

DIAKON CONNECTION

FALL-WINTER 2005-2006



Stan Steele and Carolyn Rodgers

Rehab project makes homeownership possible

Carolyn Rodgers never thought she'd own a home.

But thanks to **Diakon Housing and Development, Inc.**, the long-time resident of a Baltimore rental property now has a place to call her own.

"This is the first house we've rehabbed in partnership with the Old Goucher Community Association and the Charles Village Benefits District," says the Rev. Stan Steele, Diakon's senior vice president for housing and development. "They received state funding and in partnership with them we bought a vacant house and rehabbed it. Now we have sold it to a first-time home buyer."

Since that sale late last year, two more houses in the Gilford Avenue block have been acquired and rehab work begun. "These houses are across the street from the one we rehabbed and are in great need of repair. One has been vacant for a while," says Steele.

Steele and his community partners are working to stabilize a neighborhood in a distressed urban environment that faces many challenges.

"We want to put more homeowners on the street, which stabilizes the block," he says of the area, which is anchored by a church. "By buying vacant homes and rehabbing them, we can make homeownership affordable for people who have lived in the community

for years and years."

Rodgers had rented in the neighborhood for nearly 30 years before moving into her new home with her two daughters and grandchildren just in time for Christmas of last year.

"We made it possible for her to stay in the neighborhood. Her house was being sold," Steele says. "This is where she wants to be. She is close to her mother, who lives four doors down from her new house."

In addition to an affordable mortgage rate, Rodgers received a house with numerous upgrades. The building features three bedrooms, one and a half baths, an upgraded kitchen with center island, and carpeted and hardwood floors.

"The house is beautiful inside," says Rodgers. "It has a dishwasher, air conditioning, ceiling fans, and different items. And I don't have to climb as many steps."

The rehabilitation project represents an exciting chapter in Diakon's ministry, says Steele. "We're working in a distressed urban environment and addressing their challenges in many ways. We're organizing people around issues important to them. We are also trying to establish and stabilize assets in the community so the community itself becomes more stable and individuals become holders of those assets."



- Brandywine Program**, Newark, Del.
- Congregational Ministries**
- Diakon Adoption Services**, Maryland
- Diakon Housing & Development, Inc.**
- Family Life Services**, Maryland and Delaware
- Frostburg Heights Apartments**, Frostburg
- KidzStuff Child Care**, Baltimore
- Ravenwood Lutheran Village**, Hagerstown
- The Village at Robinwood**, Hagerstown

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Scout project at Robinwood campus is ‘for the birds’

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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Aaron Wilhide has a whole new flock of feathered friends who live at Diakon’s *The Village at Robinwood*. And the human residents think he’s pretty great, too.

Wilhide, son of former maintenance technician Kenny Wilhide, worked with his father to construct 44 birdhouses to mount on posts, trees, and other structures around the campus.

The project began as a way to enhance the beauty to the Robinwood campus. Undeveloped acreage includes poles and stakes marking existing underground utilities. Residents and staff members put their heads together and decided to adorn the poles and stakes with birdhouses.

The win-win solution, they figured, would both enhance the environment and provide a nesting place for a variety of small birds.

Aaron undertook the birdhouse building as a community service project for Boy Scouts. The village supplied materials for the houses, Aaron and his dad assembled them, and residents helped to stain some and paint others bright red, blue, yellow, and green.

Although some residents were skeptical over the bright primary colors, birds began to use the houses within hours after they were mounted. Residents found the project to be a fun and different way to spend time together, praising Aaron for his efforts. He, in turn, says their help made it a lot easier.

“They asked for volunteers and I was happy to do it,” says Mary Hickerson. “It was

a good thing that he did.”

Though most residents had no prior experience at painting or making birdhouses, they were not deterred. “I painted woodwork once,” says Iva Heltivridle. “This was a lot of fun.”

Harold Lung had a little more experience. “I made wren houses as a kid on my grandmother’s farm,” he says. “I liked helping out.”

Kenny Wilhide is proud of his son’s efforts, noting that the project seemed to be enjoyable for everyone involved. As of fall, nearly all of the birdhouses had been occupied, with sparrows and tree and barn swallows the most common occupants.

WISH LIST

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!

The Village at Robinwood

- Wheelchair bus for activity outings
- Clocks for resident rooms
- Popcorn machine
- Computer for resident use
- Elevated garden box
- Wooden cabinets

Diakon Adoption Services

- Toiletry items for children
- School backpacks or duffel bags
- Gift cards of \$10 or more for discount or video stores for children to buy needed items
- Scrapbook supplies for adoption “life-books”

Family Life Services – Maryland

- Portable LCD PowerPoint projector
- Portable projection screen
- Calibrated blood pressure cuffs, health education materials, journal subscriptions and reading materials

Mountain Glade Adult Day Services

- Activities supplies such as colored paper, markers, glue sticks, and crayons
- Subscriptions such as Creative Forecasting, Birds and Blooms, The Upper Room
- DVDs (old movies or family-content movies)
- Discount-store gift cards



Carnival Day a big hit with kids and kids-at-heart

More than a thousand people, including about 400 children, found a lot to enjoy at Carnival Day at *The Village of Robinwood*, a Diakon senior living community.

Games and entertainment, plus an array of edible goodies, kept the crowd happy on a beautiful Saturday earlier this year.

The event, the first of its kind at the senior living community, featured pony rides and 10 different carnival games, with prizes for all. One clown made balloon animals for the youngsters, while another painted faces.

Held in conjunction with Robinwood Medical Center's annual Kid's Stuff Yard Sale across the street, the carnival offered an additional venue for fun.

Residents from both of Diakon's Hagerstown senior living communities—Robinwood and *Ravenwood Lutheran Village*—joined in the excitement. Shirley Young dressed as a clown and painted faces. Fran Rupp, John and Janet Porter, Harriet Downing, and Susan and Helen Logan helped at the ticket booth, the ice cream table, and some games. A youth group from Christ Lutheran Church in Hagerstown also assisted with games.

"The event was a big success," says Eric VanMetre, marketing/admissions director at The Village at Robinwood. "Through local business sponsorships of the carnival games and food sales, we raised \$1,750. The day



Shirley Young, a resident of the cottages at The Village of Robinwood, donned her best clown outfit to paint the faces of young visitors at the community's first Carnival Day.

was such a success that we will more than likely make this an annual event."

Funds raised are being used to purchase elevated planter boxes for residents and a supply of folding chairs for future events.

'Brandywine Idol' makes lasting impact

It may not have been "American Idol," but "Brandywine Idol" drew as much interest from the audience as its televised counterpart.

Clients and staff members of Diakon's *Brandywine Intensive Outpatient Program* recently participated in the program's first annual talent show, featuring singing, dancing, poetry, magic, and more. After the group's initial performance, they returned a week later for a special performance just for parents.

"We're always looking for activities that will be therapeutic for our clients," explains J. Roy Cannon, the Delaware program's clinical director. "Many of our kids have difficulties with self-esteem, so giving them an opportunity to

shine and perform in front of their peers and family was an opportunity for them to be successful." Parents, especially, were pleased with the performance.

"Sometimes parents get used to the idea that their children feel discouraged," says Cannon. "Having their children perform well really boosts their morale and confidence in their children's ability to succeed."

"It was very moving to watch our kids—who have rare opportunities to shine—get up and perform in front of staff and peers," says Fern Spellman, Brandywine director. "This was another reminder of how much of an impact we can make."

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Brandywine Program

- Computer software for children

KidzStuff Child Care

- Volunteers and substitutes
- Mentors/tutors for school-aged children
- Transportation grant for a new bus

Diakon's *KidzStuff Child Care* program in Baltimore won a drawing to go trick-or-treating at United Way of Central Maryland's headquarters in the city. Students participated in a variety of costumes. In 2006, the child care program will be relocating to a newly refurbished center (see the lead article on the cover of this issue of *Dialog*).



Resident's search for the right senior living solution leads to Ravenwood

People choose Diakon's senior living communities for a variety of reasons.

For some it's a sort of homecoming, as they move back to the area in which they grew up to enjoy retirement years. Others know someone who lives in a Diakon community and like what they've seen. Still others check out various options, often with family members aiding in the search, and find there's something about the Diakon community that makes it just right for them.

That's what happened for Betty Wise, a resident since September 2004 of Diakon's **Ravenwood Lutheran Village** in Hagerstown.

One of her daughters, who lives in Washington County, helped her mother find a new home close by when Wise decided to return north after the death of her husband. Wise and her husband had moved south after his retirement from the Federal Aviation Administration and had spent more than 25 years there. Before that, they had lived most of their married life in the Washington, D.C., area.

Wise's daughter began her search on the Internet. She learned of Diakon and then happened to come to Farm Day at Ravenwood Lutheran Village, a summer community event that transforms the campus into a farm for the day, complete with animals, entertainment, food, and farming equipment. She toured a cottage senior living accommodation and encouraged her mother to pay a visit.

Wise wanted to be near family members in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia and Ravenwood Lutheran Village proved to be a good central location. The living options also allowed her to maintain her independence while enjoying the peace of mind and camaraderie of



the senior living community.

"I wanted to be close to where my husband is buried—in Bedford County, Pa.," she says. "I grew up there and still have family there.

I also looked around Frederick . . . and in Pennsylvania, but this is a good place for me."

Wise reared three daughters and a son, occasionally working part-time for various churches. She has 13 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, with two more due as of late summer.

She speaks very proudly of her family and their accomplishments.

One of her grandsons is stationed in Iraq on his second tour of duty. Her family includes several physicians-in-training, as well as talented younger students, busy moms, and dedicated dads.

She also recalls fondly one of her own special accomplishments—that of helping a friend launch a successful program for troubled teens in Florida, called House of Hope. For many years she assisted in a variety of ways to support the youths housed and schooled in the program's home-like facilities.

Now that she's at Ravenwood, Wise has become involved with a care group at a local congregation, helping to pack boxes to send overseas, and she's looking for other opportunities to stay active and involved. Between visits with her extended family and activities on the Ravenwood campus, Wise aims to keep busy.

"I guess you could say I have a heart to serve," she says. "I'm open to whatever the Lord has in mind for me."

WISH LIST

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Ravenwood Lutheran Village

- Wheelchair bus for activity outings
- Clocks for resident rooms
- Expanded back porch and new canopy at nursing care center (Ravenwood)

Ravenwood Adult Day Services

- Digital camera with printer
- LCD projector
- Patio chairs and table
- Gas grill

In memoriam

The following regional memorial gifts were received between Jan. 1 through Oct. 21, 2005. Diakon programs in the Delaware-Maryland Synod thank these donors for their generous contributions.

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