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

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**In Honor of**

**The Staff of Locust Grove Retirement Village**

by Mr. and Mrs. Walter L. Riggan, Jr.

# Church support staff honored

For at least 30 years, Hazel Roush worked as a secretary at **Mazepa Lutheran Church**. "I love what I do—doing God's work and working with God's people," says Roush.

Over the years, she has received many signs of appreciation for her dedication and service, but none, she says, were as unique as the St. Martha's Day service that honored church support staff in the Upper Susquehanna Synod.

"I don't have words to describe it. It was unique. It is saying that we, the support staff, are appreciated. By doing this for us, it gives us a boost and empowerment," Roush says.

She and approximately 29 other attendees gathered for a time of feast, fellowship, and worship. The appreciation day—

sponsored by **Diakon's Family Life Services** in conjunction with Church Relations and the Rev. Ted Cockley, Buffalo Valley chaplain—was made possible by a grant from **Thrivent Financial for Lutherans**.

"This service meant a lot to me. It is a pat on the back," says Nancy Eggleton, administrative assistant at Christ Lutheran Church, Lewisburg, "It is uplifting to recognize our work as God's work."

Following commissioning, those in support-staff ministry were given an opportunity to participate in the anointing of hands by Cockley and synod Bishop A. Donald Main. "Having my hands anointed was just a wonderful and touching experience," says Janet Swank, executive secretary at Messiah Lutheran Church, Williamsport. "It is very special."