

DIAKON CONNECTION

FALL 2004

Congregational partnerships bring service ministry to life

A handmade bag packed with personal items... a quilt to cover a bed far from home... not one, but two or three Christmas gifts for children unused to compassion and concern.

These are just a few examples of the multiple ways Lutheran congregations throughout the *Lower Susquehanna Synod* work alongside *Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries* to bring hope and healing to those in need.

Although many congregations have been involved with the organization for years, providing volunteers and benevolence, additional relationships are being built as the result of partnerships between congregations and such programs as *TresslerCare* and *Family Life Services*.

For example, it broke Bettie Heycock's

heart every time she saw a child who entered *TresslerCare's Foster Care* program arrive at the office with all of his or her belongings in a paper bag. "They didn't have anything personal with them," remembers the administrative assistant. "When I saw them, I was almost in tears."

Heycock turned to her congregation, Trinity Lutheran in Lemoyne, Pa., and asked the quilters' group for help. It wasn't long before she returned to work with nearly 50 small and large duffel bags, each uniquely designed and overflowing with personal-care items and a stuffed animal donated by members of the congregation.

Relationships such as this underscore the link between Diakon and its "moral owners," the church and its various expressions including congregations, Craig Smith believes.

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TresslerCare youth programs are among those benefiting from congregational involvement in Diakon services.



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 annually serves some 70,000 persons in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware through adoption, foster care, counseling, youth services, volunteer home care, retirement communities, housing accommodations, congregational ministries, hospice services, and more.

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Intergenerational program enriches young and old alike

The ball hit the bat with a crack and the batter was off and running. The crowd started cheering and soon everyone was caught up in the excitement as the runner rounded the base for home.

A major league baseball game? No. It's a game of "Buddy Baseball" between students from St. Patrick's School in Carlisle and residents of *Cumberland Crossings Retirement Community's* skilled care center and assisted living community. In this unique game, the students can choose to hit the ball and wheel their buddy around the bases or let their buddy do the hitting and the students run.

Buddy Baseball is just one of many activities students and residents share as part of the Buddy Program, an intergenerational effort that has brightened the lives of everyone involved for more than 11 years.

"I always thought this was the greatest program," says Trish Cherchuck, who coordinated the program while her daughter was a participant. "The kids get so much out of relating with the older people. They may not have grandparents in the area, and it helps them get to be friends with the older crowd."

When the program began, first-grade students were paired with an older "buddy," with whom they would meet monthly during the school year until they

completed the eighth grade. Eventually the program became difficult to coordinate and it changed to its present format, in which residents are "buddied" with a student while the child is in third, fourth, and fifth grades.

The school transports students to Cumberland Crossings each month so that they can spend an hour with their buddy, playing bingo, doing crafts, even heading outside for a scavenger hunt. They also interview each other to compile a book.

Overall, the concept is to build relationships that students will maintain outside the monthly visits. "I know several students come on their own time and visit their buddies," says Cherchuck. "It takes the parents to do it at this point," because the children don't drive. "There are many parents who have been real supportive."

Earlier this year, residents and their fifth-grade buddies gathered for a picnic to celebrate their three-year friendship and the children's move to junior high school in the fall. At the same time, residents met the third-grade students they began learning to know this fall.

The Buddy Program enriches everyone involved, says Cherchuck. "It gave me a lot of joy seeing the residents' faces light up and hearing the good things the kids get out of it."

Susquehanna Lutheran Village Young man sought Diakon facility for rehab



By 9 each morning, Shuey was in occupational therapy for an hour. Then it was on to physical therapy until noon. “I tried to push myself real hard. I would go back in the afternoon just to stretch,” he says. “The first time they had me standing, it was awesome.”

By late June, Shuey had advanced sufficiently that Bechtel incorporated the parallel bars into his physical rehabilitation program. It wasn't long before he was able to walk with a quad cane and then a one-point cane.

“He was motivated. It was refreshing,” Bechtel says. “I think the older residents enjoyed his company.”

Mike Shuey never thought of walking as difficult. That was before the 28-year-old was in a car accident that left him with broken arms, legs, left wrist, and left ankle, as well as a crushed elbow.

The months that followed taught the Landisburg man that some things taken for granted don't always come easily.

Shuey chose *Susquehanna Lutheran Village* in Millersburg for his rehabilitation.

“I had heard about Diakon,” he says. “Their reputation for rehab is outstanding.”

After spending two and a half weeks in the hospital, Shuey arrived at the village in mid-May, unable to bear weight on his extremities. “I couldn't do anything,” he remembers. “I just wanted to be able to walk out.”

With the help of comprehensive physical and occupational therapy, Shuey began a slow, but steady progression toward his goal. The process began with strengthening exercises and transfers from his wheelchair to a table and back again.

“He went from minimal assist to standby assist for transfers in two weeks' time,” says Janet Bechtel, physical therapy assistant. “At that point we began to work with isometrics and low weights.”



Mike Shuey with Janet Bechtel of Susquehanna Lutheran Village's rehabilitation department.

At the same time he was working with physical therapy, Shuey also concentrated on learning self-care with the help of adaptive devices. “Mike worked on range-of-motion exercises during his occupational therapy to increase the strength and mobility of both arms,” explains Jaime Lyter, certified occupational therapy assistant. “As his arms improved, self-care became easier and by June some of the assistive devices were no longer needed.”

An avid outdoorsman, Shuey found remaining indoors most of the summer to be one of the hardest parts of his rehabilitation. But his good rapport with village staff and other residents made his stay a little easier. “The staff was incredible. They went out of their way to help me,” he says. “Everyone was so nice.”

Younger people find meaning in volunteering

They are younger than the average volunteer and have a lot less “free time” on their hands, but they have the same motivation as every other volunteer—personal satisfaction.

That’s what keeps them coming back again and again.

At least that’s what Dana Sanchez, 46, says about volunteering at *Frey Village*.

Sanchez is one of the few younger volunteers that Kathy Nelson, volunteer coordinator, wants to recruit to meet week-day needs at the Middletown retirement community. Although Nelson has many older adult volunteers, younger volunteers are needed to keep the program strong.

“I felt called to volunteer,” says Sanchez, who has served at Frey Village for more than a year. “I’ve always enjoyed being around the elderly and working with the elderly. I thought it was something I ought to do.”

Sanchez was present for her mother when she spent the last three years of her life in a nursing home, and she hopes her

presence at Frey Village will have a positive impact on her children as future volunteers.

“So many people my age are working during the week. I don’t know who will be there to replace” the older volunteers when they are gone, she says. “I’ve been getting my children involved. They come in with me in the summers. Hopefully it will be something they want to do when they get older.”

Sanchez came to Frey Village through her congregation, the way Nelson secures many volunteers. But some volunteers find their way on their own.

Kortni Gaffney, 25, lives in Highspire and was familiar with Frey Village because her doctor’s office is next door. She currently volunteers on weekends, visiting with residents. She is training for the Abiders Program, which prepares volunteers to provide companionship and solace for a person during his or her final hours of life.

“When Kathy [Nelson] explained the program, she said it was very difficult to



Dana Sanchez, left, visits with Frey Village resident Helen Saul.

find people to do that,” says Gaffney. “Yes, it might be difficult, but at least somebody is there. I wouldn’t want anybody I know to die alone.”

Both Sanchez and Gaffney, who have discovered the fulfillment that comes from volunteering, are good examples of what volunteering an hour or two a week can offer, Nelson says.

“I just love the people,” says Sanchez. “I enjoy seeing them every time I come in. It’s a joy.”

Perry service reaches more families

TresslerCare’s *PERRYfamilies Initiative* not only will continue to bring home-based services to families in western Perry County, but also is expanding outreach to include families in the eastern part of the county.

The extension of the year-old program came with news that the Carlisle Area Health and Wellness Foundation had renewed grant funding for the program’s second year. As a result, the Perry County Children & Youth and Juvenile Probation offices agreed to fund expansion of services, making it possible for *PERRYfamilies Initiative* to provide individual and

family counseling services to youths and their families ineligible under grant provisions.

“The county found the services to be so good that they agreed to allocate additional funds for the eastern part of the county,” says Joan Lotz, clinical director. The program targets 13- to 18-year-old youths referred by the two county services. Program participants are youths at risk for out-of-home placement, as well as their parents.

“They are usually very defiant and don’t follow any kind of rules and guidelines at home and school,” says Lotz, adding that “drugs and alcohol are involved in about 70

percent of the cases.”

In addition to providing weekly individual and family counseling sessions, program counselors keep in regular contact with schools to ensure that youths are doing well academically and behaviorally.

“It’s amazing to see the decrease in truancy for kids involved in the program. Some have gone from 20 to 40 days’ truant to one or two in a school year,” says Lotz, adding that the families the program serves are primarily working and middle class. The program stresses skills building, specifically in areas such as anger management, drug and alcohol abuse, conflict resolution, and assertiveness training. Families participating in the program are eligible for up to one year of service.

Congregational partnerships Continued from Page 1

Smith is TresslerCare's executive director.

Congregations "are justifiably looking for tangible ways to see what impact their contributions and partnerships have on people in need," he says. "It is a critical component of our relationship."

The **TresslerCare Wilderness Center** (see the related article on the center's dedication on the Inside Back Cover) is among Diakon's more popular programs with congregations. "You can see the facility and get an immediate impression of its positive influence on youths," says Smith. "People are able to respond. It also has more of a direct connection to the origins of the agency," since major portions of Diakon began as children's homes.

Zion Lutheran Church in Hummelstown is another long-time supporter of TresslerCare's youth programs. "They've been providing

Christmas gifts for over 10 years," says Smith, "probably about 125 gifts per year to our foster care and residential programs."

Other congregational partnerships involve Family Life Services, which currently is developing a range of supportive programs to and with congregations.

"Over the years, we've felt that it's important not only for the congregation to use its own facility, but especially to reach out to the community through the facility and our ministry," says the Rev. Richard Ruff, whose congregation, St. Paul Lutheran in Carlisle, donates space for a Family Life Services counseling site.

"We've tried to make our building available for what we feel are worthy ministries that will really touch the lives of people who live around us."



Congregational support of the TresslerCare Wilderness Center's capital campaign helped fund expansion that allowed creation of a residential program for young females.

WISH LIST

The following Diakon programs can use your assistance! If you or your congregation would like to donate any of these items or provide funding for their purchase, please contact Diakon's Office of Advancement at 1-877-342-5667, ext. 1219. Thank you!

Community Services for Seniors – Cumberland County

- New flooring in men's restroom at Mechanicsburg Area Senior Center
- Easily moved podium with or without microphone
- Padded desk chairs with wheels

Cumberland Crossings Retirement Community, Carlisle

- New fitness equipment
- Furniture for nursing care center solariums
- Decorative borders for nursing care center resident rooms
- Enclosed glass display case for Assisted Living community

Diakon Adoption Services, York

- Proxima projector
- Digital camera
- Digital camcorder
- Overhead projector and screen
- Recruitment posters and funding for advertising
- Birthday cards for children
- Bookstore gift cards
- Video-store gift cards
- Office desk and chair

Family Life Services – Capital Region

- Gift certificates for playroom supplies
- Disney videos (VHS) for waiting room
- Donations for families who need medications and cannot afford them
- Filing cabinets

Frey Village, Middletown

- Electric high-low beds
- Landscaping for courtyard area
- Garden benches
- Activity supplies (*paper, paints, glue, bingo prizes, and games*)

Perry Village, New Bloomfield

- Wall hangings for sub-dining rooms
- Tone chimes
- Digital camera
- Plants
- Activity supplies (*paper, glue, and Bingo prizes*)

Susquehanna Lutheran Village, Millersburg

- Wheelchair swing (*costs \$4,500; \$1,300 donated to date*)
- Special wheelchairs
- Biofeedback machine

TresslerCare – Capital Region

- Digital camera with docking station
- Disposable cameras with flash
- VCR/DVD player
- Proxima projector
- Bookstore gift cards

TresslerCare Wilderness Center

- Lumber & drywall or monetary donations to repair staff housing
- Men's boots (*new or used sizes 9 1/2 to 12; no steel toes*)
- Refrigerator for staff living area
- Room air conditioners (window insert) and dehumidifiers
- Batteries (D, AA); Mag-light flashlights
- Undergarments: men's boxers (M, L, XL) and women's underwear (sizes 5, 6, 7)
- Gloves and hats
- Hygiene products (*toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, soap, small shampoo containers, towels, etc.*)
- Sponsorships for private referrals, specifically for families needing financial assistance.
- Course T-shirts for graduating participants (*sponsor cost per course is approximately \$120*)
- 25-inch television (*used is fine but with VCR hook-up*)
- Bibles for Bible study (*Zondervan Student Bible, \$25 each*)
- Monetary donations for resource library

Volunteer Home Care/Upper Dauphin & Schuylkill

- Volunteers are needed to assist with transportation related to medical appointments for persons in upper Dauphin County, as well as in portions of eastern Schuylkill County.

Peach Festival leads to village enhancements

Richard Troutman's father, father-in-law, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law have all been residents of *Susquehanna Lutheran Village* at Millersburg. So it comes as no surprise that he knows something about life at the Diakon village.

Serving his eighth year as president of the village's Order of the Good Shepherd, Troutman leads a Christian organization formed more than 15 years ago to enhance the lives of village residents.

"We have a membership of around 200," says the life-long resident of Pillow. The group's volunteer fund-raising efforts have been responsible for many village improvements over the years, including the addition of a small pipe organ, garden fencing, and regular visits by an ice-cream cart.

"A volunteer goes from room to room offering ice cream to residents" several times a month, says Troutman. "The residents

enjoy it and look forward to it."

Residents also look forward to the village's annual Peach Festival. The August event is the largest fundraiser for the Order of the Good Shepherd.

"Last year we had 120 peach pies, plus the contribution of pies, cakes, crafts, and other things people gave us to sell. It is all profit," Troutman says of the festival, which draws several hundred people from the community and is a highlight for residents.

The outdoor event also features entertainment and lots of food, including a popular bean soup sold in "to-go" packages.

While the weather hasn't always cooperated, family members know it's an event not to be missed, says Troutman. "They realize in the final analysis that this is a



family member they want to go see. They get to see someone's eyes light up when they arrive."



Susan Myers, Lutheran Adoption Network director, holds Inga, a child born without arms.

While *Diakon Adoption Services* focuses on the placement of waiting children in the U.S., its relationship with another Lutheran agency helps to streamline adoption for those interested in international placements.

Diakon is a member of the *Lutheran Adoption Network*. Through the network, families interested in such adoptions have a direct connection to international resources

Network offers access to international adoptions

and need only work with their local agency, such as Diakon, in the adoption process.

"We want to streamline the whole process for our families, so they don't have any redundancy in paperwork," says Suzanne Piccolo, Diakon Adoption Services' executive director.

The streamlining message is one LAN Director Susan Myers wants prospective adoptive families to hear about the network, formed three years ago.

"We have tremendous skills and knowledge, and Lutheran agencies have been doing wonderful work for many, many years," Myers says of the network's 30 agencies, five of which operate international adoption agencies in foreign countries: Bulgaria, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine.

"LAN member-agencies can really own international programs through the network,"

adds Myers, who visited the Diakon Adoption Services office in York in late May. "They can offer the whole spectrum of international services to their local families without having to develop relationships and contracts with foreign governments because that has already been done."

While Diakon Adoption Services is pleased with its LAN relationship, international adoption is a small part of the program's focus.

"Our intent is to offer quality services in a holistic way regarding adoption and have all sorts of adoptions available for families," says Piccolo. "We continue our commitment to the waiting children here in this country. That is our history and a permanent part of our vision."

For more information on adoption, visit www.diakon.org/adoption.

Oldland marks 30th anniversary of ordination

Many people turned out to recognize the 30th anniversary of the ordination of the Rev. Charles Oldland, chaplain at *Susquehanna Lutheran Village*, Millersburg. (In photo, from left to right, are the Rev. Dr. Richard Ballard, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Millersburg; the Rev. James Link, Cumberland Crossings chaplain; Oldland; the Rev. Mike Petresky, Halifax Lutheran Parish; the Rev. Rodger Snyder, Salem United Church of Christ, Elizabethville; the Rev. William Krenz, a retired ELCA pastor; and the Rev. Barry Ridge, Simeon Lutheran Church, Gratz, Upper Dauphin Conference dean.



Woman 'blooms' in helping others

While the return of the birds, pleasant temperatures, and vibrant colors marked the beginning of spring this year as usual, *Cumberland Crossings* resident Arlene Roberts chose to greet the season in a new way by helping some of her neighbors.

"In early spring, I decided to canvass local nurseries, home-improvement stores, garden centers, and country markets for flowers, plants, shrubbery, and bulb donations, explaining my intention to plant gardens for our more senior residents," says Roberts. The businesses were eager to donate, she says, and their response extremely generous.

"Since some stores permitted me to take as much as I wanted, I found my small car had petunias coming out the windows."

With the help of Mary Lou Seal and Beth Bond of the Cumberland Crossings staff, Roberts posted a sign-up sheet for interested residents requesting her help.

"I would check the list daily and call them to schedule a day that worked for them," she says, adding that some residents wanted to buy their own plants.

"One day I would take them to the nursery, and they would pick out what they wanted. Then we would come home and, under their supervision, I would plant."

In addition to the many donated flowers, Roberts transplanted existing plants that had outgrown their location. As the end of the planting season approached in late July, Roberts had rearranged or planted nearly 25 gardens.

Arlene Roberts



"This project was very rewarding, as smiles, conversations, and pride were shared with me by our residents," she says.

"There is an overwhelmingly warm atmosphere at Cumberland Crossings. We share our lives. We are a family."

Women of the ELCA recognize Appleby's service

Earlier this year, the Lower Susquehanna Synod Women of the ELCA group recognized *Frey Village* resident Fae Appleby for her many years of service within the synod. Appleby spent 12 years as liaison and parliamentarian for the local Women of the ELCA, while also serving as vice president of the synod. The summer celebration included dedication of a tree and plaque in Appleby's honor. (Below: Fae Appleby with her daughter, Kathaleen Lilley.)



The following regional memorial gifts were received from June through Sept. 22, 2004. Diakon's Lower Susquehanna Synod-based programs thank these donors for their generous gifts!

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