



DIALOG

Diakon Community Services

Meeting the needs of older adults—where they live

IT'S A COMMON SCENARIO THESE DAYS, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS—as the population grows older, so does the demand for social services to meet residents' needs.

In one region of Pennsylvania—and now a second—Diakon Community Services is tackling the challenge head-on.

Whether it's teaching older adults how to remain fit and active, helping them to navigate the complex health-care system, feeding those who have difficulty leaving their home, or giving people a place to go for fun and fellowship, Diakon Community Services is offering a range of services to meet those needs.

In Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, for example, Diakon Community Services offers six programs, a number of which Diakon manages under a contract with the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services with funding by the state Department of Aging:

- **APPRISE**, which offers free one-on-one counseling to Medicare participants and, two days a week, staffs a statewide APPRISE telephone hotline;
- **Diakon Living & Learning**, which offers classes, events, trips and workshops for active older adults. Diakon Living & Learning is primarily funded by Diakon, grants, fees and donations as opposed to county funding;
- **Meals on Wheels**, which delivers lunches to older adults who face challenges in leaving their homes;
- **PrimeTime Health**, which helps older adults to stay fit, eat right and manage chronic conditions;
- **Senior Community Centers**, which are program sites that offer nutritious lunches, activities, games, classes and other services; and

- **Diakon Volunteers Serving Seniors**, which provides volunteer transportation to medical visits, social service appointments and the grocery store; in addition, its volunteers deliver monthly food totes and make wellness-related assurance calls to Meals on Wheels clients.

Shirley Melot of Berks County, Pennsylvania, relies on Diakon Volunteers Serving Seniors for transportation to medical appointments. Because she has not driven for two years, the result of health concerns, she calls the Diakon Community Services program “a blessing. I can’t say enough about the program!”



In addition, Diakon Volunteers Serving Seniors provides transportation assistance to older adults in Berks County (with funding from the Berks County Area Agency on Aging through the state Department of Aging) and in northern regions of Dauphin County.

Moreover, Diakon Community Services recently began overseeing the APPRISE program in Pike County, Pennsylvania, through a contract with the Pike County Area Agency on Aging (see the story on Page 6).

“We have great relationships with the counties,” says Karen Wood, Diakon Community Services director. “We complement each other and in some regards we’re almost an extension of what they do. It helps in Schuylkill County that Diakon Community Services has all of these programs under one roof and can work efficiently and effectively in partnership with the county.”

Successful management of these types of community-based services has long been a focus of Diakon, she adds. “We are seen as being effective in this work and are very proud of the positive impact we’re having on the lives of older people.”

How do the programs offered by Diakon Community Services make a difference in lives?

APPRISE

Sarah Yost, Pottsville, says the APPRISE program was “invaluable” when she and her husband signed up for Medicare. “The volunteers were fantastic—very knowledgeable and polite. We had no idea where to start, but they helped with everything. They told us what our options were and made the whole process so easy. It’s a wonderful service. I

Our Mission

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service.

Diakon: Many Hands, guided by One Heart, transforming the lives of children, families and older adults. With programs ranging from adoption, foster care and at-risk youth services to counseling and comprehensive senior living services, Diakon annually helps thousands of people of all faiths through compassionate service, gracious hospitality and charitable care.

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Dialog is published twice yearly by Diakon's Office of Corporate Communications & Public Relations.

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Fall 2015 • Volume 15, No. 2

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The President's DIALOG



Mark T. Pile

A concerted effort to have staff 'Stay!'

I RECENTLY COMPLETED MY ANNUAL "STATE-OF-THE-ORGANIZATION" VISITS to Diakon program sites and senior living communities—occasions that always leave me feeling so thankful for the quality of staff colleagues who serve our residents, patients, clients and participants.

The Many Hands truly are the One Heart of our mission to serve children, youths, families and adults of all ages.

That sense, in fact, is at the "heart" of something different—Diakon's use of a cutting-edge employee-focused program known as the "Stay Interview."

Developed by author and employee-engagement consultant Richard Finnegan, whom Diakon had address our leadership council, the Stay Interview is an annual process through which supervisors, one-on-one, ask the staff colleagues with whom they work: "What is it that keeps you working for us? What causes you to stay?"

Not a performance review, the Stay Interview focuses as well on how the supervisor can improve the work environment over which he or she has control.

The interviews are designed to do exactly what the name indicates: retain employees. Having a high retention rate has always been an important goal for Diakon, not only because of the various costs of replacing staff members who have left the organization, but also because we recognize that our employees embody so competently the core of our mission—to serve our neighbors as God would have us do.

Such a commitment is not only important but also upholds the dignity of all those we serve.

What gives rise to the Stay Interview is a time-tested (albeit commonsensical) approach that, in many organizations, seems to have been forgotten: building effective and caring relationships between employees and supervisors creates a better work environment, more-satisfied employees (and certainly customers as well), and greater efficiency and effectiveness for the organization.

There is, in fact, a saying that people join organizations or companies; they leave their boss.

Because I and other Diakon leaders were convinced of the power of the Stay Interview, we initiated the program across Diakon late last year.

Although we were not able to complete all of the interviews within our initial time-frame, we have made excellent progress and will be launching our second round of interviews early next year.

As a donor, volunteer, constituent or other supporter of Diakon, you are equally important in ensuring our mission to those in need.

We, indeed, want both you and our valued staff members to "stay!"

Mark T. Pile, MSHA, MSW
President/CEO

Diakon services reach older adults where they live

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don't know how to thank them.”

It's no secret, says Karen Wood, Diakon Community Services director, that navigating the Medicare system can be a bit tricky. Plans and benefits often change, making it difficult for many older adults to understand their health insurance and prescription options from year to year.

To address this obstacle, APPRISE offers free individualized counseling to current Medicare beneficiaries as well as those preparing to enroll. Individuals meet with specially trained staff members and volunteers who explain Medicare's options in easy-to-understand terms, assist with applications and paperwork, and counsel clients to make decisions best suited to their needs.

David Best, Landingville, Pennsylvania, volunteers with the APPRISE TeleCenter Diakon staffs two days a week for the Commonwealth, and does one-on-one APPRISE counseling at the Schuylkill Haven Library. He understands firsthand what it's like to be on the other side of the equation.

“When I turned 65 and started getting Medicare information in the mail, I realized how tough it was to make a good decision,” he says. “Around that same time I read in the newspaper that APPRISE was looking for volunteers, so I thought I'd get involved. I knew it would be a good way to learn about it. And now it feels wonderful to help other people who are in the same situation that I was in. I really enjoy it.”

DIAKON LIVING & LEARNING

Diakon Living & Learning offers classes, events, trips and educational workshops designed exclusively for active older adults. The program allows participants to discover their creative side, explore the latest in health and wellness trends, delve into modern technologies, meet new people with common interests and, most important, find ways to enrich their lives.

A partial listing of classes includes writing, antique collecting, knitting, quilting, pottery, painting, weight loss, belly dancing, tai chi, country line dancing, languages, photography, meditation and Zumba. The program also offers occasional trips as well as clubs specifically geared to travel, kayaking, photography and more.

“The self-improvement classes have made such a difference in my life,” says Bernie Lecher of Pottsville. “I've learned how to take care of myself physically and spiritually. They've helped me greatly, and I know a lot of other people who feel the same way.”

Cindy Ellison, a Schuylkill Haven retiree, has been doing Zumba for several years and started taking a spin class about a year ago. “It's very affordable and I enjoy it very much,” she says. “You get to meet a lot of like-minded people who also think that being fit is fun. Plus, the instructors create a very supportive atmosphere for all fitness levels.”

“We're so fortunate to have a program like this in our area. It keeps people healthy, interested and involved,” she adds.

The program helps “me to stay fit,” says Sharon Haffey, a retired school teacher from Pottsville, who has taken a variety of fitness courses. “I'm trying



to stay ahead of weight gain and osteoporosis and other health issues. Anything that can help in that regard is a good thing.”

Haffey also has attended picnics, dances and hayrides, and even helps with Diakon's PrimeTime Health Exerettes program at a local church. “I think it's important to support the programs that are here for folks my age,” she insists. “If you don't take the opportunity now, then next time the opportunity may not be there.”

Jane Weicicoskie, of South Manheim Township, has been attending line dancing on Monday nights since early 2014. “It's so much fun and a great way to exercise,” she says. “I've lost 10 pounds since I started doing it. It's really good for your mind, too, because you really have to think about your dance moves.”

“A lot of retirees are looking for something to do aside from their typical chores around the house,” notes Pat Taglieri, another retired school teacher from Pottsville, who has taken various craft and art programs and has taught a course or two. “It's fun to get out in the evening with your friends and take a class or get involved in some kind of activity. It's good for you.”

Joanne Doyle, a retired art teacher, has been teaching Diakon Living & Learning classes for several years including drawing, painting, basketweaving, calligraphy and wine-glass painting.

“The groups do great work, and I think they amaze themselves sometimes to see what they can actually do,” Doyle says. “They enjoy working together and they look forward to signing up for the next class. It's a nice experience for everyone and it really makes me feel good. I get as much out of it as they do.”

Program Coordinator Susan Long says that although Diakon Living & Learning is targeted to the 50-plus crowd, anyone older than 18 is welcome to participate. “We try to appeal to a broad range of interests, so we're always looking at what people want to do,” she explains. The program also sponsors an annual Living & Learning After 50 Expo, which typically attracts more than 2,000 people.

Shirley Melot, who receives occasional assistance from Diakon Volunteers Serving Seniors, says she shows her appreciation for Diakon Community Services by making an occasional donation to the program. “I think you should help people when they need it,” she says. Her support, she adds, helps the program to help others.

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MEALS ON WHEELS

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Meals on Wheels volunteers deliver lunches to approximately 365 people in Schuylkill County.

For many of these older adults, it's the only contact they have with other individuals all week. It's no surprise, then, that the nutrition, fellowship and wellness checks these visits provide are often called a "godsend" by those who receive them.

To illustrate just how important that daily contact can be, last year a Meals on Wheels driver arrived at a consumer's home, heard him calling from inside, went in and found him lying on the floor. "He'd been lying there all morning with an injured shoulder, so I called 911," noted the volunteer. "I waited for the ambulance and later visited him in the hospital. It just goes to show how important visitations are to those receiving Meals on Wheels."

Tracy Miller, Meals on Wheels coordinator, stresses that volunteers do health and safety checks on non-meal days as well. "It's not just three days a week," she says. "In one month we can have as many as 3,000 client contacts. That's pretty good considering we have about 200 volunteers."

In fact, she notes, "volunteers add hope and joy, coupled with companionship, to the lives of Meals on Wheels consumers. But it's not one-sided—those receiving the meals give back to the volunteers through their gratitude and the sharing of inspiration and wisdom. These connections provide value to the lives of all those involved."

Adding that the program can always use more assistance, Miller says she is trying to recruit local businesses that want to expand community involvement. "Individual volunteers are crucial, but we also like to see small groups from local companies help out once a month or more," she says.

PRIMETIME HEALTH

PrimeTime Health is based on the idea that knowledge is power. Through seminars, health screenings, exercise and nutrition updates, the program assists older adults in making wise choices about overall health.

"It's absolutely crucial to help seniors stay fit, eat right, prevent falls and manage their chronic conditions," says Community Wellness Coordinator Kathy Leahy. "And they can do that by getting active, learning healthy habits, meeting new people and having fun at the same time."

The program offers a variety of wellness-focused programs to promote better health:

- Healthy Steps, which reduces older adults' risk of falling via a personal risk assessment, a home safety checklist and exercise for strength and balance;
- Healthy Steps in Motion, a fitness program aimed at building body strength, increasing flexibility and improving balance;
- Living a Healthy Life, which teaches small lifestyle changes and positive self-management techniques to help people with chronic conditions stay out of the hospital;
- Healthy Eating for Successful Living, which encourages better eating habits through education, practical skills and teamwork;
- A Matter of Balance, which addresses the fear of falling and stresses balance exercises to maintain physical skills; and
- Walk With Ease, a program developed by the Arthritis Foundation to teach safe walking through group activities and a combination of education, stretching and walking.

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THIS SUMMER, several Meals on Wheels consumers in Schuylkill County benefited from a unique partnership.

The connection brought Romans 12 Service Camp participants into the lives of a number of people who receive Meals on Wheels services to provide volunteer assistance outside the norm for the meals program.

The Romans 12 Service Camp, named for Paul's letter to the Romans, Chapter 12, focuses on being a living sacrifice. The Romans 12 group consists of some 50 teens and 30 adults from various area Christian denominations who come together at Christmas Pines Campground in Auburn, Pennsylvania, and then concentrate on service projects in Schuylkill County.

"This summer, a Meals on Wheels volunteer, Anthony Phillips, reported to me the need of a consumer to have a large tree removed from her yard. This request coincided with my just having learned from Debbie Herb, Diakon Volunteers Serving Seniors coordinator, of Roman's 12 availability for service projects," says Tracy Miller, Meals on Wheels coordinator.

In this case, "a large tree had fallen in a 94-year-old consumer's yard. Five camp volunteers worked more than 10 hours during two visits to remove the poison-covered tree. The consumer told me: 'I can finally see my neighbors. What a blessing!'"

Another Meals on Wheels consumer needed a small window pane replaced, but while the service team was at the home, they realized the back sliding glass door was cracked, she adds. "They were able to secure a glass company to replace the windows at no charge to the consumer."

In addition, 23 Romans 12 members delivered Meals on Wheels during their service week, "a joy to both consumers and the team," says Miller.

"One consumer they met while making deliveries told the group of his need for cleaning services. The Romans 12 team returned with buckets, cloths and cleaning products. They washed and hung curtains, vacuumed rugs and did some additional scrubbing."

At the close of the camp session, the group reflected not only on the needs of the older adults, but also on the light shown to them, notes Herb. "It was a truly inspiring week for this new partnership with Meals on Wheels. Coincidental? We believe God places people where He needs them. As a result of our work, Diakon Community Services and Romans 12 are already planning some joint efforts for 2016."



PrimeTime Health also educates participants in how to talk with doctors, deal with stress, plan fitness goals, read food labels, make small dietary changes and shop for healthy foods. And in 2016, says Leahy, the local PrimeTime Health will offer a diabetes self-management program.

Jeanne Novak, Tamaqua, says PrimeTime Health “isn’t just good for us physically; it’s also very educational. I enjoy what I learn from it and I like being able to pass that knowledge on to other people.

“You have to be proactive and educate yourself,” she adds. “Seniors sometimes think they can’t do things, but if you come out and learn how, you might be surprised. Now, whenever there’s a PrimeTime Health class that I can sign up for, I do it. I enjoy the program so much, and a lot of my friends do, too.”

SENIOR COMMUNITY CENTERS

Bruce Long, a retired electrical drafter from Schuylkill Haven, not only attends many of the programs offered at his local senior community center, but he also helps however he can.

“I do a little of everything,” he says. “I hook up the computers, put the food away after lunch, help with Meals on Wheels, help when they show movies. I have a good time there.”

Another volunteer, Diane Stock, Schuylkill Haven, first became involved with the senior community centers 20 years ago. “I try to help whenever I can ... helping with the fundraisers and so on. The seniors are so thankful and very appreciative. They bless me more than I can ever repay them.”

Diakon Community Services manages five senior community centers in Schuylkill County: Pottsville, Shenandoah, Schuylkill Haven, Tremont and Mahanoy City. All of the centers offer a range of programs and services for people 60 and older.

“The program reminds me how important it is to move,” says a participant of a Diakon Community Services program focused on chronic-disease management. “Since I took the class almost two years ago, I have missed only three days on my new walking program—and I definitely feel healthier!”

In addition to a nutritious lunch five days a week, the centers provide activities, games, fitness classes, educational programs, computer labs, wellness checks and help with government services or applications, all offered in a warm and welcoming environment.

The centers work closely with the PrimeTime Health and Diakon Living & Learning programs to offer practical, helpful programs for participants; recent topics have included health insurance, older driver safety and banking and investment scams. In addition, the centers offer free blood pressure screening, health talks, exercise groups and even occasional movies following the noontime meal, says Diakon Community Services Assistant Director Michelle Klusman.

A recent “Lunch and a Movie” program has proven to be very popular, with recent hits such as “Life of Pi,” “Frozen” and “42” presented.

“We have something for everyone,” Klusman says. “If older adults want to meet old friends or make new ones, the center is the place to go.”

DIAKON VOLUNTEERS SERVING SENIORS

Richard Wolff of Pine Grove says the drivers for Diakon Volunteers Serving Seniors who take him to medical appointments two or three times a month are “a tremendous blessing.”



In addition to local doctor visits, the Army vet sometimes needs to go to the VA Medical Center in Lebanon or the Hershey Medical Center—“a bit of a drive” from Schuylkill County, he points out.

“It’s worked out well for me,” Wolff says. “Even though I have diabetes and I’m on a machine that helps me breathe, I don’t have the mindset of being disabled. So having the necessary transportation to help me remain independent has been absolutely great. Plus it’s great to be able to connect with people.”

When older adults can no longer drive, the impact on life can be enormous. Whether the people are dealing with health issues, sudden changes in lifestyle or other factors that make driving difficult, giving up car keys can cause them to feel as if they’ve lost their independence.

Diakon Volunteers Serving Seniors—previously known as Diakon Volunteer Home Care, a name recently changed to reflect its services more accurately—offers peace of mind by providing drivers who can transport older adults who no longer drive to medical appointments, social service visits, or the grocery store. In Schuylkill County, its volunteers also deliver food totes each month and make wellness-related assurance calls to clients of the Meals on Wheels program.

Without these options, says Debbie Herb, program coordinator, older people in need of a ride may have few other options.

“If they can’t get where they need to go, they may feel that they can no longer remain in their homes,” she says. “But thanks to the friendly neighbors who volunteer to give them a lift, we’re transporting seniors seven days a week.”

Steve and Jane Boyer, of Tremont, have been volunteer drivers for several years. “By helping folks who don’t have another way to get to doctors’ appointments, we

really feel as if we’re giving something back to the community,” says Jane Boyer. “Another big part of it for seniors is having someone to talk to during the ride. In fact I often wind up exchanging food recipes with them. They’re very appreciative of the help and we really enjoy offering it.”

Besides, her husband adds, part of the motivation for volunteering is that “someday, I may need the service myself.”

Following the loss of her personal vehicle in an accident, Roselba Hornberger found herself relying on Diakon Community Services for occasional transportation—assistance pivotal to her ability to continue to live independently. The program “certainly fills a need,” says the 86-year-old. “It’s a wonderful service.”

Opening her heart – around the world

AS THE DAUGHTER OF INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARIES, Heidi Storey describes life experiences that likely have a familiar ring to a foster child.

Indeed, says Storey, a foster parent for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, some of what she experienced growing up helps her to understand the feelings of foster children.

“We moved around a lot so I was always packing up my bag,” she explains. “There was always a new house, new rules, other kids to get used to.”

Storey and her younger brother and sister moved with their parents to a new place every two years, mostly different locations within Macedonia. Often, the children lived in boarding schools to keep up with their education. There were occasions that Storey calls “grab and go,” when they faced a sudden and swift evacuation. She knows some foster children find themselves in similar circumstances on occasion.

Now married, Storey has settled in York County. Her parents and siblings had lived there for a year and she had attended 3rd grade in the county. On one hand, Storey says it feels “a little weird to be here” after having traveled some much internationally; on the other hand, York feels like home, perhaps representing a time of stability for her.

“I met my (future) husband and somehow we ended up here,” she says. “We married in 2009 and I’ve been at the same job for seven years now.”

Thinking of children in need

The experiences that helped to shape Storey growing up carried in to her adult life. She finds that she is especially drawn to help children in need. She and her husband, Tim, have a young daughter and last year opened their home to become foster parents.

“For both Tim and me, our gift is hospitality,” she says. “The home we bought in 2012 has five bedrooms. Over the years, we’ve opened it up to be a safe space for someone who just needed help to catch up at that point in life.”

The adults they have helped include Storey’s brother, her sister and a co-worker. Foster care seemed to be the best way to provide the same type of assistance for children and youths.

“We spent Christmas of 2013 with my parents in Macedonia and had a conversation about fostering,” Storey says. “We feel that investing in someone’s life is the best thing we can do with our resources.”

That conversation eventually led Storey to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. Her first placement, in November 2014, brought two brothers to her home for a year. Now, she says, they are headed toward adoption.



Syrian children from refugee families are treated to coloring books and crayons.

“I can’t say enough about Diakon,” she says. “They really partner with their families and give their support. The best advice we got was to be friendly with the birth parents, and that’s worked well for us.”

Storey says it took about six months for the family to “get in a groove” with the boys, who are now eight and two. In a lovely twist of fate, the eight-year-old is in 3rd grade in the same school Storey attended when she lived in York as a third-grader.

Recently, Storey found herself assisting children in another part of the world—Macedonia, helping refugees fleeing the Syria region. To read about her experience there, please visit www.diakon.org and click eDiakconnect under the “Keep in Touch” sidebar menu.



Heidi Storey, in white shirt, offers a sweater to a Syrian child on a recent trip to aid refugees.



Heidi & Tim Storey

Diakon Community Services expands to Pike County

Diakon Community Services now manages APPRISE, a free health insurance counseling program for people with Medicare, under a contract with the Pike County Area Agency on Aging with funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and the Administration on Community Living.

Through the program, staff and volunteers are available to answer questions about Medicare and provide objective, easy-to-understand information.

“Medicare is a very confusing subject and we are focused on helping Pike County residents make informed decisions about their health insurance,” says Karen Wood, director of Diakon Community Services. “We take a

very complicated subject and explain options relating to their particular situation in terms they can understand.”

Diakon Community Services has more than 20 years’ experience in managing the APPRISE Program in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. That service is contracted with the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services with funding by the state Department of Aging and Administration on Community Living.

“We plan to apply the same principles and values used in Schuylkill County to bring a high level of service to Pike County residents,” Wood says.



Stream study brings classroom to life

FOLLOWING AN OCTOBER AFTERNOON SPENT WADING IN THE YELLOW BREECHES, searching for macroinvertebrates and testing nutrients in the water, students in Diakon Youth Services' Center Point Day Program have a new appreciation for classroom discussions on environmental science.

"It was an amazing day," says Wendy Shaver, a teacher with the Capital Area Intermediate Unit, who leads the class. "The one thing that sticks out in my mind is the amount of times the kids were asking me to look at something. Wanting me to see what they found shows me they were excited, invested and having a good time."

The stream study was just one of several field experiences in a curriculum focused on helping students to understand how the health of local waterways affects the Chesapeake Bay.

Funded by a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the hands-on watershed education experiences allow the students to learn ways they can positively influence water quality in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, while also gaining skills that can improve their own lives. A significant part of the funding is used for two three-day field experiences with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in a remote area of the bay.

Locally, Shaver has teamed with the Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring (ALLARM) to conduct the stream studies. A Dickinson College program, ALLARM has a watershed-education program that is one piece of a larger pie, says Jinnie Monismith, assistant director.

"Our main constituency is working with adult volunteers, watershed organizations and community groups throughout the state," she says. "We also feel that there is a need to take this to a younger level and educate students and get them involved in stream monitoring and learning about streams in their own backyards."

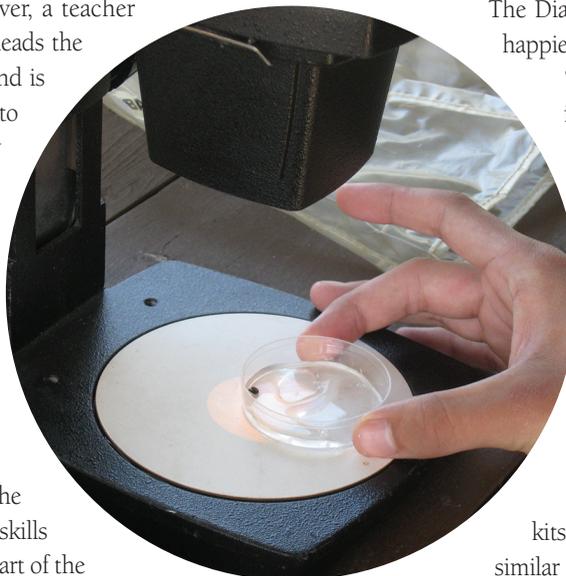
The Diakon Wilderness Center students couldn't be happier to participate.

"It is great! We are discussing pollution and how it impacts the Chesapeake Bay in class, and now we're tying this up," says one young man as he searched for macroinvertebrates in the rocks and sediment gathered in the stream. "The best part about our school is getting out and doing this kind of stuff."

"Hands-on with anything is really nice," notes another student. "We actually learn about [the macroinvertebrates] up close and personal, see how they look and how they move."

Complete with waders, nets, chemistry test kits and more, the students had experiences very similar to those ALLARM volunteers experience when they investigate the health of local streams, notes Joshua Dixon, watershed coordinator.

"Every person, from the youngest to the oldest, was engaged and noticeably excited to be working with the equipment we had and conducting the tests volunteers do in their communities," he says. "On some level, you could tell that everybody learned something."



Unusual musical performance recalls past for Luther Crest resident



Ruth Yeo, seated, reacts to the piano presentation, hugging Marion Phillips.

people who play to get together and learn to play together. “I still try to play, but my fingers are getting too stiff and I can’t see the keys anymore, but I still try to play.”

“It was fun,” says Phillips. “All of us knew how to play the piano; still [playing six-handed] was so very different. . . .” The goal of surprising Yeo arose when she was overheard wondering if six-handed piano selections were still published.

Volk notes that she believes the trio should continue to play—an idea Yeo enthusiastically supports.

SIX-HANDED PIANO PLAYING? While that might seem unusual to some people, the skill is very familiar to Ruth Yeo, a 103-year-old Luther Crest resident.

She and her late sisters, Emma May and Betty—known then as the Gabel Sisters—had played six-handed piano for many years, traveling and performing for audiences in a variety of settings. The style means three people play one piano simultaneously.

Recently, three independent-living residents of Luther Crest—Carolyn Volk, Marion Phillips and Joan Baumer—practiced for several months so that they could surprise her.

“I’m so thrilled there’s somebody else playing it, too,” says Yeo. “It’s a wonderful way for three



Trudy Johnson assists Carolyn Volk, Marion Phillips and Joan Baumer as they play six-handed piano.



Left to right: Ruth Yeo, Carolyn Volk, Trudy Johnson, Marion Phillips and Joan Baumer.