

# DIAKON CONNECTION

## Rehab 'stars' celebrate success

They didn't let broken hips, knee replacements, strokes, surgeries, breathing or language obstacles get in their way. They were unstoppable—even indestructible, at least in spirit.

They—former nursing care center residents whose rehabilitation therapy enabled them to conquer a health barrier to return home—are **Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village's** "rehabilitation stars." And while all have different stories to tell, they all share a common denominator: the village's therapy team.

As part of National Rehabilitation Awareness Celebration Week this fall, the village's physical, occupational, and speech therapists invited former rehabilitation clients to a ceremony to recognize their transformations and successes.

"Before I began working here," Jamie Stahl, rehab-team member, told those at the ceremony, "I often thought of nursing homes as a final stop in one's life. That is not true here. Each of you returned home to live your lives and by gathering today, we wanted to remind you how special you are to us. We haven't forgot you—you have all become our friends and extended families."

The former clients received humorous awards that frequently conjured laughter, tears, or applause.

To Anna Snyder, her award of "most likely to be seen playing bingo" brought a smile to her face, but also stirred deep emotions. As a resident of the nursing care center for almost eight months, she endured a variety of challenges.

"The nurses can tell you, I almost died a couple of times," she says. When she first arrived at Buffalo Valley, she was extremely ill and could not walk on her own. However, she quickly became part of the village family and the rehab team worked with her between surgeries.



**Kuldip Kaur**  
receives recognition from therapist **Cheer Cole**

"I went from being bedfast to a wheel chair to a walker and then a cane. I could not have done it without them. They deserve the credit—all the staff does. They are like my kids. They even cried when I left."

One of the most recent successes is William Oldt. Having had a stroke, he arrived at the village unable to walk or move his right side. Today, he moves with amazing ease. "They told me that I was going to walk and I did," he says. "I just love them all—I really miss this place."

For Kuldip Kaur, a native of India, therapy was even able to transcend cultural and language barriers. She came to Buffalo Valley with a fractured hip—and unable to speak or understand English.

"The minute I took one look at her, I knew we had a special connection," says therapist Cheer Cole. "Although she couldn't understand English, I knew what she needed. We formed a bond." Since Kaur's rehabilitation, she has visited family in India, even though the trip included 16 hours on a plane and seven hours on a train.

The former residents are quick to say that the real stars may be the therapists who guided them to recovery. Donna Rearick, rehab team member, agrees that the process is a reciprocal one. The clients "don't realize how much they give us. They give us inspiration. They share their life stories. They have touched our lives. They make what we do worthwhile."

FALL-WINTER 2005-2006

**Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village,**  
Lewisburg

**Congregational Health Ministries**

**Diakon Adoption & Foster Care**

**Diakon Youth Center**

**Diakon Youth Services**

**Diakon Family Life Services –**  
Upper Susquehanna

**Ohesson Manor,** Lewistown

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# Parish nurses learn to treat body, mind, and spirit



As a registered nurse, Ellen Weaver knew the clinical aspects of nursing, but she wanted to learn how she could better serve her congregation as a parish nurse.

"I just didn't know enough about scripture and the religious aspects of parish nursing," says the member of Pleasant Gap United Methodist Church near State College.

Then she learned of a Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries course on parish nursing and health ministry. Upon completion of the multi-session course, which focuses on treating mind, body, and spirit, participants receive a certificate and will have earned 51.8 nursing contact hours.

"Foundational to parish nursing is the belief that all aspects of our lives are grounded in faith. In essence, the nurse bridges the secular and the spiritual worlds of his or her clients or congregation members," says Debbie Best, **Diakon Congregational Health Ministries** coordinator in the Upper Susquehanna Synod. "Parish nursing acknowledges the power of prayer and promotes health and wholeness even when a cure is not possible."

Along with Dr. Ruth Stoll and Bonnie Archer—both nurse educators—Best developed the local program in response to a survey that revealed the need for training. The course touches on an array of topics, including the history of parish nursing, the role of the parish nurse, health education for all ages, and family systems work.

Francine Everson of Faith Lutheran Church of Lewisburg says the course taught her new things in just the first few sessions. "I am already involved in the church and doing more. When I complete the course, I will even be able to do more—to me, it is very beneficial that I attend. It is teaching me different aspects of patient care and how I see myself as part of the family of Christ."

Everson and Weaver are just two of 13 persons who took part in the multi-faith training sessions, held locally at the Upper Susquehanna Synod office. Nine additional participants were enrolled in the same course at Penn State-Hershey Medical Center. The sessions were completed in December and November, respectively.

"I am grateful for this course. I am becoming even more aware of the voice of the Holy Spirit working through us," says Everson. "He speaks, and it teaches us to be open to listening for His voice. What we are learning is immeasurable, especially when you look at what we will be able to bring back to the congregation."

Weaver believes the program has helped her gain confidence in her role. "Parish nursing is my calling. I wanted to be able to make a difference, and this course is helping me to do just that."

*Program faculty will offer a second session in 2006 as well as provide continuing education opportunities on topics of need or interest. For more information, readers should contact Debbie Best at (570) 320-0520.*

## Family Life Services

# Girls are 'on the run'



Jessica Dunkleberger just couldn't get enough of Girls on the Run®—a program that encourages pre-teen girls to develop healthy lifestyles through running. "I did it during the school year, and it was so much fun that I wanted to come in the summer," she says.

Since the national program was implemented locally in 2004, area girls, educators, parents, and community representatives have embraced it.

"The response has been overwhelming," says Joan Evans of *Diakon Family Life Services* and GOTR council director. In 2004, "we had 188 participants. This year, we had four after-school programs—12 sessions at each school that 108 girls participated in. Plus we had more than 295 girls enrolled in the summer programs."

As part of efforts to knock down the walls of what program originator and four-time Iron-Man tri-athlete Molly Barker calls a "girl box"—a place where preoccupation with appearance and anxiety over being liked keep girls from fulfilling their potential and put them at risk for eating disorders, depression, and succumbing to peer pressure—GOTR summer programs were held at 18 participating elementary schools in Lycoming County.

The summer GOTR program is open to females who have completed the third, fourth or fifth grade. Although the program collects a \$10 per-week registration fee, no girls are denied participation because of financial need.

During GOTR "life training," students focus

on values, support systems, and community responsibility through activities and discussion.

"I've seen many programs come and go, but this one is different," says Linda Rommelt-Scott, Family Life Services outreach counselor and GOTR coach. "The physical activity hooks them. It gives them something concrete—a structure for change."

During warm-ups, workouts, and games, participants discuss such topics as media influence on self-perception, how to counteract bullying, and the importance of setting and accomplishing goals.

According to Dr. Portia Brandt, principal at Myers Elementary School, GOTR stresses that outward appearances are not as important as what is inside.

"This program helps them find their niche—where they fit in. They may not be a jock or a prom queen, but they learn they can be strong contributors and set their minds to accomplish anything."

"I've learned how to eat healthy because they taught us about good food to eat and about exercise, but the best part is the running. I love to run," says participant Autumn MacInnis.

On the last day of the summer program, several schools met at one GOTR site to run a 3K race—something they had trained for all week. "The best part is seeing the kids come together and accomplish things they never thought they could do," says Rommelt-Scott. "It's just amazing."

## 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!

### Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village

- Tape and CD players
- Calendars
- Anti-skid slipper socks
- Isotoner slippers for women
- CDs, DVDs, videos
- Games (checkers, UNO, dominoes, etc.)
- Fleece throws
- Clothing – mostly L-XL sizes  
(women – pullover or button-up sweaters, novelty/printed sweatshirts, button-up sweatshirts; men – L-XL pajama pants or sweatpants, sweatshirts, or flannel shirts)

### Congregational Ministries

- Funds to produce Health Ministry manual
- Funds for pedometers for clergy wellness, 2000 Steps program

As a service of *Diakon Family Life Services*, the local Girls on the Run® program is primarily funded by the West Branch Drug and Alcohol Abuse Commission and supported by private sponsors and corporate entities such as Labels by Pulizzi, Williamsport.

"We look forward to continuing our collaboration with Family Life Services and seeing the program reach out to our youth and create a positive impact on our communities," says Danielle Hardy, prevention program specialist at the D&A commission, which supports the program because it offers young females education on topics about which they "might not otherwise learn."

In addition to continuing the summer programs, Family Life Services staff member Joans Evans hopes to expand the GOTR after-school programs and implement the Girls on Track program for students in grades six through eight. Girls on Track debuted locally as a summer camp this year.

"Life truly is a journey," says Evans. "Programs such as these can help girls train for it. There is no better gift that we can offer the girls in our community than the realization that they are unique, strong, capable, beautiful young women."

If you would like to support this or other Family Life Services programs, contact Diakon's Office of Advancement at (717) 795-0470.

# Red hats mix service, fellowship at Ohesson

Underneath those red hats are big hearts. Just ask anyone who knows the members of the Ohesson Manor Red Hat Cardinals and the Lewistown Red Hat Gems.

As part of the Red Hats Society—one of the nation's largest social organizations for older adults—the Lewistown and *Ohesson Manor* chapters meet together monthly to socialize and conduct service projects.

The joint effort began when Kathie Yocum, activities director/volunteer coordinator at the Diakon senior living community contacted Gwen Wilson of the Lewistown chapter about creating a chapter at Ohesson.

"I just thought this would be a great thing for the residents to get involved with. It definitely engages them in the community, allows them to remain active, and gives them an opportunity to serve others through projects. They just love it," says Yocum.

"I look forward to this every month," says resident Madeline Suloff, chosen "Queen" of the Cardinals. "I enjoy the friendships and the interaction with others."

Ella Shirk, another resident, who meticulously made her own red hat, was excited when she heard the nursing center was forming a Red Hat chapter.

"I couldn't wait to join when I learned about it from the girls in the hobby room. I

thought it would be fun to do things with other people. I've really enjoyed getting out and doing activities together. One of the best things we did was sending the boxes off overseas. That just gave me so much pleasure."

Participating in Mission Afghanistan, the groups provided much-needed school supplies and gifts to children in Afghanistan and Iraq. Filling approximately 14 backpacks with school supplies, hats, gloves, socks, and "beanbag babies," the women formed an assembly to package the items.

"It was quite a day. The ladies knew that the backpacks they were stuffing would help the children. We packed eight boxes," says Yocum. At the end of the day, the women said a prayer to bless the boxes and the hands that would touch them.

Together, the two groups have also provided gifts to service men and women, such as long underwear, electrical adapters, and approximately 500 toys to be distributed to children affected by the wars.

Both groups are benefiting from their interaction. Gwen Wilson of Yeagertown says she enjoys their projects, but also relishes time spent with the Ohesson Manor members. "The ladies [the Cardinals] just love it. It makes you feel so good to know that they enjoy themselves."



Gwen Wilson, Red Hat "queen" from the Lewistown chapter, top, poses with Madeline Suloff, Ohesson Manor Red Hat leader.

## In Memoriam

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

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