

MEETING

SUMMER 2004

Challenges

TresslerCare Program Directors *recognized for commitment to serve*

Four TresslerCare program directors recently were recognized for their dedication to service and to daily actions that live out Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries' mission to minister to those in need.

In March Diakon, TresslerCare's parent organization, honored the recipients of its 2003 SERVICE and LEADERSHIP awards during the agency's Leadership Team meeting in Grantville, Pa., and recognized all award nominees with framed plaques.

Among the LEADERSHIP award nominees were Jason Brode,

Wilderness Challenge Program; Corey Carothers, Weekend Alternative Program; Nina Poe, Wilderness School Horticultural Program; and Jane Yeatter, Foster Care and Specialized in-Home Treatment Program. Eric Melder, who recently returned to the Weekend Program on a part-time basis, was recognized as TresslerCare's nominee for the SERVICE award. These five staff members represented the highest number of nominees from any single program within Diakon.

"We congratulate these individuals for their dedication and commitment to making our programs the best



Jane Yeatter

they can be in serving youth and their families," says Craig Smith, TresslerCare's executive director.

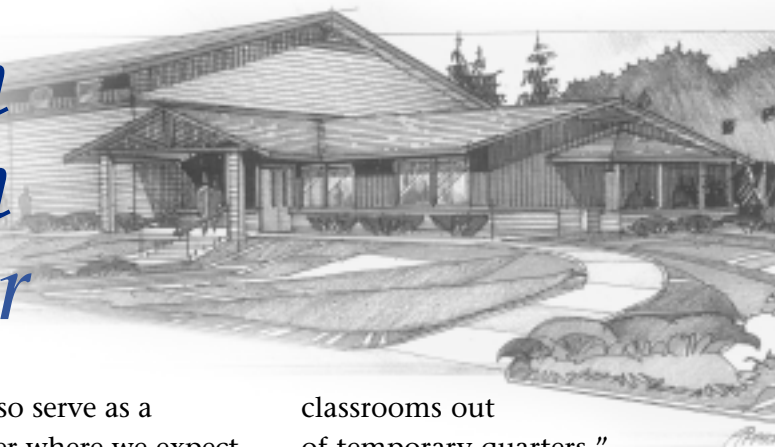


From left: Corey Carothers, Nina Poe, Jason Brode

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Construction underway on multi-purpose center



With the start of spring, construction began on a combined gymnasium/classroom building at the TresslerCare Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa.

When completed this fall, the 5,000-square-foot gymnasium will provide space for basketball, volleyball, and other indoor activities, says George Eckenrode, TresslerCare's director of marketing.

"The space will also serve as a convocation center where we expect to hold Wilderness Course graduations and other activities requiring a large indoor setting," he says, adding that there will be additional room for academic services.

"Construction will also include four new classrooms attached to the gymnasium that will allow us to move our 90-day Wilderness Challenge Plus program

classrooms out of temporary quarters."

The Wilderness Center's capital campaign, The Wilderness Challenge: A Chance to Succeed, reached its \$2 million fundraising goal earlier this year. To date, the campaign has funded completion of a new residence hall, implementation of the girls' residence program, and kick-off of the horticultural program.

DuBois Day Treatment Program

Approval granted to operate alternative school

Late in 2003 the TresslerCare Day Treatment Program won approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to operate a school that supplements the alternate education efforts of local school districts in Clearfield, Jefferson, and Elk counties.

Being named to the Private Provider list for Alternative Education of Disruptive Students allows the Day Program to serve an expanded population of sixth through twelfth graders, says Rod Burlingame, clinical director.

"Our small-group setting permits each student to work at his or her own pace and level, with the opportunity

for extensive one-on-one instruction and support," he says. "All instruction is provided by a certified special education teacher."

Students in the program participate in a daily Prevention and Recovery Group, which provides education and relapse prevention support for substance abuse, as well as a Pro Social Skills Group.

"This group emphasizes various aspects of getting along with others, such as anger management, conflict resolution, assertiveness training, and positive workplace behavior," Burlingame adds. "Individual and family counseling, as well as parenting instruction, is

provided by licensed professional counselors, psychologists, and social workers on an as-needed basis."

In addition to classroom-style learning, students participate in experiential learning at various community service sites in the surrounding area. "The youths volunteer at nursing homes and non-profit organizations. The class travels to a reclaimed strip mine project to learn and help out on occasion," he says. "We emphasize ecological and social responsibility."

For more information on the school or to make a referral, contact Rod Burlingame at 814.371.1542 or by e-mail at burlingamer@diakon.org.

ILS Group is client-focused

Adrienne Jackson, MSW, LSW, the new Independent Living Skills Group facilitator, is helping youth in the TresslerCare Foster Care—Capital Region gain some of life's basic survival skills.

"We work on everything from asking for an application and interviewing skills to finding out the differences between needs and wants and being able to distinguish between those when trying to set a budget," Jackson explains. "It's basic stuff that isn't basic for a lot of people."

According to Marilyn Sutton, assistant director of TresslerCare Foster Care, the Independent Living Skills program makes it possible to intervene in the lives of the youth so they develop self-esteem, basic living skills, social and leadership skills, community and peer support networks, and guidance for employment and educational choices.

Currently, there are three group sessions held each week for youths ages 15 to 18. The classes are small in size, allowing Jackson to offer individual attention. She describes her approach to the interaction as very client-directed and -focused.

"The youth pick what they want to do and we go from there," she says. "They are always told we can talk about absolutely anything as long as they bring it up. If I don't have the answers, I'll try to find them. But they also have to try to find the answers."

The youth recently completed the Occupational Aptitude Survey and Interest Schedule, which helps determine what jobs and work activities best fit their interests. In addition, they are working through the National Endowment for Financial Education Program, which addresses financial planning, careers after high school, how to budget, savings and



investments, how to get and maintain good credit, and how to apply and receive insurance.

Plans are in the works to involve foster parent volunteers in the program as a way to incorporate outings into the curriculum. "We're planning to take field trips to apartment buildings, Laundromats and other related services that the youth will use when they are on their own," Sutton says. "It is really good to have the weekly sessions, but we wanted to have the practical part of it too."

For more information, or to make referrals to the Foster Care-Mechanicsburg program, please contact Cindy Garfinkel at 717-795-0320, or by e-mail at garfinkelc@diakon.org.

Customer satisfaction survey measures outcomes

With the help of a newly implemented customer satisfaction survey that takes less than five minutes to complete, county caseworkers and probation officers are letting TresslerCare know if its programs and services are meeting their needs.

Effective Jan. 1, the survey process began for most programs after nearly a year in development. The process is tied to the monthly billing cycle, which identifies when a youth has been discharged. By the fifteenth of the following month, TresslerCare sends the survey to the youth's county

caseworker or probation officer.

With the goal of making the survey as simple as possible to complete and return, TresslerCare devised a 12-question survey based on a rating system of 1 to 4, with 4 being "Mostly Satisfied." The survey also includes a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

"We have had a much better than anticipated response from people," says Craig Smith, TresslerCare's executive director. "Our monthly response rate has been as high as 50 percent, which is great when

you consider 30 percent is a reasonable expectation."

The feedback in those completed surveys has been mostly positive, as well. "But when a concern is noted, George Eckenrode or the program director personally follows up to find out what we can do to improve our services," Smith says.

The customer satisfaction survey process is a continuing initiative that will evolve over time and may eventually extend to parents and the youths themselves, says Smith.

Weekend Alternative Program

Rock-A-Thon raises money and awareness

Brandon Shrawder, 18, of Middletown, Pa., says he feels TresslerCare's Weekend Alternative Program has helped him to change his value system.

"Before I came here, I valued things that I shouldn't have valued. Now I know there are more important things in life."

One of the many experiences that has helped Brandon come to this realization was seeing children his age and younger participate in the annual "Rock-A-Thon" themed "Kids Rockin' for Kids," held at the Trinity Lutheran Church, Pottsville, in February. The event benefited the TresslerCare program, which provides outdoor-based treatment services for court-adjudicated youth in Boiling Springs, Pa.

As part of the Rock-A-Thon's outreach ministry, approximately 75 youth rocked 12 or 24 hours straight to raise \$5,000—the most money ever raised from the event, which originated in 1977. Proceeds will be used to purchase outdoor gear such as sleeping bags, coats, gloves, and boots for Weekend Alternative Program participants like Brandon.

"When we bring them out here, it provides unique therapeutic interventions..."

"It can really get frigid in the winter, especially since we sleep outdoors. Some people come up here with regular street clothes. They don't understand how cold it can get," says Brandon.



Ariel Reeve and Sarah Spece, left to right, from Trinity Lutheran Church, Pottsville, recently supported Diakon's programs for at-risk youths by "rockin' round the clock." Story in the Northeastern Pennsylvania regional edition of Dialog.

Corey C. Carothers, director of the Weekend Alternative Program, which serves approximately 325 individuals ages 13 to 18 each year, says that the program's structured outdoor activities such as hiking and camping are important to the program's mission.

"The outdoor activities take the majority of the kids out of their comfort zones—most of them have never been in an environment like this. A lot of our students are used to standing on street corners under streetlights and when they see all these trees, mountains, and animals with no pavement, they are not sure how to handle it. When we bring them out here, it provides unique

therapeutic interventions through which students can learn and grow as individuals. They are more reliant on us so they build trust, and the accomplishments they experience through our activities help them to develop self-esteem."

Karen J. Wood, director of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries' Community Services to Seniors programs in Schuylkill County and Trinity's youth ministry coordinator, says there is a connection between the rockers and the Weekend Alternative Program.

"The Weekend Alternative Program is performing a ministry with kids. It intervenes in kids' lives when they need it the most. It teaches responsibility for the community they reside in and that is what we teach our kids here. It was a real nice fit."

For more information about or referrals to the Weekend Alternative Program, please contact Corey Carothers at 717-258-3168, ext.117 or by e-mail at carothersc@diakon.org

Wilderness Sc

Summer program

The TresslerCare Wilderness School plans to offer its popular Summer Program beginning June 14. This structured summer experience will provide a flexible menu of short-term intervention options designed to help youths successfully return home in time

Wilderness Challenge Program

Focus on therapeutic treatment model

With the introduction of a multi-phase approach to the course and the addition of a clinical coordinator earlier this year, the TresslerCare Wilderness Challenge Program delivers the therapeutic treatment model needed for the youth involved, says Jason Brode, director.

"We listened to our referral sources and have incorporated more of what they are looking for in terms of gains from the program," Brode explains. "The new format increases the contact our more experienced staff have with the youth."

The first component of the enhanced program is The Learning Phase. During this time the clinical goals are set for each youth with the help of the new clinical coordinator, Barbara Fulton.

"What I bring is experience in helping identify treatment issues for these students and building action steps within the framework of the course that can help them reach their goals," says Fulton, who served the residential program from 1992 until 2000. She began as a weekend resident counselor, moved to case manager, and then became clinical team leader,

a position she held for four years. Fulton, who has a bachelor's degree in behavioral science, also has experience in MH/MR and working with inpatient adolescent programs.

"We will look at behavioral goals and also help identify underlying issues of conflict at home or school. So, at the end of the course, I can help the youths build an action plan to take with them back to their community."

The bulk of the course, The Expedition Phase, takes place on the trail. "This is where the youth are working on their goals, having successes and issues come up so they can process and work through them," Brode says.

The final part phase of the new approach is The Reflection Phase, which includes the solo experience.

"At that point they are reflecting on what got them into the program, how they've been able to work on that, the successes they've had and how they can transfer those successes back into their community," Brode notes. "This also is the point at which Barb meets with them and develops the action plan to take with them."

hool Program

to begin

to begin the upcoming school year.

Services will include education enrichment, therapeutic and education groups, community service, and completion of the Wilderness Challenge course. Family counseling will be provided during and for up to four sessions following discharge.

Additional program and referral information is has been mailed to counties in late April to early May.

For additional information, or to make referrals to the Summer Program, please call Deanna Davis at 717-258-3168, ext.111

In other news

Youth achieve successful completion rate

With 227 participants—160 males, 67 female—completing the Wilderness Challenge Program in 2003, 89 percent successfully graduated from the program. Juvenile Probation offices referred 137 of the youths, while Children and Youth Services referred 90. Bucks County Juvenile Probation was the lead referral source with 37 referrals.

Transportation

Also in the works is a mid-point pick-up area for youths coming from western Pennsylvania counties to participate in the Wilderness Challenge Program. Currently, Wilderness Challenge staff members provide transportation for youths coming from eastern Pennsylvania counties on a case-by-case basis, unless there are two or more youths from a county on a course, in which case transportation is provided.

Early Delivery

In addition to offering short-term residential stays for youths waiting to begin the Wilderness Challenge Program, the Wilderness Center will accommodate counties that want to deliver youth on the Friday before their course is scheduled to begin. "They can arrive on Friday and spend the weekend with the Weekend Alternative Program," Brode explains. "We would staff them for overnight Sunday and have them ready to start the course on Monday."

For more information or to make a referral to the Wilderness Challenge Program, please contact Jason Brode at 717-258-3168, ext.124 or by e-mail at brodej@diakon.org.

TRESSLERCARE *Regional News*

- Welcome to Kelly Smith, who started Feb. 17 as a case manager with TresslerCare Foster Care. She previously worked at two community-based residential treatment facilities in York, which housed adolescent males ages 14 through 21 referred through the juvenile justice system.
- Welcome to Justin Smith, who began in January as a case manager for the Specialized In-Home Treatment Program. He previously worked at Cornell Abraxas' South Mountain facility and wanted an opportunity to work more specifically with youths with sexual behavior and offending problems.
- Specialized In-home Treatment Program services are being used in conjunction with TresslerCare's 90-day Wilderness Challenge Plus program to provide effective interventions for youths with sexual behavior and offending problems. When youths need to be removed from the home to ensure safety, case-management, family therapy, individual therapy, and group therapy services continue to be provided, while staffs from both programs work together to address treatment issues.
- **TresslerCare – *Wilderness Center***
Eric Melder, a former counselor with the Weekend Alternative Program, recently returned to the program to provide support on an on-call basis.
- **TresslerCare – *Downingtown***
Staff at TresslerCare Southeast Region attended training on the CAFAS (Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale). This assessment tool is being considered to measure changes in a youth's overall functioning, following participation in one of our programs or services.
- **TresslerCare Foster Care – *Topton***
TresslerCare Foster Care – Topton recently completed its annual DPW licensing inspection, citation free. Congratulations to Lauren Roth and her staff for this excellent accomplishment.