

# DIAKON CONNECTION

FALL 2004

## Mount Luther, village link ties generations

Ten-year-old Zachary Herbster smiles as he sits with a group of fellow Mount Luther campers waiting to perform songs in front of approximately 35 **Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village** residents.

“We like singing for people. We are excited to perform,” he says.

Zachary is just one of two dozen third-through fifth-graders from Camp Mount Luther, an outdoor Christian ministry site affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American and the Upper Susquehanna Synod, who have come to perform at the Lewisburg retirement community on this summer day.

“Singing makes people happy,” says camper Ben Shemory. Just minutes before the group begins its performance, he adds: “We have been practicing a long time for this.”

Songs are enthusiastically performed, accompanied by choreographed moves.

“Those kids have a lot of pep. It brought back memories of when I used to sing in the high school chorus,” says Richard Schnure,

a Buffalo Valley resident.

Chris Sands, a Camp Mount Luther staff member, says that campers have been coming to perform at Buffalo Valley the last three years.

“The campers have a lot of fun here. They sing and interact with the residents. They share stories about it with their friends and family. It is not only good for them, but it also allows our camp to branch out into the community,” says Sands.

Following the performance, campers and residents enjoy root-beer floats as they visit with one another.

Camper Anna Bahnfleth says she especially enjoys talking with residents. “I like meeting new people. It was fun—I really enjoyed it.”

Elizabeth DeSantis, village activities director, says that Buffalo Valley hosts the event not only because it provides entertainment and cultivates memories, but also because children are an important part of residents’ lives.

“During and after the event, you can see that... see it in the residents’ faces. The children are a breath of fresh air.”



Mount Luther camper Anna Bahnfleth greets Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village resident Blanche Geiswite during the campers’ annual visit with village residents. In the background are residents Betty Cooper and Loretta Thiesfeld.

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**Congregational Health Ministries**

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**Locust Grove Retirement Village,**  
Mifflin

**Ohesson Manor,** Lewistown

**Penn Lutheran Village,** Selinsgrove

**Refugee & Immigration Services**

**TresslerCare**

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*Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village residents practice their Tai Chi moves, learned as part of a Bucknell University research project. From left are Joyce and John Vought, Pearl Good, and Sandra Evans.*

# Tai Chi subject of study

John Vought seemed to be losing the ability to balance himself. “I noticed that when I would go to run, I’d have a tendency to stumble. I know losing your balance is part of the aging process, but I am also a diabetic,” says the resident of a Villa at *Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village*.

In general, older adults are more subject to slips and falls, but diminished circulation from diabetes can create additional issues with balance.

Dr. Samantha Richerson of Bucknell University recognized these problems and, in cooperation with Buffalo Valley, has launched a study involving the ancient Chinese art of Tai Chi to improve balance.

“Because I saw problems in the aging and diabetic population, I designed a non-drug intervention program that should improve the strength and balance of those that are aging and hopefully those with diabetes as well,” says Richerson.

Beginning in February and extending over the next six months, some 35 participants ages 65 or older—including those with diabetes—gathered at the village Commons every week to learn Tai Chi. Community members as well as Buffalo Valley residents took part.

Emily Kerstetter, village administrative assistant/volunteer coordinator, offered Buffalo Valley as program site because she recognized the benefits for everyone involved. “The program study not only provided an opportunity for participants to [work toward] a healthier life, but it also offered a social connection between our residents and

members of the community,” she says.

Buffalo Valley Cottage resident Sandra Evans says the classes resulted in new friendships.

“Everyone was talking. We interacted with everyone and the instructor was wonderful. He was very gracious. He would help those with disabilities adapt, and he would encourage us. We would try to be as graceful as him but most of the time we didn’t come close,” she chuckles.

Another cottage resident, Pearl Good, feels fortunate that she was a part of the program because she believes she gained stability through her participation.

“I feel more secure about my stepping because of Tai Chi. It is not a heavy exercise, but it strengthens your muscles by stretching.”

Formal sessions ended in July, but participants were given Tai Chi DVDs so that they could continue to work at improving strength and balance.

Although Richerson is still in the process of calculating and comparing data compiled from participants both before and after the study, she says that she hopes the results will demonstrate “some change in participants’ balance.”

Vought, whose wife, Joyce, also participated in the study, says that he not only improved his balance, but also gained inspiration from the program that he will carry into the future.

“Tai Chi helped to inspire discipline in other areas in my life. I’m losing weight and exercising,” says Vought. “It is surprising what this art form of balance and controlling motions can do.”

## Family Life & Health Ministries

# Support program aids secretaries

Like many church secretaries, Deb Munson, secretary at Pine Street Lutheran Church in Danville, could very well be a juggling artist.

“There are many challenges to being a church secretary. For me, I think the biggest thing is trying to work on the newsletter and juggle phone calls and people dropping in all at the same time,” she says.

Church secretaries may also deal with delicate, emotional, and often confidential issues.

“They do so many different jobs that people just don’t know about,” says Debbie Best, Diakon’s *Congregational Health Ministries* coordinator within the Upper Susquehanna Synod.

“Sometimes they get into a triangulation where two individuals are in a disagreement of some sort, and they get stuck in the middle and bear the brunt of it. There are confidentiality issues, scheduling worship assistants, and assembling reports and documents for the synod.”

To help these “front-line” church staff members deal with issues that are unique to their positions, a quarterly support group has been formed for secretaries within the synod. “We have been building opportunities of support for pastors and congregations, but up until last October there was little we had done for secretaries,” says Best.

With the combined efforts of the synod, church secretaries, and Diakon’s *Congregational Health Ministries* and *Family Life Services* programs, the meetings have explored such topics as computer education, communication techniques, and newsletter construction. At other times, they have simply provided a platform through which secretaries can share experiences.

“The meetings have been very beneficial,” says Virginia Frantz, administrative assistant to Bishop A. Donald Main. “They do help with the phases of the ministry.”

Over the last year, attendance has grown from 12 to 25 participants.

“We attend to support each other, get to know each other, and to help each other learn new things. It expands our horizons as church secretaries, and we feel we have sisters and brothers in the mission,” says Munson.

To recognize those in support staff ministry, Family Life Services, the health ministries program, and the Rev. Ted Cockley, chaplain of Diakon’s *Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village*, Lewisburg, hosted a St. Martha’s Day celebration for church secretaries on Sept. 16.

Sponsored by a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, the appreciation luncheon and commissioning service included the anointing of hands for those who desired it. “The anointing was a significant part of the worship,” says Bishop Main. “Church secretaries use their hands every day to accomplish God’s work, and anointing those hands is a fine way to

acknowledge their contributions.” Held at The Commons at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, the event acknowledged church secretaries’ dedication and service to the church.

The secretaries “affirm every aspect of ministry,” says Cockley. “Yet when something goes wrong, they are the first to hear about it. When something goes right, they are the last to receive credit. That is why it is important to recognize their ministry.”

Both the appreciation luncheon and support-group meetings acknowledge secretaries as an integral part of the church, congregations, and synod. “Very often the people who are in behind-the-scene roles and keep things going are the church secretaries,” says Frantz. “They play a very crucial role. They are a gift worth being recognized.”



The Rev. Ted Cockley, Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village chaplain, addresses the church secretaries.

## Ohesson Manor

# Doctor's ministry leads to Mexico

Dr. John Parry ministers to the health needs of people everyday—including residents of Diakon's *Ohesson Manor*—but on a recent mission trip to Mexico, he provided care to the Tarahumara Indians, many of whom had never before seen a physician.

"I look at my job as being a calling more than just a career. My practice reflects my relationship with God," says Parry. "There was a certain calling of what God wanted me to do. I came to a point in my life when I stopped saying 'no' to God and started doing things out of my comfort zone."

On three separate occasions, Parry has left that "comfort zone" to travel to desolate locations within Mexico to minister to others. As he recounts his experiences, he says his travels have not been easy, but they have been gratifying.

"It is difficult. There is no running water. For a number of days, you can't shower. You are really living in a primitive fashion, yet it is stimulating that you can provide a service to others," he says.

On his most recent trip—in June—Parry and a group of other individuals ministered

to the health needs of Tarahumara people on an outreach mission to the mountains of the Sierra Madre Occidental—the portion of the Sierras that passes through the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

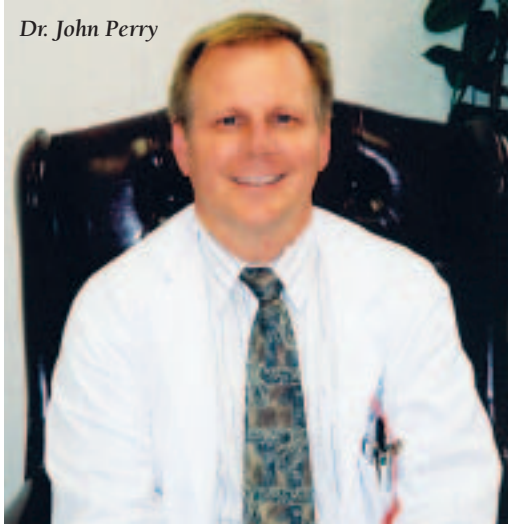
With the trip organized by Pine Glen Christian Missionary Alliance Church in Lewistown, Parry, a guide, a pediatrician, a nurse/midwife, a pastor, translators, and others found themselves on the outskirts of the Copper Canyon of Northern Mexico.

"We had an eight-hour drive into the mountains. That night, it rained and hailed very hard. Some took cover in tents. Others took cover under or in a car."

After a night of battling relentless precipitation, they rose to begin a three-hour hike to reach the Tarahumara Indians living deep in the canyon. But before they began their journey, the group sent a peace sign to the villagers.

"We weren't sure if they would accept us or not. We packed sacks of donated goods and put them on a burro and sent the burro ahead of us," says Parry.

While the burro took the easier path to the village, the group's guide became disoriented and led the group down a much steeper path. "Everything is different, but it all looks the same. Our guide just picked the wrong path. At an altitude of 8,000 to 9,000



Dr. John Perry

feet, if you exert yourself, you are short of breath. It gets pretty hot during the day, too, and you need to carry food and water." Although the hike was difficult, the group finally reached the site of the village.

"They"—the Indians—"were looking up and probably wondering why a group was coming down the canyon walls and not the normal route. They were all milling around. Information was transmitted from person to person that doctors were coming to move all the sick people to the village," recalls Parry.

The first day approximately 30 people arrived for care. As days passed, "it was hard to keep track [of the number cared for], but we ministered to their health needs. Everyone received vitamins and some received pain medication. They have a very hard life. They are undernourished. Their life is extremely physical. They do a lot of walking—generally they are in good condition, but [they] don't have the luxury of taking a Tylenol for pain."

Although Parry provided a health ministry, he says the real mission was showing others the love of Jesus Christ. "You see these people for such a short time and will probably never see them again. You don't know if and how you have touched them, but it is such an exciting spiritual journey to be able to do the will of God. To see his plan unfold is so exciting and I just wanted to be part of that."



Dr. John Perry, second from left, in Mexico.

# Penn rehab aids people of all ages

The morning of Monday, March 29, Kathy and DJ Hoffman left their McAlisterville home a few minutes early so they could drop off their vehicle for service before they went to work—but they never made it to the service station.

Near the entrance to the development in which they live, the Hoffmans were involved in a devastating vehicle accident that could have easily taken their lives.

“As long as I live, I will never forget the accident,” says Kathy Hoffman. “I was flown by Life Flight to Geisinger [Medical Center]. I had 11 fractures. It was like putting Humpty Dumpty together again.”

The woman remained in the hospital for nearly three weeks before medical staff suggested she receive further rehabilitation at a skilled nursing facility.

“I was willing to go wherever I had to go to continue the healing process. I didn’t choose *Penn Lutheran Village*, but they had a bed available—but I don’t think it was coincidence that I ended up there. I was meant to be there because of the caring staff. They went far beyond the call of duty.”

DJ Hoffman, recovering from a concussion, broken ribs, and other injuries, says Penn

Lutheran Village staff made his wife’s transition to the nursing center easier. “When Kathy first arrived, she was immobile. She had to lie on her back, and she wasn’t capable of sitting up. The staff found out that she liked cats. I believe she moved in on a Friday and by Monday, the activities director had gotten approval to put a mural of cats on the ceiling so she had something to see,” he says.

It was that kind of care that helped Mrs. Hoffman maintain a positive attitude. “They went out of their way to make me feel comfortable,” she says. During an especially difficult time, she recalls, a special staff member provided comfort.

“I just thought my calf muscle was sore from physical therapy, but it ended up being a blood clot. While I was waiting for the ambulance to arrive to take me to Geisinger, one of the nurses’ aides stayed with me and prayed for me. When I think of a nursing home, I don’t think of that kind of care, but that is how it is at Penn Lutheran.”

The village’s care even reached beyond Mrs. Hoffman. Although DJ Hoffman was unable to drive to visit his wife during the first three weeks of her Penn Lutheran stay, he says staff members kept him apprised

through daily updates.

“They included me in every daily improvement. When I could drive myself to see Kathy, they knew she worried about me getting home safely. When I’d leave, they would say, ‘Call us when you get home,’ so that they could relay the message to Kathy. When I’d call them, it was like getting an extra hug before I’d hang up for the evening,” he says.

During Mrs. Hoffman’s approximate two-month stay, she not only formed bonds with staff members, but also made friends with residents and helped inspire them through her experiences.

Frank Oswald, rehabilitation coordinator, says Mrs. Hoffman was an encouragement to others. “She shared her story with other residents and many of the residents commented on her positive attitude,” he says.

The couple believes that Mrs. Hoffman’s physical progress can be greatly attributed to the staff members of the rehabilitation department. “They did a remarkable job; it was unbelievable,” says her husband.

“Her transformation was extraordinary,” says Oswald. “She didn’t let things get her down. She was very motivated,” adds Melissa Ludwig, occupational therapist.

“I kept an open mind and worked with the professionals,” says Mrs. Hoffman. “They had the experience, and they knew what steps to take to get me back on my feet again. Melissa and Frank really got me moving.”

With support, she even reached her goal of walking again. “The day I walked was a special day in the therapy department. Therapists that didn’t even work with me that much were clapping and crying. I’ll never forget that day.”

The Hoffmans also will never forget their Penn Lutheran family. “There were lots of tears and hugs when we left,” says Kathy Hoffman. “When you get used to the care that we received at Penn Lutheran,” her husband adds, “there is a void when you come home. Penn Lutheran is extended family—there is no doubt about it.”

*Kathy Hoffman, center, with Penn Lutheran Village rehab staff, Frank Oswald and Melissa Ludwig.*



## WISH LIST

The following Diakon programs can use your assistance. If you or your congregation are able 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!

### Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village Nursing Care Center

- Portable stereos/radios for residents (4)
- Tape recorders for residents' use
- Thirty-five-inch television
- Portable stereo/radios
- Television/VCR/DVD carts low enough for resident use
- Display case for residents' crafts

### Assisted Living

- Patio table and chairs
- Game table for lounge

- Fish for fish tank
  - Overstuffed chairs and sofa for lobby
- ### Independent Living (The Village Commons)

- Podium
- Bookshelves
- Torch lights (six)
- Round collapsible tables to seat eight
- Shuffleboard
- Putting green
- Artificial trees with lights
- Toolbox with handtools

### Congregational Health Ministries

- PowerPoint projector

### Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna

- Video projector

### Locust Grove Retirement Village

- Hi-low electric beds
- Wheelchairs
- VCR/DVD player

- Video camera
- Electric razors
- Polaroid-type camera for documentation

### Ohesson Manor

- Low beds
- Vital signs monitor

### Penn Lutheran Village

- TV/VCR combination unit
- Aromatherapy machines
- Cassette tape players
- Digital cameras (two)
- PowerPoint projector
- Electric razors
- Subscriptions to large-print Reader's Digest
- Electric keyboard
- Framed artwork appropriate for resident rooms

# Rehab: from broken leg to 10-mile hike

Simon Dressler is a living testament to the benefits of daily exercise, says Joyce Parson, physical therapist at Diakon's **Locust Grove Retirement Village**.

Walking daily—sometimes up to ten miles—Dressler has always been an active individual, which proved especially beneficial just days after his 75th birthday.

While inspecting spouting on his Cocalamus home last fall, Dressler stood on an eight-foot stepladder. “The ladder was sitting on a twist. Everything felt all right. I looked into the spouting—it didn't need cleaned. Then my leg went into the ladder. I hung onto the spouting as long as I could until the spouting came down. My leg was scissored in the ladder as it shut.”

When he regained consciousness, he found himself lying on top of the ladder, his femur shattered. Because he lived alone—his wife of 52 years had passed away from cancer in 2000—he knew he had to make it to the telephone to survive.

Partially opening the ladder and balancing it on his head while he pushed his leg through it, he began surveying the area for his eyeglasses, lost in the fall. Spotting

them at the bottom of a gradual slope, he rolled himself down the hill. “I needed them to see or I wouldn't have been able to dial the phone.” He then had to pull himself up the lengthy incline to reach the rear entrance to his car shed, where he needed to tackle four steps and open the door. By the time he had reached the shed, hours had passed and he was losing strength.

“I thought I just couldn't go any more, but I figured I had to. I was in tremendous pain,” he says. Entering his car shed, he crawled to his home's front door, then pulled himself up additional steps. Four hours had passed by the time he reached the phone. “I don't know how, but I dialed my son's number. I don't remember doing it, but when he arrived, I was still by the phone.”

Hospital personnel said he needed major reconstructive surgery. “The doctor said it was a true miracle that the bone fragments and my movement hadn't severed an artery or nerve,” he says. The doctor had additional positive news: Because Dressler was so physically fit, his bones “were as strong as an 18-year-old's. I had a clean break above my



Simon Dressler

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# Remembering Joan Enger

Joan Enger's life was one of mission and ministry. As a lifelong Lutheran, mother, friend, social worker, volunteer, community advocate, and former counselor at Tressler Counseling Services—now known as Diakon's *Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna*—she shared her warmth and compassion with a multitude of individuals and organizations during her 74 years of life.

"She was quite an amazing person, and her story touched many lives and Lutheran organizations. She was really a pioneer in Christian social ministry," says Mark Basinger, Family Life Services director.

Mrs. Enger's benevolent works unfolded everywhere and anywhere she directed her energies—beginning when she was just a teenager.

"My mother worked and volunteered for the Lutheran church in different capacities since she was in high school. She was a devout liberal Lutheran. Her faith and dedication to public service influenced every aspect of her life," says Serena Enger, Joan's daughter.

In the 1940's, while Mrs. Enger was in high school in Weehawken, N.J., she taught Sunday school and English to Chinese immigrant men at the True Light Lutheran Church in Chinatown, New York City.

"For such a young woman to teach immigrants in the inner city—especially during the 40's—shows a true compassion towards others," says Basinger.

That compassion continued throughout Mrs. Enger's adult years as she served social service and Lutheran organizations in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. Reaching out to people of all ages, socioeconomic, religious and cultural backgrounds, she worked with emotionally challenged children, adolescent girls, adoptive and foster parents, married couples, and individuals facing life's obstacles.

"Joan was very charitable and service-oriented. She did this without resentment or vanity. She was open-minded and could easily connect with people wherever they

were at in life," says former colleague and friend Richard Craig, licensed psychologist with Family Life Services.

As the first member of her family to go to college, Mrs. Enger received an undergraduate degree in psychology and sociology from Wagner College, Staten Island, N.Y., and a master's degree in social work from Boston University. During her undergraduate studies, she took a psychology course taught by the Rev. Dr. Harold Haas, a past president of Tressler Lutheran Services.

"She found the course very inspiring," says Serena Enger. "She thought he was a very good leader and teacher. I believe he further influenced her into social work."

Many years later, Mrs. Enger would reconnect with Haas when she was hired as a part-time counselor for Tressler's Family Life Center in Lock Haven.

"When Joan came on board," says Pat Peltier-Russell, outreach counselor for Family Life Services, "Harold Haas was president of Tressler. We were at Camp Hill for one of our staff meetings and when Harold saw her, he had the biggest grin on his face."

According to those who knew Mrs. Enger, it was just like her to bring smiles to others.

"She was just a really neat lady. She added special touches to everything she did," says Peltier-Russell.

At a time in social work history when boundaries weren't as defined as they are today, she often opened more than her heart to her clients.

"Joan would say, 'I know I shouldn't have done this, but I had a client and her child spend the night at my house. I felt I had to keep them safe. I couldn't turn them out into the street,'" says Peltier-Russell.

"There were times—just like a country doctor—that my mother would accept food or a \$5 fee because she and Tressler rightly felt it was important for the client to be invested in counseling," says Serena Enger.

Within the community, Joan Enger was also recognized for her energy, empathy, and organizational skills.



"She would be called on by many different advisory boards and councils because of her mediation and listening abilities. She could assess a situation, create an agenda, and work through differences among strong antagonistic personalities to work toward a realistic plan," says her daughter.

As a children's advocate, Mrs. Enger was co-founder of the Clinton County Children's Festival, still a community tradition. In varying capacities, she served and supported many other community causes such as literacy, economic growth, family planning advocacy, support groups, civil rights, and professional, church and synod efforts.

"She placed an importance on public service—of being involved in one's community and not accepting the status quo. She was dedicated to improving peoples' lives," says Ms. Enger.

Mrs. Enger may have loved serving others, but she also loved nature.

"When there were fresh flowers on the table in the lounge, you knew Joan was at work," says Craig. Her appreciation for nature pervaded her essence. As someone who enjoyed the outdoors, Mrs. Enger saw nature as an extension of God's creations.

"She loved wildflowers," says Peltier-Russell. "I was driving down the road one day with Joan and all of the sudden she said, 'Stop!' I threw on the brakes and she said, 'I have to go and get some of those pussy willows.' I said, 'Joan they are in someone's yard.' She said, 'Oh, they will never mind.' She truly believed that people

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## Joan Enger...

*Continued from Page 6*

gave as graciously as she did and that the world was a loving and giving place. That is one of the gifts of Joan.”

Although Mrs. Enger passed away in February, her spirit of generosity will always be remembered.

“The breadth and intensity of her life was incredible,” says Basinger. “She had a sense of calling and mission that most of us don’t experience in a lifetime.”

## Ten-mile hike...

*Continued from Page 7*

knee. Normally, someone my age would have had a shattered break. He said he would have me walking ten miles again in about eight months. I laughed. Even though I was active, I never thought I would walk again.”

Following surgery and a seven-day hospital stay, he was admitted to Locust Grove for further rehabilitation.

“When he arrived, he required assistance with walking, getting in and out of bed, dressing, and bathing,” says Erin Leister, occupational therapist. “He advanced very quickly, learning how to use a walker and adaptive equipment for dressing since he was unable to bend over. The amount of exercise he did before this injury was very apparent and played an instrumental role in his quick recovery.”

Parson adds that Dressler’s personality also prompted healing. “The amazing thing about Mr. Dressler was his youthfulness,” she says. “He was positive, friendly, kind, and highly motivated.”

“The care I received was wonderful,” says Dressler. “I give them a 100 percent on everything—the nursing, eats, and rehab. Without Locust Grove, it would have probably taken four times longer to recover.”

After a two-week stay at Locust Grove, Dressler returned home. Eight months to the day of the accident, he took a 10-mile walk. He says he could not have done it without the confidence and determination he received from God and the health-care professionals who helped him during his recovery. “It felt great,” he says. “It was like winning a game.”

The following regional memorial gifts were received between June 1 and September 22, 2004. Diakon programs in the Upper Susquehanna Synod thank these donors for their generous gifts!

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