

Dialog

Continuing the ministries of The Lutheran Home at Topton,
Tressler Lutheran Services, and LWS of Northeastern Pennsylvania

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Yungmann becomes a young man

Three years ago, David Yungmann liked to turn his back on responsibility. Involved with the wrong crowd as well as alcohol and substance abuse, the teenager defied authority at every turn.

"I was causing trouble with my family and not spending time at home," says the now-19-year-old Yungmann. "I was not respecting my family life; not being very responsible at all."



After a series of run-ins with the law and two failed drug tests, Yungmann's parole officer referred him to TresslerCare's Weekend Alternative Program (WAP) and Bridge Program, based in southeastern Pennsylvania.

"When I first got [to WAP] I was really reluctant to let the program help me," says Yungmann, referring to the Friday-through-Sunday program based at the TresslerCare Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa. "As time went on, I grew accustomed to it and got to understand that it was more a prevention than a consequence. It prevented me from going farther into the world I was in."

WAP's communication and life-skills offerings had a long-term impact on Yungmann. "They presented life skills in a way that I could understand and actually like doing," he says. "How to look people in the eye when I talked and act in a professional manner—things I should have been learning from life that I wasn't getting a grip on."

Although seldom out of his urban city environment, Yungmann enjoyed the program's wilderness challenge activities. "I had never really been camping a whole lot. It was calming for me, being with nature," he says. "It was an interesting thing to go through."

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Making an important connection

Last year, as we began more intentionally to promote Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, we introduced an advertising campaign around the theme “Faith-based care you can believe in.”

We liked that theme very much because we believe it captures the difference between Diakon and for-profit competitors in the health care and social service fields. We believe what sets us apart is our affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and our resulting core belief that all people are unique gifts of God to be treated with dignity and compassion.

Of course, faith is a very personal issue. Faith-based is not an easy concept to convey accurately. And faith means different things to different people.

How, then, do we convey this vital mission and message? We believe one important way involves connection with our “moral owners.”

Who are our moral owners?

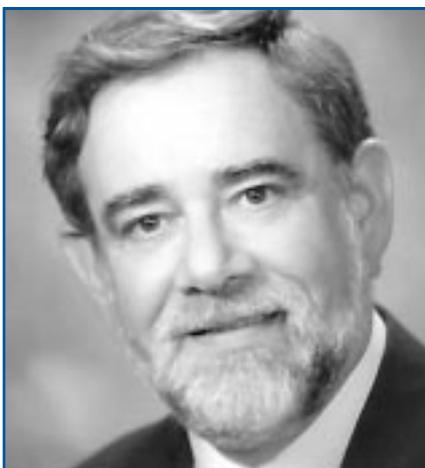
Moral owners are those who would re-create you if you did not exist. Diakon’s board of directors has defined our moral owners as the church in its many forms, particularly congregations, pastors, synods, conferences, and mission districts. A key role of our board is connection with those moral owners.

Will developing this connection be easy?

Not necessarily. What the church and its congregations need from us varies significantly from region to region. Resources to meet those needs are always an issue.

And the process is fraught with challenges that arise from our history.

Both Lutheran Services Northeast and Tressler Lutheran Services—the agencies that created



The Rev. Daun E. Mckee,
Ph.D., President/CEO

the President's Dialog

Diakon in 2000—have begun projects with congregations that, for varying reasons, have not gone as planned. We have, in the past, created expectations that we may not have fulfilled.

We do not want to do that this time.

We are therefore being very deliberate as we take specific steps to make initial connections. Family Life Services has been very successful in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod in responding to the needs of pastors and parishes as they encounter life’s challenges.

At our May board meeting, for example, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop David R. Strobel, a parish pastor, and an Episcopal canon spoke eloquently on the impact Family Life Services programs—counseling, pastoral care team, professional consultation, custom-designed programs, support

groups, and more—have had on lives. Tearfully but joyfully, a woman detailed how Family Life Services counseling had brought her up from the depths of depression.

We are now expanding Family Life Services into the Upper and Lower Susquehanna synods and, eventually, into the Delaware-Maryland Synod. Family Life Services programs are being phased into existing Tressler Counseling & Education centers in the Upper and Lower Susquehanna synod and are, in fact, reflecting Tressler’s history of having had congregationally based counseling.

Already, the impact has been felt, notes Mark Basinger, who directs Family Life Services in the Upper Susquehanna Synod.

“A teenager in crisis is nothing new,” he says, “but it is if it is your teen. And coming from a ‘good home’ is no longer a guarantee that the life of your child (or your family) will go smoothly. ‘Beth’s’ parents were doing their best to provide a secure, loving home but it didn’t seem to be enough.

“Through their congregation,” he continues, “Beth’s parents became aware of the counseling available through Family Life Services. It turned out to be a life saver for them. Severe depression, entry into drug and alcohol abuse, and a string of poor choices had placed Beth in danger. She and her parents were strengthened by the support of their pastor and by the professional counseling services of Family Life Services in the Upper Susquehanna Synod. Problems were met head on and there has been a steady return to the life that we hope for our children.”

Volunteer Home Care is another significant opportunity for providing services to and with

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House full of children brings happiness

On The Road To 3,500 Adoptions in 30 Years

Yolanda and Alfonso Kemp knew they would work with Tressler Adoption Services of Delaware when the time was right to add to their family.

The parents of three biological sons had worked closely with the organization, now part of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, while providing foster care for their niece. They had told their social worker they would be in touch when they were ready to adopt a girl.

In December of 2000, the couple took the first step and enrolled in the adoption program's 10-week preparation course. In their excitement to proceed, the Kemps made certain to include their sons in the process as well.

"They were a part [of the adoption process] from beginning to end," Yolanda adds. "Every time

we went to our classes, we came back and talked to them about everything we learned in class. They were prepared like we were. They were with us from beginning to end."

Many of the families that work with Diakon's adoption services programs have birth children and need to deal with the same concerns, says Michelle Miller, adoption case manager.

"We need to determine how much the families have involved their birth children in the adoption process and if the kids realistically understand how the adoption will affect their lives," she says.

The Kemps "are very open people and they were open with their extended family, too," Miller adds. "Not necessarily in asking for permission, but in saying, 'This is what we are going to do and we are asking you to support us.' Their family was overjoyed."

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Bernadette and Lakeema, both center, are now members of the Kemp family of Delaware, one of the nearly 3,500 adoptive placements Diakon's adoption programs have made since 1972.



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 50,000 persons annually in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware through adoption, foster care, refugee services, volunteer home care, retirement villages, housing accommodations, congregational ministries, hospice services, and more.

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Time for relief and reflection:

Diakon Pastors Aid New York City-Area Congregations

In the days and weeks following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, people across the country and around the world reached out to help the victims and families, and the City of New York itself.

Now, some say life is beginning to return to “normal.” But the communities closest to the site still struggle to cope, their losses personal and profound.

In a concerted show of support for these communities, a group of some 200 Lutheran pastors from nearly every state traveled to New York City recently as a show of solidarity with their colleagues in local congregations.

Since Sept. 11, New York City area pastors have been ministering to traumatized congregations without pause, particularly reluctant to disrupt the traditions of the Christmas and Easter holidays. Lutheran Disaster Relief chose the weekend of April 6 and 7 to provide a timely and much-needed respite.

Among the clergy were three Diakon staff members, the Rev. Lisa Leber, Esq., corporate compliance officer, and two retirement village chaplains, the Rev. Kathy Kinney and the Rev. Ted Cockley.

Leber served at the ELCA congregation closest to the World Trade Center, Trinity Lower East Side, which houses a large soup kitchen and provides basic necessities.

“This is an amazing congregation with an incredible social ministry focus,” says Leber. “Their worshipping community is so diverse, from every race, culture, socio-economic group—that’s what the kingdom of God looks like.”

While everyone was assigned to a congregation for Sunday-morning services, those who made the trip also participated in a joint



The Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries staff members took this photograph of the altered New York City skyline in the area of Ground Zero.

worship service in Manhattan on Saturday afternoon.

“The sense of the worship service was very uplifting,” says Leber. “The visiting pastors sat surrounding the New York City clergy and church members to demonstrate our support. People were so glad to be there—it truly was a real incarnation of the gospel and a powerful experience of the church’s unity and solidarity in Christ.”

Kinney, chaplain at Penn Lutheran Village in Selinsgrove, spent her time with the pastor and members of St. John’s Lutheran Church in Jersey City, N.J. Situated across the Hudson River with a clear view of the World Trade Center towers, the city and many of its residents were unwitting eyewitnesses to the attacks.

“When I first went to Jersey City, I was a little skeptical about what good all these pastors who were descending on the area could do,” Kinney says. “After all, it had been months since the event happened. Now I know that the

basic fact of collegiality, just knowing that someone cared and supported the pastors and congregations of the metro New York area, truly was helpful and meaningful.”

Kinney also found a “kinder, gentler approach to strangers.” She and her husband got lost in the subway system, since the trains were running differently from what their outdated map showed.

“Everyone we met, and we spoke to business people, obviously street people, teens, Latino youth, everyone across the board, responded to our inquiries with kindness and openness,” she says.

Visiting Ground Zero was “shocking” for Kinney. Having seen the site, she says she considers it a miracle that more people weren’t killed or injured. And she was moved by “the incredible silence. No work was being done, so there was no engine noise,” she says, “but after coming from Port Authority, and walking down from Chambers Street, the hustle and bustle of the city devolved into an eerily still and

quiet group of people staring in amazement at what seemed to me a gaping wound.”

On Sunday morning, Kinney led and shared in more than four hours of worship and fellowship. There was talk about death, she says, and issues of mortality. The people of St. John’s reflected on the loss of friends and family throughout their lives and the horror of witnessing the violence of Sept. 11.

The Jersey City High School is in a direct line of sight with the World Trade Center. When the first plane hit, Kinney explains, teachers allowed and encouraged students to watch because, not realizing what was really happening, they thought it was an accident, history in the making.

“Many of those young people actually saw the second plane hit and then the towers crashing down,” she notes.

As a whole, Kinney says, the experience was “incredibly moving.” She has invited the pastor of St. John’s and his family to go camping with her and her family this summer in Juniata County. She feels a special bond now.

“Our neighbors have suffered greatly,” she observes. “They are making it a day at a time but there remains an air of uneasiness along with a heightened sense of mortality among the people.”

Chaplain at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village in Lewisburg, Cockley aided the congregation of Oceanside Church in Long Island.

But a chance encounter on a city subway put the Sept. 11 tragedies into even greater perspective for him. Traveling with the pastor from Oceanside Church to view Ground Zero, Cockley encountered a group of men dressed in Scottish garb.

Striking up a conversation with one young man, Cockley learned they were all members of a pipe and drum corps headed into the city for a parade. The young

man gave up his seat for Cockley, who noticed he had the photo of a New York City firefighter on the front of his drum. The firefighter, he learned, was the young man’s brother, killed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. The young man told the pastor that he displays his brother’s photo and marches in every parade he can as a way of paying tribute.

“To meet someone firsthand who was directly affected brought it home on a personal level for me,” Cockley says. “What that young man is doing is his way of coping with his tragic loss and a remarkably decent thing to do. It was an experience I didn’t expect to have, but I am so grateful for moments like that.”

Cockley’s visit to Ground Zero touched him deeply as well. “I’ve heard it referred to as sacred ground, as a cemetery, as a shrine. It is, in fact, all those things.”

During his sermon for the Oceanside Church congregation, Cockley noted how he is constantly

surprised the way the world closes in on him. He referred to a “common bond” that connects his corner of the world with the Long Island area, that being the crash of TWA Flight 800 carrying Montoursville High School French Club students nearly six years ago. The plane crashed just south of Long Island.

A speech he heard from a Fire Department New York official—a fellow Lutheran—on the impact of their losses within the firefighting “family” underscored the depth and extent of the tragedy.

“I was reminded of the John Donne verse that ‘No man is an island’ and even more so that, ‘Any man’s death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind,’” Cockley says.

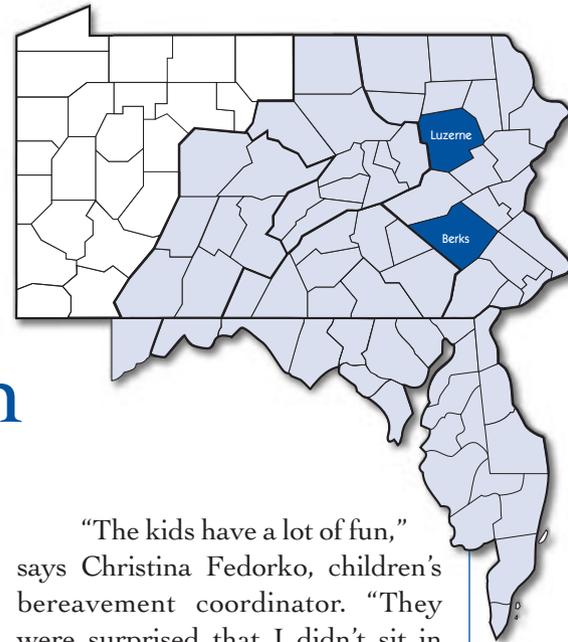
Yet he would go again without hesitation. He was proud, he says, to be part of the church’s national show of solidarity.

“It was a privilege to go and help even just a little bit, and an honor to be among people who have dealt with so much.” †



Surrounded by refugees from around the world, Samedy Sok of Diakon’s Refugee and Immigration Services staff in Baltimore speaks at one of two press conferences the agency co-sponsored in May to emphasize the dramatic slow-down in U.S. refugee admissions following Sept. 11. Participants at the conferences, part of a nationwide effort, signed letters to President Bush, urging him to admit the number of refugees the U.S. had already promised to resettle. “Refugees already screened and ready to travel have been put on indefinite standby. They live in terrible conditions, struggle to survive while they wait, and are desperate to bring their loved ones to safety. With each delay, someone dies,” says Alan Dudley, executive director of Diakon’s Refugee and Immigration Services. Copies of the letter and more information are available on Diakon’s web site at www.diakon.org.

New In-School Program Supports Grieving Children



Coping with grief is never easy, and it's even harder for children. To help them, Hospice Saint John developed a Children's Bereavement Program in 2000, highlighted by Camp Evergreen, a day camp that meets four times a year in each of the program's three service areas in northeastern Pennsylvania.

Based on that success, Hospice Saint John recently developed an in-school program for area elementary, middle, and high schools. Held an hour a week for six weeks, the program includes topics such as emotions and finding supportive systems, but it's far from traditional counseling.



Children suffering from the emotional effects of the death of a loved one are being helped by new programs offered by Hospice Saint John.

"The kids have a lot of fun," says Christina Fedorko, children's bereavement coordinator. "They were surprised that I didn't sit in front of them with a notebook and ask questions about how they were feeling. Instead we played games, did crafts, and helped them find really positive ways to express and cope with their grief."

Hazleton Area Elementary was the first school to request the program.

"We had an unusual year. Several students had lost parents, and we were seeing some of the effects—missed school days, falling grades, signs of depression. We were looking for a way to help, and some of the parents, who were still dealing with their own grief, had contacted us and were eager to find ways to help their children," says Guidance Counselor Mary Jo Shellanski.

Some of the children were initially skeptical, but once they began participating, Shellanski was pleased with the results. By talking with others going through the same emotions and issues, the children begin to cope with their loss, while creating a lasting support system.

Hospice Saint John also offers in-service training programs for teachers and school leaders to help them facilitate discussions and be better prepared to work individually with grieving students. †

The program is funded in part by grants and generous contributions from the community. For additional information, readers may contact Fedorko at 1-877-458-5511.

Small congregations—as well as larger ones—can often make a big difference in Diakon's ability to serve people in need. The Youth – Young Adult Group at Zion's and St. John's (Reed's) Lutheran Church in Stouchsburg, Pa., a small congregation in the West Berks Mission District, holds a community event called the "Annual Fantabulous Fall Fest." The 2001 event raised funds for a number of community needs, including \$400 for Diakon's Volunteer Home Care.



Berks

One event at the fest featured the congregation's Proclamation Puppets, pictured, which present messages at various congregational events and often go "on the road" for other congregations' special services and programs.

House full of children brings happiness

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Before long, the Kemps made the decision that adding one girl to their family might not be enough. “We decided to [adopt] two girls, or siblings,” Yolanda says. “We weren’t limited to the number, we just didn’t want to separate sisters from brothers.”

Alfonso is quick to point out that they welcomed a multiple adoption because they are accustomed to having a house full of children. “I’m like the counselor of the neighborhood,” he says. “Anytime [the parents] have problems, they bring their sons to me.”

In the summer of 2001, information on Bernadette, 7, and Lakeema, 2, crossed the desk of the Kemp’s social worker. “The social worker did her part to make sure the move was easy,” says Yolanda, explaining the process that followed. “She made sure we knew everything. We didn’t meet [the girls] until we had everything in place.”

On October 17 at a local fast-food restaurant, the Kemp family met the two little girls who would soon add to their family. “That weekend they came from Saturday until Sunday,” Yolanda explains. “The following weekend they came Friday to Sunday, and on Nov. 1, they moved in.”

The fact that Bernadette and Lakeema are sisters was a big benefit in the transition, insist the Kemps. “Instead of having two girls from two different homes in two different states, [Bernadette and Lakeema] were used to each other,” Yolanda says. “Just getting them to bond with our children was much easier.”

Moving from a city to the Delaware suburbs brought many changes for the girls too. “They are glad to be here,” Alfonso says, adding that they especially like McDonalds, and Bernadette enjoys riding bikes and having her own room.

As the months with their new

family pass, the Kemps are happy to say that it feels as if the girls have been with them forever.

“Every child needs a family instead of going from one house to another,” says Yolanda. “That is why we [went] straight into adoption. We wanted these girls to be with us the rest of their lives.” †

If you would like to learn more about adoption, please call one of the following numbers:

- Delaware, (302) 995-2294
- Maryland, (410) 633-6990
- Eastern PA, 1-888-582-2230
- Central PA, (717) 845-9113

You can help children with special needs find the love, stability, and joy they need. Adoption Services depends on contributions to help make its services available even to those who cannot pay the full costs of service. Call 1-888-582-2230, ext. 1219, to learn how you can help.

The President’s Dialog

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congregations. Long a service in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and portions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, this ecumenical program, which provides non-professional home- or chore-related assistance to people in need, is now operating in upper Dauphin County and is expanding rapidly in central Maryland.

Still another example is Congregational Health Ministries, which began in two different forms some years ago in the Upper Susquehanna and Northeastern Pennsylvania synods. Significant expansion has occurred in these regions as well as, now, in the Delaware-Maryland synods.

And we plan to do more.

The essence of Diakon, we

believe, is that, in response to God’s word, affirming our Christian identity and Lutheran heritage, and witnessing to the goodness of God’s creation, we engage in service. We believe also that what we do is more than work; we believe it is our vocation.

These concepts and connections will take time to develop. We want to take that time to make sure they are strong and right and what are needed. We invite your thoughts as we proceed.

Thank you again for your partnership with us.



The Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D.
President/CEO

TimeLine 1867...

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building and placed himself on the spot where his office was to be.” Asking God’s blessing, “he dug out, in the shape of a cross, about the size of a man, several wheelbarrowsful of ground. Then looking towards the north and kneeling in the cross-shaped opening, he offered a brief prayer . . .”

Building began in earnest later in the year, with the first orphans arriving in mid May.

In the spring of 1900, however, Heilman developed pneumonia, having taken “a chill during a trip to Schuylkill Haven, where he had gone to preach for an ailing brother [pastor].” Having “pushed himself day and night” for the sake of the home, he didn’t have the strength to ward off the affliction and died on April 10 at the age of 50. †

Wilderness Center breaks ground to launch expanded service to Pennsylvania youths

*m*ottled, the sky had threatened an outburst all morning, dropping occasional curtains of rain to crash through the dense foliage. As if they knew the importance of this event, however, the clouds scuttled back as the ceremony began, allowing rays of sunlight to dance across the trees.

The May ceremony, a groundbreaking, marked the beginning of an expansion and upgrading of facilities at Diakon's TresslerCare Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa. Its importance lies in the impact the center's programs have on the lives of at-risk youths across Pennsylvania.

Some of those youths, who have graduated from center programs, shared that impact in brief remarks before one of them, along with a current student and center Executive Director George Eckenrode, overturned spadeful of dirt to launch the project.

"I came to the program from the City of Philadelphia, with pretty much zero hope for what my future would become," noted Anthony Stukes, a successful graduate of the Wilderness School. Days after the ceremony, he graduated from Temple University, on track to attend law school. The school, he added, "creates positive young people, and that's what we need in our society."

Competitive pressure, new licensing requirements, and aging housing accommodations mandate the expansion project, which involves the construction of housing, classrooms, and a gymnasium. The center's infrastructure also will be updated.



Breaking ground for the Wilderness Center's expansion are, from left to right, current student Jason Kissinger of Reading, Executive Director of the center George Eckenrode, and Hosea Twiggs of Philadelphia, a former student.

Diakon has launched a \$2 million capital campaign to fund the project, having reached nearly 40 percent of that goal by the groundbreaking.

The Rev. Thomas W. Hurlocker, retired president of Tressler Lutheran Services, is honorary chair of the campaign. John J. Rhodes, president of Rhodes Development Group, Inc., and Frederick S. Rice, CLU, RIA, president of Rice & Hetrick Financial Services LLC and a former Dauphin County commissioner, are campaign co-chairs.

The Wilderness Center offers a range of services to aid adjudicated delinquent and dependent youths

from counties across Pennsylvania. Serving as an alternative to traditional intervention services, the center houses four programs—residential Wilderness School, short-term residential Wilderness Challenge+Plus, 31-day Wilderness Challenge course, and the Weekend Alternative Program.

Studies conducted by Dickinson College in Carlisle of youths discharged from the Wilderness School for 11 to 17 months found that 71 percent had not re-offended and 88 percent had earned their GED, graduated from high school, or were in school and on target to graduate. The Wilderness Course boasts similar high marks. †

Wilderness program helps Yungmann become a young man

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Youths at the Wilderness Center, whose programs include the Weekend Alternative Program in which David Yungmann took part, experience a range of challenging activities such as climbs on the center's 50-foot Alpine Tower.

Sunday through Thursday, when Yungmann was not at the Wilderness Center, staff of the Bridge Program made daily contact with him to make sure he was complying with his identified goals and expectations.

"That really saved me, being able to go home and having to answer to someone when I got there," says Yungmann, who admits he didn't always play by the rules. "One night I stayed out all night and I ended up on 'house arrest' for two weeks."

After 11 weeks, Yungmann graduated from both WAP and The Bridge program. "The first couple of weeks, I stayed away from trouble," he says. But about a year after leaving, he ended up moving out of his parents' home and dropping out of high school.

"As time went on, I saw the error of my ways. I came back, finished high school and now I have finished my first college courses," he says. "It has taken me probably three years to get where I want to

be, but I've stopped drinking and I've moved forward spiritually. I'm able to be more of an adult, a man, and take responsibility for my actions."

Yungmann, who now lives on his own, also admits that his relationship with his family has greatly

improved. "I've definitely realized the importance of becoming part of a family and playing a more positive role within my family," he says. "I didn't realize the importance of family until I left TresslerCare."

Now focused eventually on becoming a graphic designer, Yungmann doesn't long for the life or friends he left behind. "I have bigger things to do with my life," he says. "There are certain perks in my life—my family, my girlfriend—that I couldn't hold if I had those old relationships. I understand that and I moved forward."

At the same time, Yungmann is returning to the TresslerCare Wilderness Center—as a part-time Weekend Alternative Program staff member—to help other youths like him, who might respond to his first-hand experience.

"That place helped me with so many things in my life, things that are really important, instead of the things I held dear at the time," he says. "I just want to bring that all back and lend a hand. I owe a great deal to TresslerCare." †



David Yungmann, right, talks with Wilderness Center students sitting on the steps of one of the cabins that will be retired following the center's expansion project.

Diverse input impacts new menu plans

When CURA Hospitality began providing dietary services for Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries' retirement and nursing facilities in January, it had an ultimate goal: to upgrade menu offerings.

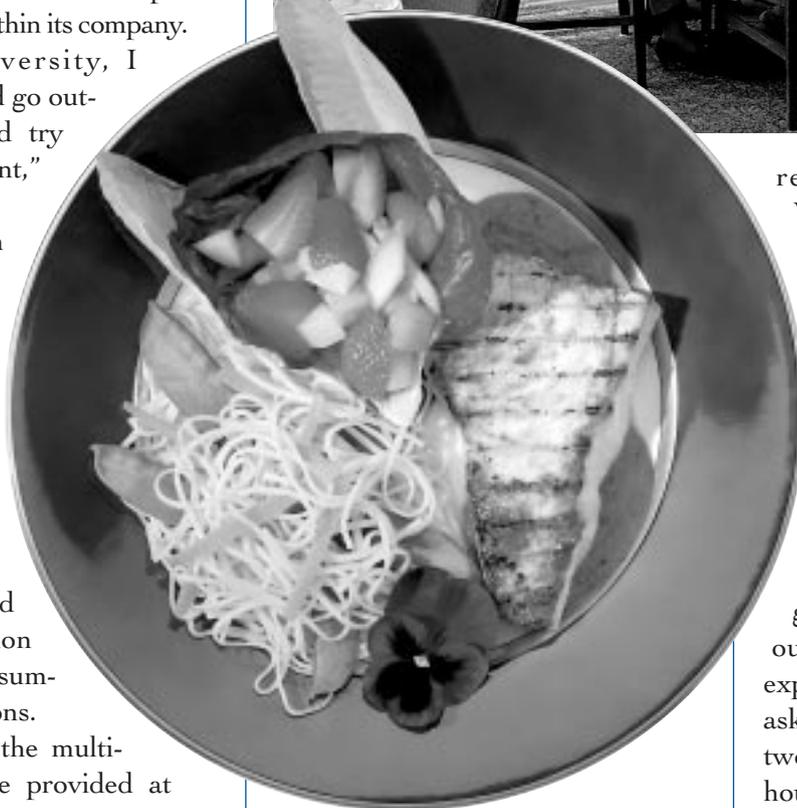
After staff transitions and kitchen process changes were complete, the Allentown-based organization began to focus on menus, says Patrick Johnson, CURA's senior regional director of operations.

"It's CURA's standard to change our menus at least twice a year," he notes. "What we did this time is kind of unique because we have such a diversity of facilities within Diakon, with regard to regional food preferences."

Normally when planning menus, CURA uses a menu planning committee within its company. "With such diversity, I thought we would go outside the box and try something different," Johnson says.

With that in mind, he selected four dietary managers from four very different Diakon facilities to bring perspective to a new, four-week menu cycle that would serve all Diakon facilities for the summer and fall seasons.

Because of the multiple levels of care provided at The Lutheran Home at Topton, Pa., Johnson selected Steve Moyer. Representing Pocono Lutheran Village, an assisted living facility in



representing Penn Lutheran Village in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, brought a thorough knowledge of the food preferences within central Pennsylvania. Nicole Hayes, of Saint Luke Village, Hazleton, Pennsylvania, rounded out the group with her knowledge of the dietary needs of a large skilled nursing facility.

Johnson brought the group together, gave them an outline of what Diakon was expecting from the process, and asked each one to develop one or two menu weeks. "It took me 40 hours on those menus to have them ready to look at," says Miller, who thinks using field personnel to plan menus makes sense. "That is where the expertise is rather than with

East Stroudsburg, Pa., Keith Miller brought yet another perspective. Carla Kline,

someone in an office who has no idea what challenges we face.”

After everyone drafted his or her portion of the cycle, the group reviewed the plans. “We compared them, made changes, and worked together as a team,” says Moyer. “We took ideas from families, residents, and staff and tried to incorporate them in the menus.”

Adds Johnson: “We cut and pasted, talked, convinced, and consoled. We wanted to put together the best menu that reflects operational processes and regional preferences.”

For Moyer, the benefit was having more than one person make decisions. “You get better choices, better feedback,” ultimately with the resident in mind, he says.

The new menu, featuring more fresh fruits and produce, represents a format that can be adjusted for individual facility likes and dislikes. “In this industry there is no such thing as a perfect menu,” says Johnson. “But, getting more people involved and using their background and familiarity with Diakon programs, has really lent a substantial impact to this menu.”

CURA then sent the drafted menu to its dietitians to review. “We had to make some adjustments to comply with nutritional daily allowances.”

Diakon chefs and resident and family councils have reviewed the plan as well. “We put effort into the recipes and want them to be successful,” says Johnson.

Following introduction of the menus in June, CURA “will conduct a resident satisfaction survey that will provide us with a real picture window of not only our menu, but our overall service.” †

Enriched foods program enhances quality of life

Called upon to provide a variety of special diets for its clients within the healthcare industry, CURA recently introduced an enriched foods program meant to limit the use of supplements.

Often used for residents who need to gain weight, supplements can become habit-forming, boring, and even discourage eating at mealtime, says Pat Sullivan, director of clinical nutrition services for CURA.

“Our clinicians noticed that even though residents were put on supplements three or four times a day, they were still losing weight,” she says.

In response, CURA began creating menu items that residents generally enjoy—comfort foods, such as hot cereals, gravy, and pudding. “We took those recipes and changed them, in some cases, to double their calorie levels,” Sullivan explains, adding that the



recipes were tested for taste and ease of preparation.

Last fall, CURA rolled out the enriched foods program in the facilities it serves, encouraging staff at those facilities to use the recipes they thought would work in their communities.

“Every day, a resident on the enriched food program is averaging 600 to 800 extra calories given at meal time,” Sullivan says. “We’ve decreased and, in some cases, eliminated the use of supplements for residents. We’ve been able to maintain nice weight

management through meals, at meal time.”

To get a better idea of how the enriched foods were working, Sullivan and her staff studied 118 residents.

“Eighty-two percent of the residents on enriched foods either stabilized their weight or gained weight in a period of one to five months,” she says, adding that CURA will continue to gather more statistical data as it refines and adds to its enriched foods recipes.

Mealtime should be enjoyable for all residents, Sullivan notes, and the process begins with being adequately nourished. By providing concentrated calories at mealtime, rather than through supplements given at other times, she says, “the nursing staff can spend more quality time where it is needed, to give residents the highest quality of life possible.” †

Orphans home newspapers. Fund-raising campaigns. Annual visitors' days. Many activities highlight the similarities between the earliest days of The Lutheran Home at Topton and the Tressler Orphans Home, Loysville.

And while they came to their charges in different ways, there were similarities, too, between the Rev. Uriah P. Heilman and the Rev. Philip Willard, first superintendents, respectively, of the Topton and Tressler orphanages.

Perhaps their most significant common attribute was unwavering dedication to the institutions they headed, resulting in positions that can only be described as 24/7. The drain of that work eventually cost Heilman his life.

Willard came first to the work, having visited the Loysville site in 1867 while an agent for the Lutheran Publication Society of Philadelphia.



The Rev. Philip Willard (left) and the Rev. Uriah P. Heilman

In response to the aftermath of the Civil War, the Tressler family had already converted their educational academy into a fledging home for soldiers' orphans.

Following the purchase of the site by the General Synod of the Lutheran Church, Willard was appointed superintendent. He immediately hit the road in search of donations.

Known affectionately as "Father"—not an ecclesiastical title but a reflection of his role at the home—Willard was 59 when he

became superintendent, a position he held until he was 80. During those years, the home's "Old Main" was constructed and significant physical improvements made to the facilities.

Heilman was slightly younger when in 1897 he assumed the superintendence of the "The Lutheran Orphans Home in Berks County, Pennsylvania"—the first name of the Topton facility. He was 47.

Also charged with raising funds for the new home—it was to be built on farmland purchased on a hill overlooking the village of Topton in northeastern Berks County—Heilman played a more personal role in getting the building program under way.

According to published histories, "on the 29th of June, 1897, in the morning at 6 o'clock, the Superintendent, with pick and shovel on his back, went out to the building site of the projected main

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