

Challenges

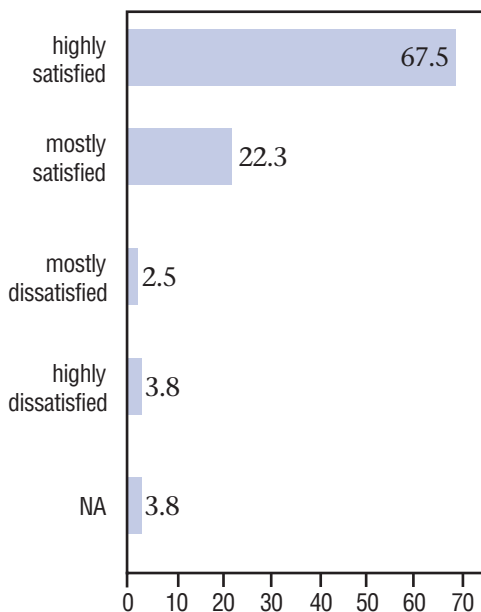
Customer satisfaction earns *high ratings*

The vote is in and county caseworkers and probation officers say TresslerCare programs are delivering effective services that they highly recommend to others.

These positive remarks arise from a continuing customer-satisfaction survey that TresslerCare introduced earlier this year. From January through

Overall quality of service

Percent of respondents and their overall satisfaction with TresslerCare programs



June, the organization sent out nearly 200 surveys to referral sources following the discharge of youths from one of 10 programs, including Mechanicsburg- and Topton-based foster care programs, Specialized In-Home Treatment, TAPP, Chester County Aftercare and Prevention, and all Wilderness Center programs.

With 75 percent of the surveys returned by 24 county agencies from across Pennsylvania, TresslerCare was able to get an accurate read of its performance.

"I think your program is great," says one caseworker from York Children and Youth Services. "The entire process from referral to graduation is easy to deal with."

Another caseworker from Chester County said, "When held up in comparison with all of the placements I work with, TresslerCare rises above."

Juvenile probation officers also expressed similar satisfaction.

"I have always been highly satisfied with the services the TresslerCare program provides our juveniles. The program is the best," says a Delaware county probation officer. "I highly recommend TresslerCare to any troubled youth."

On a four-point scale rating overall satisfaction, all of the programs included in the survey earned a score of 3.3 or better, meaning that most of the feedback included in the completed surveys was positive.

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Case manager returns to lead **BARJ** and independent living groups

Having worked as a counselor and a case manager for the Wilderness School right out of college, Jill Fisher was no stranger to the school's staff when she returned this summer to lead both BARJ and independent living groups at the Boiling Springs location.

In the years prior to her return, Fisher gathered experience as a probation officer working with youth during placement and aftercare, as well as helping them make independent living arrangements. These skills have proven helpful to her as she works with male and female youths in the school's weekly sessions.

"In the BARJ group, we work on getting across the principles of balanced and restorative justice," Fisher explains. "Our central themes are victim restoration and youth redemption."

During six one-hour sessions, Fisher leads the co-ed group in discussions of how to give back to the community.

"We talk about how, as juveniles, inherently we believe they are able to redeem themselves, learn job skills, go to school, get counseling so they can leave placement and be productive members of society," she says. "We build on the central ideas of accountability, competency development, and community protection."

The group discussions help many youths realize how their actions have affected everyone around them including family, community, and themselves.

"My main goal is to help the students understand that they are good people who have made bad choices," Fisher says. "But they need to take responsibility for the choices they've made and move on from there."



Jill Fisher

Fisher also leads a weekly session that stresses the development of independent living skills, such as money management, social skills, and job preparation.

"We talk about things as simple as how to do your laundry, how to go grocery shopping, and how to look for an apartment," Fisher says.

"Anything that we can do that is 'real life' to help them learn sufficient skills to be able to care for themselves."

Allentown business gives families _____ a day at the park



Life took sudden turns for some Diakon foster families recently. But those turns—as well as rapid descents—weren't unexpected. They came on the thrill rides of an area amusement park.

In August, foster families and foster care staff members were treated to a day

at Knoebels Grove Amusement Park in Elysburg, thanks to the generosity of OMI, Inc., operator of Lehigh County's industrial wastewater treatment facility.

"OMI, Inc., is the only organization that provides such a large event for our families," says Lauren Roth, director of TresslerCare Foster Care—Topton and Diakon Pregnancy Services, adding that it's an outing some families might not otherwise be able to afford.

Training *refocused* to build resource families

With their focus on finding permanency as quickly as possible for adoptive and foster care children in their care, Diakon Adoption Services and TresslerCare Foster Care are working together to streamline family training.

In the past year, families considering adoption and those considering foster care have come together for combined training that results in dual certification.

“We decided to bring them all together to train them,” says Kathy Roach, director of Diakon Adoption Services for Pennsylvania. “This way, they get the information about all the programs we offer, and they can make decisions about what type of resource they want to be for a waiting child.”

This is good news for the approximately 1,300 children in Pennsylvania who don't have an identified resource, Roach says. Beginning in 2005, Diakon

“Our families look forward to this event every year. We have families in the Poconos who drive the distance to attend.” Foster care staff members also participate to spend time with families outside the office. “It helps them develop an even stronger relationship because they are seeing the families outside the typical setting,” says Roth.

For the last eight years, William Haberstroh, project manager for OMI's Allentown facility, has coordinated his employer's annual tradition of

Adoption Services' Tipton office will offer the new training four times a year. The York office, which has been offering the dual training for about a year, also holds it four times a year.

Kristin Young, an adoption case manager in the Tipton office, says the first combined training, which ended in October, earned high marks from the 15 families that participated.

“The families gave us very positive remarks on the training. They said it was helpful, and they learned a lot of valuable information,” she says, adding that the training prepares families to handle the different issues that children coming into their home may have including behaviors, diagnoses, and family history.

“We also let them know about the adoption process in general and what resources are out there to support them as they prepare to parent the children.”

providing a trip to an area amusement park for families who participate in the program. In recent years, OMI has funded outings to Hershey and Dorney parks as well.

“We try to do what we can in the community for kids,” says Haberstroh. “It is one of our commitments to always give back to the community. It is extremely important for businesses to give back to the community for the opportunity to work in it.”

TresslerCare Foster Care recently finalized adoptions for eight children within a one-month period. Seven of the eight children included in this new one-month high found permanency through the Fast-to-Adopt Program.

One parent was pleasantly surprised at what she learned about the process and what the children experience. “It was great to hear the real stories,” she says, “not just the joys, but the real-life frustrations and how others dealt with them.”

“I think the training is great,” another parent added, “because it makes people more aware and have a better understanding of adoption. Yes, we certainly learn from each other.”

The needs of kinship families are different from those interested in adoption or foster care, so Diakon is planning to develop separate training for them.

“Because of the kinship boom, our trainings are filling up quickly,” explains Roach. “It worked well, but capacity is too high. We need to run a separate training group for kinship to keep the families moving through to adoption.”

Flower sale earns *dollars* for horticulture program

After spending months nurturing, fertilizing, and pruning hundreds of chrysanthemums, youths in the TresslerCare horticulture program successfully sold more than 750 of the traditional fall flowers throughout the community.

"We sold them to various places, but most went to employees at Diakon facilities," says Nina Poe, horticulture program manager. "The money we

raised went back into the horticulture program, which provides an opportunity for the kids to complete community-service hours when they work in the greenhouse, at the flower sales, or in our campus gardens."

The horticulture program also donated some of the flowers to the renovation under way at Willow Mill Park in Mechanicsburg.

"Through the Master Gardener

Program, we donated flowers for planting in the park gardens to help build up the flowerbeds," explains Poe. "As a service project, we took the youths to the park and had them plant the flowers."

Youths who worked in the greenhouse or on the mum project also earned a mum to give to their parents.

"They really enjoyed getting a flower to give to their family," says Poe. "It meant a lot."

TRESSLERCARE *Regional News*

TRESSLERCARE – SOUTHEAST REGION

- TresslerCare - Southeast has hired a new mobile therapist, **Bob Knecht**. Before coming to TresslerCare, he worked for Chester County Children, Youth, and Families. Currently pursuing his doctorate, he is a Boy Scout troop leader (he was an Eagle Scout several years ago), an academic coach for Coatesville Area School District, and a committed community and church leader.

TRESSLERCARE – CAPITAL REGION

- The TAPP program welcomes **Denise Shay**, currently employed by Dauphin County Children and Youth, for an internship that began in September. She is a student at Widener University in Harrisburg working on her MSW. **Joan Lotz** is her supervisor.
- **Whitney Walker**, a social work student from Messiah College, is doing her sophomore field placement with the TAPP program this fall. She is an active volunteer at the Capital Area Therapeutic Riding Association and, upon graduation, is interested in a career in adoption, children and youth services, or foster care. **Katie Binder** is her supervisor.
- Welcome to **David Bever**, who started as an individual and group co-therapist with the Specialized Home-Based

Treatment Program in September. Bever is a probation officer with York County Adult Probation in the daytime, and he has experience in facilitating groups and domestic violence treatment. His experience translates well to working with youths with sexual behavior and offending issues. Bever co-facilitates Tuesday's Growth and Responsibility Group with **Jane Yeatter** and Thursday's Growth and Responsibility Group with **Shanen Turk-Geller**, in addition to individual therapy.

- TresslerCare's Specialized Home-Based Treatment Program staff wished **Chris Gergich** farewell after one and a half years of providing group and individual therapy. Gergich moved to an island off the coast of North Carolina with his wife. He promised to send us his address before staff members' vacation times!

TRESSLERCARE – LEHIGH VALLEY REGION

- **Rebecca Small**, MSW, LSW, recently joined Foster Care Services – Topton as a clinical supervisor. Previously she worked with Pinebrook Services and the Children's Home of Reading.
- Congratulations to **Kimberly Burtoft**, family development coordinator, who recently became engaged to Hugh Byrd. They plan to marry in June 2005.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL THERAPIST COMMITTED TO *working with at-risk youth*

With approximately 80 percent of the youth enrolled in Wilderness School programs involved in some way with drugs and alcohol—whether through personal use or that of a family member—the recent arrival of Alice Collier, a drug and alcohol therapist, comes as a welcome addition.

Collier is an employee of Diakon's Family Life Services – Capital Region, which provides the Wilderness School's drug and alcohol services. She spends four days each week working with the youth in the wilderness setting.

"Now we are able and capable of providing the treatment and education that these youths need as a preventive measure for when they are discharged from our program," says Deanna Davis, the Wilderness School's clinical director. "With Alice

here we can have assessments completed on all the youth as they come into the program. Being a certified addictions counselor, she has the knowledge and skill to determine if they require an educational component or in-depth treatment."

What Collier doesn't do is provide services for youth who meet the need for inpatient treatment. She provides drug and alcohol assessment, individual counseling, individual drug and alcohol treatment groups, and education groups.

When Collier isn't at the Wilderness School, she can be found at Family Life Service's Mechanicsburg office, where she provides community referrals with drug and alcohol treatment.

Anne Leedy, Family Life Services – Capital Region director, says Collier is a perfect fit with the organization.

"Alice has spent a good part of her professional life working with at-risk youths. She is somebody who likes working with at-risk teenagers who have substance abuse treatment experience," she says, adding that Collier has a master's degree in psychology and is working on a doctorate in addiction psychology. "She does a lot of public speaking around drug and alcohol issues."

It was the opportunity to do treatment that attracted Collier to her new job.

"I have extensive background in treatment and always enjoyed working with adolescents," she says, adding that she especially enjoys her work at the Wilderness School. "A lot of kids who come here have good potential to go on to a normal adult American life. We are reclaiming children, reclaiming education, and bringing dreams to fruition."

Customer satisfaction earns high ratings

Continued from Cover

"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," says Craig Smith, TresslerCare executive director. "This is a two-way effort designed to improve both communication and quality of our services."

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

Annual parade draws participants to celebration

With the Summer Olympics still fresh in their minds, participants in the annual Reid Leesig Teddy Bear Parade went all out for the Red, White and Blue. Held each year as part of the annual Anniversary Day at Diakon's Lutheran Home at Tipton, the parade provides foster and adoptive families with the opportunity to showcase creative talents around the theme of the parade, in which 40 to 50 children and families annually participate, says Lauren Roth, director of TresslerCare Foster Care - Tipton and Diakon Pregnancy Services. Here, the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon

president/CEO, awards prizes to parade participants.



New collateral and Web site *feature program growth*

It has been nearly 10 years since TresslerCare developed a comprehensive guide to its services. During that time the programs and services have grown and changed, becoming more specialized to meet the needs of those served.

In an effort to better communicate those changes, TresslerCare is in the final stages of producing an updated brochure that outlines its capabilities.

The brochure's central message is TresslerCare's long-held belief that it is possible to help at-risk youths overcome the many challenges they face and lead stable, healthy, and productive lives. Within every program,

the focus is clearly on responsibility, accountability, and community.

Now that collaterals are available that clearly state program objectives, TresslerCare is set to distribute the brochures to referral sources late this fall. To obtain a copy, readers should contact George Eckenrode, TresslerCare director of marketing, at (717) 795-0361.

In addition, in early November TresslerCare launched its completely redesigned Web site. The site, available for viewing at www.tresslercare.org, features a map of Pennsylvania on which each of the 67 counties is "clickable."

When Web-site visitors click on a particular county, a list of available services for that particular county appears. Viewers can then click on any service for more information about that particular program or even to make a referral. The new site includes additional expanded features.

