

# DIALOG

*A publication of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries*

*Spring 2009*

## A young man's memories of summer camp

*More than just fishing trips and toasted marshmallows, this camp helps young hearts heal*

Casey Klaips was only 11 years old when his mother died of cancer. "I had had parents all my life up until then—family had been a constant," says the now-19-year-old. "After my mother was gone, there was such a sense of uncertainty about my future. So I had to learn that although there is uncertainty, there is still a need to go forward."

But to Casey the fifth-grader, overcoming grief seemed insurmountable. Although he experienced an outpouring of support from his school, the community, and from his father, Bill, his brothers, William and Cory, and his sister, Courtney, he still had a deep sense of sadness.

"Casey seemed so withdrawn," his father recalls.

As a Diakon Hospice Saint John volunteer, Bill thought Casey should attend a local Diakon Hospice Saint John children's bereavement day camp—a program designed to help youngsters cope with loss.

"Because I was a volunteer, I saw how other children benefited from the program and I knew Casey would benefit, too—whether it would be immediate or long-term," says Bill. "He went begrudgingly."

The thought of sharing his personal experience with others made him nervous, Casey recalls. But after he arrived at the camp, his hesitancy faded and he formed a bond with the counselors and the other children who had experienced loss.

"Looking back, it was the best course of action that I took. Letting people know how I felt and learning that there were resources—counselors and volunteers—that I could turn to was a big help."

During the day camp, he crafted a banner in his mother's memory. It hosts several colorful felt images including a flower, a tic-tac-toe board, and Casey's handprint. Hanging for the past eight years on a wall in the Klaips' dining room, the family still looks at the banner and remembers their loved one.

"My mom always had a kind word to say," says Courtney, 24.

"It is still hard to think about our loss," says Cory, 37. "Holidays are especially hard."

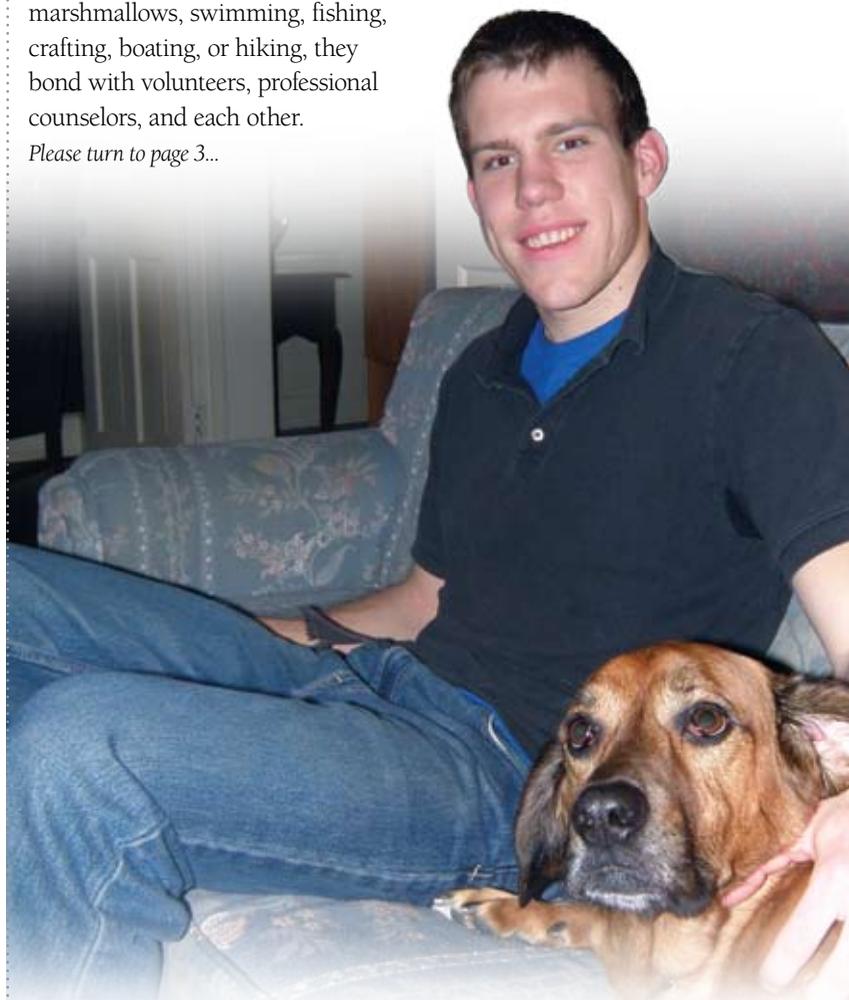
For the Klaips family, the banner not only preserves memories, but also serves as a reminder of how Casey has grown—both physically and emotionally. His hand now dwarfs the handprint he left as an 11-year-old. Through the years, he has learned to cope with grief, in part because of the children's bereavement program.

In fact, the camp was such a help to him that, now a college freshman, Corey serves at Camp Evergreen himself as a volunteer.

Along with his father and brother Cory, Casey now assists at Camp Evergreen, a weekend-long Diakon Hospice Saint John bereavement camp held annually at Camp Kresge near White Haven, Pa. "I've gotten older and I am able to deal with my loss, but I know there are some kids out there who need help," he says.

A spin-off of the original bereavement day camps that Casey attended, Camp Evergreen provides participants with a host of therapeutic activities in a rural setting. Whether campers are roasting marshmallows, swimming, fishing, crafting, boating, or hiking, they bond with volunteers, professional counselors, and each other.

*Please turn to page 3...*



*Home from college on winter break, Casey spends time with the family pet, Rocco.*

OUR 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 Lutheran Social Ministries is a leading provider of senior living accommodations and social services, including adoption, counseling, home care, and youth programs in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. With many hands and one heart, Diakon staff members each year touch the lives of more than 80,000 children, families, and older adults. Diakon's mission is to respond to God's call to serve the neighbor, and we are proud to continue a more-than-140-year tradition of hospitality and care for people of all faiths.

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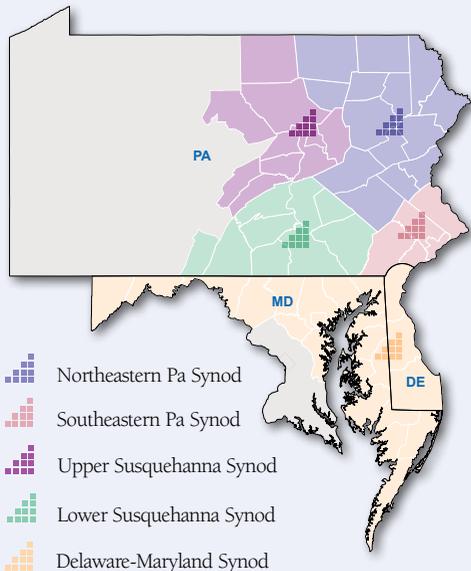
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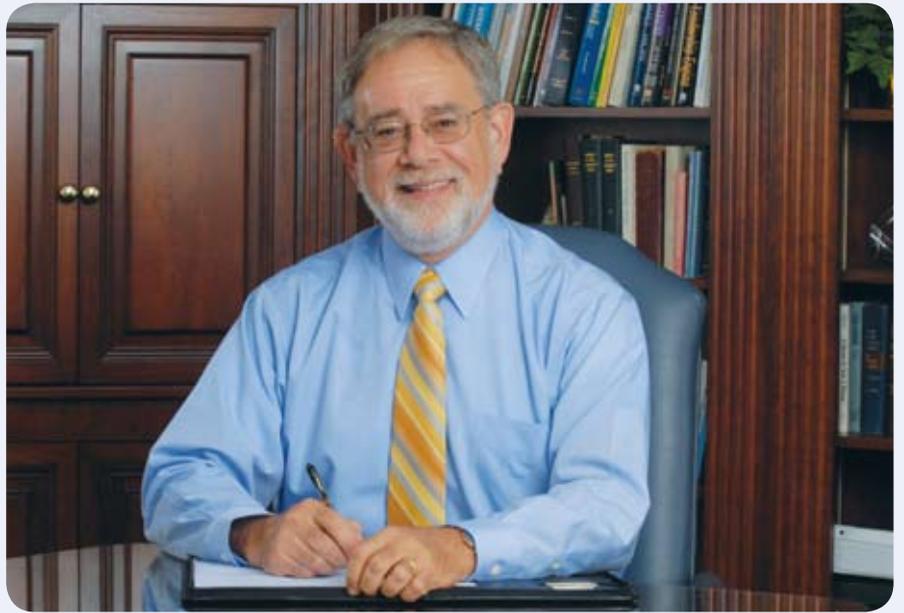
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DI AKON SERVICE TERRITORY



THE PRESIDENT'S DIALOG



The Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D.

*Many years ago, as I moved from parish ministry to social ministry, I made a promise to myself and my family that I would not do what I observed so many other retirement-age people doing—to work beyond the time when I knew or, even worse, others knew, it was time to retire.*

I would not work so long that my wife, Mary Jo, and I could no longer do the many exciting things we had planned to do in retirement. I would retire at the point I understood that I had given as much of myself, my energy, and my leadership as I could give; that the organization I was leaving was strong, vibrant, and filled with competent and mission-driven leadership.

This is the right time for me to retire from Diakon.

I announced my intention to our board of directors last year and to my staff colleagues earlier this year. The board has begun its search for my replacement.

What a wonderful, fulfilling, and privileged journey this has been. I could not have imagined back in 1977 that my life in ministry would be so good. The thousands of people with whom I have worked have been my source of hope and encouragement in difficult times, as well as sources of joy and pride throughout my journey.

My most fulfilling memories are of witnessing, or hearing the stories of, the very special care and comfort given to our clients or of staff offering that same care to one another. Such times clearly fulfill Diakon's mission—to respond to the needs of others as our response to the love of God that has already been given to each of us.

My journey in social ministry was both possible and made more fulfilling by the support and encouragement of my family. I was especially privileged to have served my early years in social ministry at Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries, where I could more easily attend sports and school events with our children as they grew into accomplished and responsible adults. As the scope and breadth of my responsibilities changed when I moved to The Lutheran Home at Topton, then Lutheran Services Northeast, and now Diakon, such involvement would have been more difficult.

In the midst of these changes in our family and my ministry, Mary Jo has been my persistent caregiver, supporter, confidant, healer, and critic. I will never be able to express adequately to her or our children my deep appreciation and humble respect for their contributions to my life and ministry.

For me, there are three vital duties of a chief executive office:

- Surround yourself with people who are better than you in the jobs you hire them to do.
- Know and be comfortable enough with yourself that you can get out of their way and let them do the job you hired them to do.
- Know how to direct all those creative and strong personalities so that they are both accountable for their responsibilities and work together toward the same ends.



## Seniors connect with grieving children through pen-pal program

The Camp Evergreen experience doesn't end when the weekend children's bereavement camp concludes.

Volunteer residents from Luther Crest and Manatawny Manor, two Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Communities in Pennsylvania, are participating in a newly-launched program—Evergreen Elders. The program links volunteers with children who attended Camp Evergreen, allowing them to form relationships through hand-written letters.

In essence, Evergreen Elders are pen pals to campers learning to overcome loss.

I have been surrounded with the brightest, most accomplished, professional, and mission-driven team of leaders and colleagues one could ever hope to serve with in ministry.

I will retire from Diakon knowing it has the best leadership dedicated to ministry and committed to doing the “right thing” at all times. There is no more satisfying way to retire.

Finally, but of supreme importance, are the character, quality, and dedicated leadership of the volunteer members of the boards of directors under whom I have lived out my ministry. I do not know another social ministry executive who has had the privilege of serving for one board after another with the talented, committed, engaged, and supportive members as those with whom I have worked.

I will venture to say that in all my years in social ministry every single board meeting has been one of close board scrutiny, committed conversation about those we serve or should serve, uncompromising support for our mission, and persistent encouragement for me and staff members. In times of difficult decisions they have always debated the issues and then as individuals fully supported the decisions made; in not-as-challenging times, they have continued to be diligent and forward-looking. I am both grateful for and humbled by their attention to detail and sense of responsibility.

I will leave Diakon later this year with a sense of sadness and excitement. I will miss those for whom I have so much respect and with whom I have spent so many meaningful hours of ministry.

However, I also will leave with a strong sense of fulfillment for what we have been able to create and to pass on to future generations. We received this gift of ministry from our predecessors and now gratefully hand over to the next generation a ministry that is both developed and developing.

Thank you to my family, my colleagues here at Diakon, my colleagues in social ministry across the church, those who entrusted their care to the agencies I have served, and all the board members with whom I have journeyed in ministry.

You have helped me more than you will ever know in the vital task of serving our neighbors.

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

When Luther Crest resident Christine Medinger saw the request for Evergreen Elder volunteers in her mailbox, she immediately believed she could help.

“I lost my own father when I was in my teens. I felt a certain connection to the campers’ situation. I knew this was something that I could participate in because it simply involved writing,” she says. “When I was younger, I was active and could drive, but now I can’t. This is something that I can do to help.”

Sending numerous letters and receiving cards from her camper, she believes she contributed to Camp Evergreen in a small way. “There is no way of knowing how much I am helping my camper, but I hope I have given her comfort by letting her know I have gone through some of the same things she is going through.”

Jeanette Diehl, also of Luther Crest, was motivated to volunteer as well because of a loss she experienced as a youngster.

“My father died of a heart attack when I was young. My camper also lost her father—when he died, she was around the same age that I was. We shared a connection and the program is all about sharing,” she says.

“The program was designed to offer additional opportunities to help children cope with grief,” says Leigh Bergstrom, executive director of Diakon Community-Based Health Care, which includes Diakon Hospice Saint John, camp organizer. “Seniors often share life experiences and wisdom with camp participants. They also help carry on the compassion of Camp Evergreen.”

Additional Evergreen Elders tell why they donate their time to be pen pals with Camp Evergreen Campers. . .

*“I admired the program and believed that the contact would be beneficial to both the adults writing and the children coping with grief.”* –Peg Peterson, Luther Crest

*“It is a worthwhile program. . . Today, children do not receive enough attention. Many times, parents are busy working and when children are faced with such a problem as grief, additional interaction is beneficial to the child.”* –Elizabeth Bagger, Luther Crest

*“I have had some rough times—I lost my husband and son. I thought my experience might have some way of helping a young person in need.”* –Sally Pfrom, Luther Crest ■■



### Continued from cover

Some may even forge new friendships with residents of Diakon Senior Living Community residents through Evergreen Elders—a program that links campers with the residents through written communication.

“Our Evergreen Elders are able to continue the work started at Camp Evergreen throughout the year. By becoming pen pals with the campers, they provide a vital link and support,” says Leigh Bergstrom, Diakon Hospice Saint John executive director. “Because of this program, our campers know that they always have someone to turn to and share their feelings with.”

“Kids should know that they are not alone,” says Casey. “My [camp] experience helped me to realize I wasn’t the only one going through this.■■

Bill Klaipts, seated, and three of his four children, admire the banner that Casey made in his mother's memory while at Camp Evergreen. From left are Casey, Cory, and Courtney.

# Advocate for those with disabilities continues life-long mission



*Jim Coughenour, a self-proclaimed Phillie's Phanatic, sports his Steelers jacket.*

■ Eat your vegetables. Exercise regularly. Stay positive.

No, this is not the advice of a doctor, but the encouragement Frey Village resident Jim Coughenour provides to fellow residents free-of-charge every day.

Coughenour has spent the last two years at Frey Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Middletown, Pa., recuperating from several falls related to his lifelong battle with epilepsy. Having regained strength and motion through physical therapy, he is an inspiration to other residents, always encouraging them to challenge themselves physically and keep healthy through good nutrition.

"I have so much to be thankful for and I want others to feel the same," says Coughenour, who has been asked by Frey Village's Activity Department to promote an exercise class for skilled-care residents. "No matter what disability you have, you can overcome it and live life to the fullest."

Diagnosed with epilepsy in infancy, the single father of eight children completed business school and worked for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, providing a good life for his family.

Along with work, he volunteered tirelessly for the disabled. He has stood on the floor of the Pennsylvania House and Senate as a representative for the disabled and helped to convince legislators to implement mandatory ramps, electronic doors, and accessible restrooms in public venues. Coughenour also served for 25 years on the Governor's committee to hire the disabled.

"My dad is someone to look up to, an example of how an individual with a disability can conquer anything," says Pat Zimmerman, Coughenour's daughter who works as a licensed practical nurse in Frey Village's community for those with Alzheimer's disease and related illnesses. "My family is so proud of what he has accomplished, and I know the residents here really benefit from his positive attitude," she adds.

"I have benefited greatly from the skilled staff here at Frey. Through physical therapy, I am able to remain mobile and continue to do the things I enjoy," Coughenour says. "I hope that my enthusiasm for life is contagious. I tell all my friends here at the village: Be positive, think positive, and you will get positive results." ■

## Family legacy honored through generous donation

■ Alice Demey received more than lifelong love from her younger sister, Alberta. She also gained inspiration, including a drive to volunteer in service to others. Since childhood, the sisters used their individual gifts and talents to benefit their family, church, and community.

After their retirement, the pair moved in 2001 to Frey Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Middletown, Pa. They had volunteered at the village for many years and knew they wanted to make the friendly, caring community their home. The sisters enjoyed several years together at Frey until Alberta passed away in 2006.

"I wanted to honor the life of my sister, whose friendship and strength were an inspiration to me," says Alice Demey. "Alberta became the caretaker of our family when our mother died, so that I could continue teaching in the Middletown area. She also found time to volunteer in the community and help those in need."

To that end, Alice Demey made a \$100,000 donation to Frey Village for the renovation of its chapel, recently rededicated to memorialize Alberta Demey. The chapel was expanded and received new lighting, carpeting, windows, ceiling, and flooring. Alice purchased a new grand piano for the chapel as well.

Alice Demey has set an example of caring for others, having accumulated 9,000 hours of volunteer service with Frey Village. An elementary school teacher for 50 years, she was presented with Pennsylvania's first Golden Apple Award for teaching, and the Middletown elementary school in which she taught was renamed in her honor.

Demey has another sister living in the Frey nursing care center. "My sister, Kathryn Seiders, is receiving wonderful care, and I am able to visit her every day," she says.

"It is a blessing to have a place to live when you are no longer capable of taking care of yourself. I speak for my beloved sister Alberta when I say that

Frey Village is a wonderful place to call home. And I am so pleased to have her memory live on through my gift."

■ For more information on how you can be a donor to any one of Diakon's many programs, please contact Diakon's Office of Advancement at 1-877-DIAKON-7, option 2, extension 21219. ■



*Alice Demey stands beside the grand piano she had donated to the Frey Village chapel.*

# New program matches corporate in-kind donations with non-profits

*Diakon Kathryn's Kloset promises to serve hundreds of thousands*

■ Somewhere in Maryland or a surrounding state, there's a tractor-trailer filled with new, unused personal-care items ready to be donated by a large corporation. Urgently in need of such items, a nearby community homeless shelter would love to get a portion of the donation for local families.

Diakon Kathryn's Kloset helps the two find each other.

Diakon recently committed funding and support to grow what had been a part-time program in Baltimore into Diakon Kathryn's Kloset, which partners corporate donations of goods with non-profits that serve those most in need. This innovative effort promises to reach hundreds of thousands of people annually.

Accepting dry goods, non-perishable and some perishable food items, toiletries, cleaning supplies, school supplies, office equipment, and furniture, Diakon Kathryn's Kloset serves as a sort of way station for goods donated to aid people in need.

Diakon Kathryn's Kloset collects, stores, and distributes the new, unused products to non-profit organizations, which in turn distribute the goods, free of charge, to people in need in the community.

The program's warehouse-based operations center stores and distributes donated products to partnering agencies, allowing a far greater capacity of donated products to flow to those in need, says Wade Brown, executive director of the program. "None of these organizations has the space to take a truckload of product," he says. "We have a 53,000-square-foot warehouse where corporations can donate in volume. They have one location for their whole donation."

Community organizations can tap into those donations as they become available, and as they have needs. Partnering organizations, which must be non-profit, complete a survey form indicating their needs, Brown explains. "There is no cost associated for anything they need. They just have to be able to come to the warehouse and get it."

Donated items may be as varied as sewing machines and laptop computers to bottled water and shampoo. The ultimate end-users of donated items are the children, families, and adults served by the local non-profits.

The program, in fact, is named for Brown's mother, a Maryland woman who fed, nurtured, and provided for all who came into her presence. Brown established the service, part-time, while an employee for Unilever in Baltimore.

While Diakon's funding and administrative support have allowed the program to expand into a full-time major operation, the basic goal remains the same: "We're a unique matchmaking process that puts useful items into the hands of those who need them most," says Brown. "Resources are so limited. There's always a need." ■



*Representatives from the Baltimore County Head Start Program visit Kathryn's Kloset to receive a supply of previously-donated flashlights. From left are Ayesha Clatterbuck, family and community services specialist; Wade Brown, executive director of Diakon Kathryn's Kloset; William Haskett, program service coordinator/family services; and Gail Reich, executive director YMCA Central Maryland.*

## Giving, receiving, and sharing Program touches many lives

■ At centers across the country, Head Start teachers focus on helping to prepare young children from economically challenged families for success in school. There isn't a lot of space to spare, as most of it is devoted to the eager young faces served by the program, so when a company wants to help by donating classroom supplies, for example, Diakon Kathryn's Kloset is invaluable.

"When items are donated for the program, we turn to Kathryn's Kloset," says William Haskett, a volunteer with the national Head Start program. "Through them, we can share the donations among centers and the staff can get things as they need them."

Sharing resources for the greater good just makes sense, notes Melissa Shaffer, volunteer coordinator for Each One Reach One. Based in Shrewsbury, Pa., the non-profit organization has a mission similar to that of Diakon Kathryn's Kloset and partners with the Diakon program to make the most of donations.

"Whether it's rice or cereal or medical or office supplies, nothing goes to waste," Shaffer says. "We share with Diakon Kathryn's Kloset and they share with us."

Oftentimes, corporations wish to remain anonymous, Shaffer says. They simply want to donate their product without recognition. Working with Each One Reach One and Diakon Kathryn's Kloset allows them to donate in their own way.

"For example, that's how we can take cookie donations like we got recently and distribute them among children's homes from Baltimore to Harrisburg," Shaffer says. "It's really a win-win arrangement."

💡 *No money is ever exchanged for items distributed through Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. It is the generous support of donors who make Diakon Kathryn's Kloset possible. Annual costs associated with maintaining a program of this breadth and magnitude are significant, averaging \$661,566. Your generous gift will not only help to cover current operating expenses, but also to build the endowment funds needed to support this program.* ■

*Riverview Head Start Center site manager, Chelai Byrd, left, delivers a flashlight to teacher Delores Snipes for her room's emergency kit.*

# Residents decorate community tree with hand-made ornaments



(left photo) Residents Mable Smith, left, and Mildred Hoell work on the hand-made tree ornaments. (right photo) The Driebe Freight Station in Stroudsburg, Pa.

■ For Pocono Lutheran Village resident Irma Dube, making Christmas ornaments for a tree display in town was a highlight of the holiday season. “I enjoy crafts, and making the snowmen and snowflake ornaments was a great way to get into the Christmas spirit while doing something nice for the community,” says Dube, who has lived at this Diakon Senior Living Community in East Stroudsburg, Pa., for the past three years.

“I am in a wheel chair, so this is something I am able to do without difficulty and I like the social aspect of it as well.”

The tree-decorating was part of the Monroe County Historical Association’s two-week Holiday Open House at the 1882 Driebe Freight Station in Stroudsburg. The tree display was organized in conjunction with the Stroudsburg Fire Department’s holiday lights exhibit.

The Driebe Freight Station was decorated with Christmas trees from area organizations. Residents from Pocono Lutheran Village created a blue-and-white tree decorated with the hand-made ornaments. The tree-topper was a “senior” snow man complete with gray hair, bi-focals, and a pipe.

“I was delighted that Pocono Lutheran Village was able to participate. I feel that it helps us both,” says Amy Leiser, historical association executive director. “Pocono Lutheran Village gains exposure in the community, and our association has a wonderful tree that helps get everyone into the holiday spirit.”

The historical association has given presentations to village residents. “It has always been a delight to work with [village] staff members, who are so accommodating and energetic,” says Leiser. “And the residents are just amazing. The tree is beautiful.” ■■

## College student inspired by senior living residents

■ When you mention the name Tara Werner to residents of Pocono Lutheran Village, a big smile comes across their faces. This East Stroudsburg University senior has been spending much of her free time the past two years at the village, and residents adore her.

A speech pathology major, Werner completed her practicum requirements at the village, a Diakon Senior Living Community in East Stroudsburg, Pa., and enjoyed it so much she decided to stay on as a volunteer. She admits that one reason she chose the village for her practicum was its proximity to the university, but she now says she has developed such a strong bond with residents that she will visit after graduation.

“I have worked with the residents every week for the past few years and I enjoy every minute of it,” says Werner. “I think I get as much satisfaction from them as I hope they do from me being around. I feel like I was born to help others. Wherever graduate school takes me, I will still come back and say hello.”

Werner assists with Bingo games, bowling, shuffle board, arts and crafts, and anything else she is asked to do. She especially enjoys visiting residents in their apartments and just talking with them.

“Sometimes the residents just need a friend to talk to and they are so glad that I knocked on their doors. There are some amazing people living here with interesting stories to tell. I learn a lot from them.” ■■



Volunteer college student Tara Werner helps resident Irma Dube decorate the Christmas tree.

# Program helps senior pay fair cost for medications

■ No one likes to pay more for something than they should, especially in today's tough economic environment.

Sophie D'Alfonso, a 96-year-old resident of Pottsville, Pa., lives with her daughter and son-in-law, Josie and John Hammond. Like most people her age, she takes several medications on a daily basis, prescriptions that should be covered in part by her prescription-drug plan. But last summer, the Hammonds realized that D'Alfonso was paying more than she should for her prescriptions.

After several attempts to rectify the situation on their own, the Hammonds contacted Susan Johns, a counselor with APPRISE, Pennsylvania's State Health Insurance Assistance Program for residents aged 60 and over. Diakon Community Services for Seniors provides the APPRISE service in Schuylkill County.

After many calls, complaints, and correspondence with the insurance company with no resolution, Johns recommended to the Hammonds that they change D'Alfonso's drug plan. As a result, Johns was able to get a refund of several hundred dollars and correct the amount D'Alfonso was paying for prescriptions.

Deborah Pauzer, APPRISE coordinator, recognizes how difficult it can be to change a situation like this. "It takes a lot to keep going when an agency tells you 'no.' Sue knew the rules and knew what was right. She kept calling and following through," says Pauzer.

The Hammonds are grateful for the end result: D'Alfonso is now paying what she should for her medications. "Thanks to Sue Johns and Diakon, the prescription cost issue has been resolved." ■



*Sophie D'Alfonso now pays less for the various medications she takes regularly.*

## Student blankets a community with warmth



*Michael Howard and his sister, Amanda, carry a large box of blankets donated by friends and neighbors in their community.*

■ As a student at North Schuylkill Junior/Senior High School in Ashland, Pa., Michael Howard must complete a senior project in order to graduate. He could have written a 10-page report, but decided he wanted to do something different.

"I wanted to do something special that would make a difference in the lives of others," says Howard.

"With a lot of [older adults] on fixed incomes and the price of gas and oil [being high], I thought they could at

least have a blanket to help keep them warm."

From that thought, Project Winter Warmth was born.

Howard collaborated with the staff at the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services and Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, which provides a number of county-funded senior programs in Schuylkill County.

As soon as collection bins were placed throughout the county, blankets and monetary contributions began pouring in from as far away as

Florida. By the end of the year, Howard had collected a total of 600 blankets and \$400 in contributions to be used to purchase additional blankets for new clients.

"I think this was a wonderful idea, especially during the winter," says Michelle Klusman, Diakon's Meals on Wheels director. "My feeling is that many people had turned down their heat this winter to a point where it was not safe. In addition to keeping them warm, hopefully the blanket made them feel more safe and secure." ■



## Your generosity is appreciated

In 2009, Diakon will provide approximately \$14 million in benevolent care to the people we serve. We need your continued support to provide that level of care to people in your community with limited financial resources.

Most of the Diakon services depicted in Dialog provide benevolent care in a variety of ways. Diakon depends now more than ever on generous donations from corporations, synods, congregations, and individuals to enable it to serve so many people.

You can join us in making a difference in the lives of people in need. Simply use the blue envelope in this issue of Dialog or log onto our Web site's convenient and secure donation form to make your gift.

For further information on how you can support one or more of Diakon's ministries, please call the Office of Advancement at 1-877- DIAKON-7, option 2, extension 21219, or visit [www.diakon.org](http://www.diakon.org). Thank you.

# COMING SOON Adoption & Foster Care to launch online forum

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care is expanding its use of the Internet to reach adoptive and foster families.

The Diakon Web site home-page ([www.diakon.org](http://www.diakon.org)) currently features information on children available for adoption, but a new Web feature will help to link adoptive and foster parents to share resources and build lasting friendships.

A bulletin-board forum has been developed to help create an online community of adoptive and foster parents. From preparing for a child's arrival, to caring for a toddler, to dealing with teenagers' concerns, parents will be able to share information and stories, answer questions, and offer support to one another.

In addition, registered participants will also find links to helpful sites, useful phone numbers, and a professional-advice section on which questions can be posted for Diakon staff members. When launched, the site will be found at [www.diakonfamilies.org](http://www.diakonfamilies.org).



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