

DIAKON CONNECTION

SPRING 2003

Romig rehab deemed 'nothing short of miracle'

Alan Romig remembers nothing about the day he had a stroke in March two years ago. Nor does he recall the following few days. But he says he'll never forget the care and kindness of the staff of *The Lutheran Home at Topton*, where he went for rehabilitation and recovery following his hospital stay.

Now a resident along with his wife, Mabel, of the assisted living community at The Lutheran Home, Romig then remained at Topton for a little more than five weeks. His quick recovery and return home were, in his words, "miraculous." And the staff members who helped him to recover are "angels in disguise."

In fact, only about 25 percent of stroke patients are able to return home.

"I'm told there were a lot of prayers and blessings being said on my behalf," Romig says. "While I wasn't aware of much those first few days, I know a lot of friends and family had high hopes for my recovery."

His long-term goal was to return home, and that guided therapists in shaping his plan. Jeannine Dreibelbis, one of the occupational therapists who helped Romig, says he made rapid progress; goals, therefore, changed weekly.

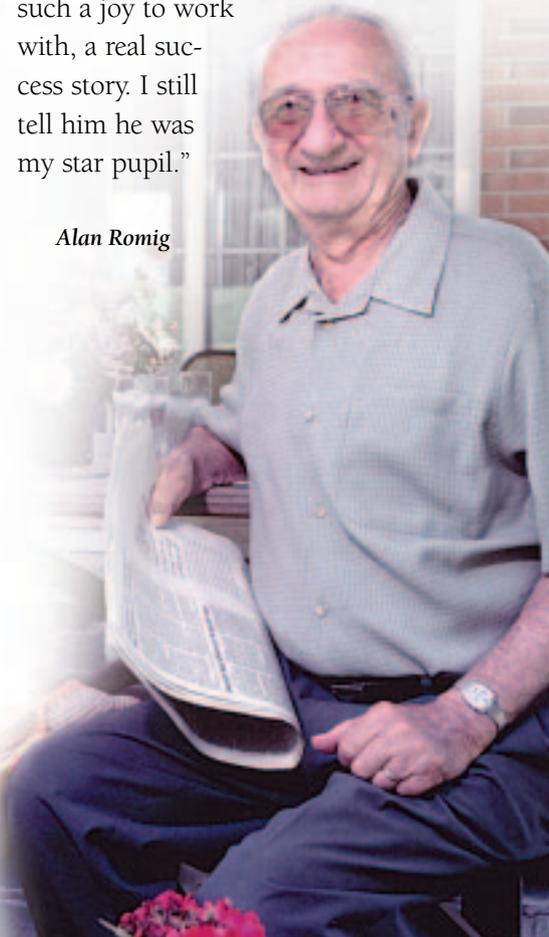
"We talk with residents and their families about long-term goals," she explains, "and Mr. Romig always wanted to go home. Our job was to help him reach the highest level of independence possible. We worked on strengthening and balance so that he could again manage day-to-day tasks such as feeding, dressing, bathing, and getting in and out of bed." When the time came for Romig to return home, staff members also did an assessment of his living environment so they he could be as safe and independent as possible.

Speech therapist Felicia Horton agrees that his recovery was "nothing short of a miracle." While he couldn't at first maintain alertness, he quickly improved, thanks to an aggressive therapy plan and his own determination.

"We were changing his goals every two days, that's how quickly he was progressing," she says. "Professionally we knew we were doing the right services for him, and he was so determined to get better. He was the one doing all the work."

The Romigs now enjoy their residence at The Lutheran Home at Topton, having served the community for more than 30 years in a number of roles and capacities. Mr. Romig still stops by the therapy department to say hello, says Horton. "He was such a joy to work with, a real success story. I still tell him he was my star pupil."

Alan Romig



- Adoption Services**
- Community Services for Seniors**
(Berks & Schuylkill counties)
- Caum Assisted Living**, *Reading*
- Congregational Advocates**
- Family Life Services**
- Hospice Saint John**
- Luther Crest Retirement Community**,
Allentown
- The Lutheran Home at Topton**
- Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill**, *Pottsville*
- Lutherwood**, *Scranton*
- Pocono Lutheran Village**, *East Stroudsburg*
- Pregnancy Services**
- RSVP** (*Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon counties*)
- Saint Luke Village**, *Hazleton*
- TresslerCare-Lehigh Valley**, *Topton*
- Volunteer Home Care**

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Refugee sponsorship crisis

Admissions

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“While we understand the need for increased security, only those of ‘special humanitarian concern’ have historically been approved for admission. Generally, this has meant refugees who have spent a long time in limbo with no other solution in sight, refugees at special risk of forcible return, and refugees with family members already in the United States. Government policy changes are affecting the arrival of even those persons,” he says.

Refugee Services staff members ask concerned citizens to write legislators to renew America’s long-standing commitment to the world’s displaced. More information on contacting senators and representatives, as well as a sample letter, can be found on Diakon’s Web site, www.diakon.org. **Dialog** readers may also contact Dudley at (717) 795-0378.

Iraqi

Continued from Inside Back Cover

He has supported the recent war in Iraq. Thinking of the brother and sister who remain in northern Iraq, he says that, “We want to know that the future can be better than today. We don’t want another dictator. We can get our freedom back, get our dignity back. We don’t want any more suffering.”

Abdulqadir remains committed to reaching his goal of obtaining a degree and U.S. citizenship. “I can be part of my old country. I think I could be part of two worlds,” he says. “Not a lot of people get that.”

His dream would not have been possible without Diakon’s Refugee Services, he says. “Whatever question we had, they tried to help us—finding a place to live, finding a job, directing us to education. They represent the good will of the American people.”

Luther Crest resident instrumental in space-project fuel development

The recent breakup of the space shuttle Columbia during re-entry shocked the nation.

The tragedy had a special poignancy for a **Luther Crest** resident, whose work years ago helped to create the fuel that sends today’s shuttles and rockets into orbit.

Lee Gaumer’s road to prominence in the development of liquid-hydrogen fuel was not a direct one. When Gaumer finished high school, he never dreamed where his love of sports would lead him. Asked by a friend to join the gymnastics team at Penn State, Gaumer was soon offered admission to the university.

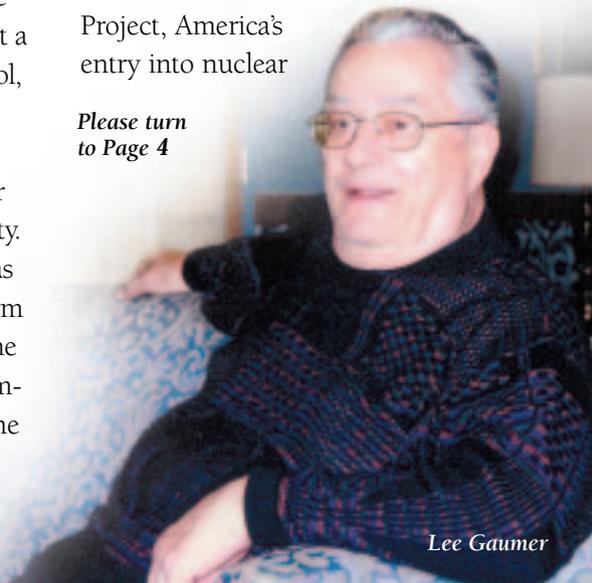
“When they asked me what course I was going to take, I had no idea. I was just a farm boy. All I knew was the farm and sports,” he says. Gaumer’s friend was majoring in chemical engineering. “Fine, I’ll take that, too,” he told them.

With World War II under way, Gaumer soon found himself in the U.S. Army.

Following basic training, he was sent to the University of Chicago. “I was bar-racked in a frat house and all were grad students in physics,” he remembers. “That’s where I stopped being a farm boy.”

With the recommendation of a professor, Gaumer began a seven-year stint working on the Manhattan Project, America’s entry into nuclear

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Lee Gaumer

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 serves nearly 60,000 persons annually in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware through adoption, foster care, refugee services, volunteer home care, retirement villages, housing accommodations, congregational ministries, hospice services, and more.

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Dialog, including the regional **Diakonnection**, is published quarterly by Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries.

William Swanger, APR
V.P., Corporate Communications
(717) 795-0308

Elizabeth Johnson
Regional Director of Public Relations
(610) 682-1292

Editors

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries
798 Hausman Road, Suite 300
Allentown, PA 18104-9108
1-888-582-2230

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www.diakon.org

Volunteer pens words of comfort

Hospice Saint John staff members in Allentown don't need a calendar to know what day of the week it is.

"I always volunteer on Thursdays. When I walk in, usually they say 'Kathryn is here, it must be Thursday,'" says long-time volunteer Kathryn Kershner, 80, with a smile.

Volunteering approximately six hours nearly every Thursday for the past 20 years, Kershner is committed to helping Hospice Saint John in a very special way.

"Primarily, I take care of all the hand-written bereavement letters to survivors of former patients. I send out an initial sympathy card. Six weeks later, I send out another card and at six months and a year, I send out anniversary letters."

Although writing some 25 cards a week can be tough on the hands, Kershner says she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I do some letters at home because there is a lot of written work involved," she notes.

"But having the letters hand written just adds a personal touch. From experience, having lost my husband, I look at these letters from the families' perspectives. The hand-written letters let the families know that the agency still cares about the families of former patients. Even though I don't know most of the people I am writing to, I find myself wondering how they are doing."

Hospice Saint John staff members are certain they're doing better—partly as a result of Kershner's concern.

"Not only are we appreciative of Kathryn's work with the bereavement program, but hundreds of families are grateful to her for her kindness and devotion," says Mary Timko, a Hospice Saint John social worker who has served with Kershner since 1990. "Kathryn has stood by us through all our corporate changes. Although changes may have been frequent, we never had a concern that bereavement correspondence would not be completed."

Why is Kershner so dedicated to the program? Losing her husband, Tom, to a terminal illness in the late 1980s, Kershner knows firsthand the value of hospice care.



Kathryn Kershner

"Six months during his illness, a visiting nurse from hospice came and cared for my husband. This is how I got involved. Right after I went to bereavement sessions, someone asked me if I wanted to volunteer. Helping them is like paying them back for what they did for me, as I so much appreciated the support they gave me and my husband."

Jeanne Vogt, who headed the Allentown office until her recent acceptance of a position in Washington, D.C., worked with Kershner for 10 ten years and says that her volunteer efforts are exceptional.

"She truly is one of our unsung heroines. She is probably one of the most humble people I know. She comes in consistently and faithfully and is kind-hearted, gentle, and committed to what she does. She takes her time and she takes her job very seriously."

Kershner said she takes her responsibilities seriously because she likes to give back to others.

"I have been blessed with good health, and I am free to do something like this. I want to help others. At the same time, this is very

good for me. Sitting at home is not good. It is not my nature to sit back and do nothing when I could be assisting others."

Hospice Saint John staff members—and clients and their families—certainly appreciate that nature.

"Kathryn is part of our team," says Vogt. "If she weren't helping us, it would have a significant impact on us. She completes us and helps families gain closure by her volunteer efforts. Essentially, she is the period at the end of a sentence for us here at hospice."

COMING EVENT

Volunteers are needed to marshal a hole at the Wachovia LPGA Classic, hosted by Betsy King, from Aug. 21 to 24 at the Berkleigh Country Club in Kutztown. Readers may contact Andrea Andrzejewski at (610) 682-1356 to volunteer or to obtain more information.

Shuttle fuel

Continued from Page 4

power; it was at the University of Chicago that the world's first controlled nuclear reaction occurred.

"When I got out [of the Army], I went back to Penn State for my senior year, got married, and was drafted again," he says.

This time participating in the Korean War, Gaumer was stationed in the New Mexico desert, where he worked on the development of liquid oxygen used in test-firing rocket engines that would ultimately be used for the ballistic missile program.

When he returned to civilian life and a job with Air Products, Inc., headquartered at Allentown, the Air Force sought him to design and build a liquid-hydrogen plant. "There were three of them," he says of the top-secret project. "We called them Baby Bear, Mama Bear, and Papa Bear."

It was this work that led to his involvement with the space program.

"The liquid hydrogen was used in the Apollo program," he says, adding that Air Products continues to this day to provide liquid hydrogen for all space projects. In his 40 years with Air Products, Gaumer saw the rocket fuel he pioneered find wide commercial application in electronics, food processing, and metallurgy.

His innovative work, which also included the Aerospace Plane project—a single-stage-to-orbit passenger and light-cargo craft designed to take off horizontally from a runway—earned him multiple honors, such as the Coors American Ingenuity Award, American Heroes of Chemistry Award (given in 1996 for his discovery of "qualities of liquid hydrogen"), and the Apollo Program Award.

Gaumer's efforts to have an impact on the world around him didn't stop at the door of his professional life but lasted into his retirement. He continues to gain respect from his peers through active participation in local politics and as an officer of Luther Crest's Resident Association.

Looking back on his career, Gaumer believes he never could have planned the way his life would turn out. "Things just happen," he says.

FLS helps couple put marriage back on track

The young mother didn't think things could get much worse. She had just learned that her husband had had an affair.

"I had no idea where to go or what direction to go in," she remembers. "I needed someone to talk to. I was ready to explode."

Taking the advice of her pastor, she turned to Diakon's *Family Life Services*, Topton, which offers community-based counseling, frequently in partnership with congregations, throughout much of northeastern Pennsylvania.

Although her husband had been unwilling to consider counseling in the past, he agreed when confronted with the possibility that his marriage would end without it.

"I made the initial call right away," the wife says. "The whole process was very fast. There wasn't time wasted."

During the initial telephone interviews with Family Life Services staff, the husband's alcohol use was identified as a contributing factor to the couple's problems; they were referred to a drug and alcohol specialist for evaluation. The two-hour session that followed was very helpful, according to the wife, because it brought concerns into the open and educated the couple about how alcohol abuse can affect a marriage.

"To have someone say that [his drinking habits] are not the norm and are not right was what I needed to hear, what I wanted my husband to hear," she says.

The couple requested a male counselor to conduct their marriage counseling. "I wanted a man, so my husband didn't feel like two women were ganging up on him," the wife says. "I needed that."

The 10 weekly sessions that followed magnified the challenge the couple had before them. "For me, it was important to hear somebody say other people have gone through this and your marriage can work," the woman says. "We had to find our way back. Things that would have been a normal conflict in a marriage to us were just terrible because you perceive them as being 10 times worse as the result of the pain, anger, and betrayal."

With their counselor, the couple focused on the necessary skills to rebuild their marriage. "The counselor helped us with communicating, how we could grow closer together again," the wife says, adding that the Family Life Services staff member also helped to sort out other issues he believed could have led to their problems.

"We had become very defensive and couldn't even talk about things without becoming angry. The main thing we worked through was hearing each other and repeating what was said to make sure we were interpreting things okay."

After the counselor and the couple agreed they were communicating better and on the road to recovery, the couple chose to end the counseling sessions.

"We still have issues. It is very difficult to go through something like that. The fact that I had kids made me work at it," admits the wife. "But there is a lot more communication and my husband is willing to make changes. The counseling saved our marriage."



Family Life Services marks 25th year

The key to successful ministry is hiring good people, believes Terry Lieb, executive director of Diakon's *Family Life Services* in northeastern Pennsylvania.

"Provide quality services and the word spreads," he says. "People tell other people." Then, 25 years later, you realize you have something much broader than what was imagined by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod pastors who first asked for professional counseling that would be accessible to all congregations.

"They wanted a program that would be based on a sliding-fee scale, so no one would be denied services based on ability to pay," explains Lieb, who has been with the program for 23 of its 25 years. "We needed something a little different than what was provided in the secular realm—therapists sensitive to faith issues and comfortable incorporating them into counseling."

Recently, Family Life Services has worked to expand its ministries throughout the entire synod. "We are expanding into the Lehigh Valley and throughout the northern part of the synod," Lieb says.

As times have changed in the last 25 years, so have the programs Family Life Services offers. "We are developing programs and services that reflect the evolving needs of

folks. For example, the Employee Counseling and Consultation Service today is vastly different from what it was when it started," he says. "Today our ECCS uses a broad-brush approach. It deals with helping employees with the whole spectrum of issues from parenting, marriage, and depression to addiction problems."

Other programs that have emerged in recent years include anger management and conflict resolution for public schools, living with loss support groups (one of which was most recently offered in a county prison), the parent-child university (see the article on Page 10), separated and divorced support groups, child safety in the congregation, and so on.

"Consultations have changed a lot, too" says Lieb. "We are doing a lot of training of lay leadership in such areas as conflict management and team building. We are getting into congregations earlier, before the issues become divisive and start undermining the mission."

Years ago, Lieb noticed a pattern within congregations in which small groups of people were doing everything, with concurrent limited financial support for the congregation's mission.

"The person in the pew didn't help in setting direction for the mission. They didn't own it," he explains. "Through a new program

called Congregation-Driven Mission, we involve as many members as possible through a congregation-based workshop that helps them identify what God is calling them to do in the coming year," he explains.

"Congregations are becoming very excited about this program because the entire congregation is asked to discern what the mission is. If members help to develop the mission, they tend to own it and will support it with their time, talent, and treasure."

Of course, another area reflecting significant change over the last quarter-century is the understanding of what constitutes a family.

"We have tried to be increasingly sensitive to the changing needs of family systems," Lieb says. "Years ago we didn't talk about developing programs or support groups for single parents or blended families. If we want to remain an agency to which families turn, we have to constantly re-evaluate the evolving needs of the family."

In response, Family Life Services continues to evolve to meet changing needs. "Our hope," Lieb says, "is that as we continue to grow, we grow based on our listening to the needs of church professionals, congregations, and the community, and not just to develop programs."

Luther Crest volunteers answer call for help

When the Lehigh Valley's PBS station was looking for help with its annual March Festival pledge drive, *Luther Crest* staff members and residents answered the call.

Four residents and eight employees staffed phones during the station's phonathon, helping to raise \$16,900.

"The Greater Lehigh Valley PBS station sees us as a partner that supports its efforts to provide quality family programming," says Dale Honig, director of admissions and marketing. Luther Crest was one of 28 organizations highlighted during the event.

Although participation in the event was a



Luther Crest resident Bill Bartholomew and Activity Director Elizabeth Stemrich staff phones.

Luther Crest regularly reaches out to the community through its active volunteer network, which includes more than 25 residents serving a variety of non-profits from local churches and arts organizations to hospitals and groups meeting social needs. In addition, Luther Crest residents reach out to community groups through offerings collected during worship and special services.

first for Luther Crest, PBS officials said that for a weekday, the group did extremely well raising money. "We are a community of people that believes in the Lehigh Valley," Honig says. "We can reach out to the community."

University students, residents bridge age gap

The East Stroudsburg University student loved the local eatery, known for its hot-dog specials. For his much older friends this day, the experience was a new one—and one they relished.

The interaction of young and old was due to a unique program put together by the university and Diakon's **Pocono Lutheran Village**. Residents of the assisted living community and students came together last fall for a four-evening course on "Leisure and Aging."

The curriculum is designed to help students in the university's Recreation and Leisure Services Management major understand the changing skills and needs of older people in relation to leisure activities, says Dr. Angela Vouter, the program's student advisor and professor.

"One of my goals was to help decrease the negative stereotypes young people might have about the capabilities of older people," she says. "The students were amazed at what the residents were able to do. I think their eyes were really opened."

The two groups spent their first meeting getting to know each other. In the second session, students designed activities stations for residents; they also worked one-on-one with residents. "I wanted them to walk side-by-side with a resident to understand the different speed and pace of movement

and eye attention that older people have," Vouter says.

A current-events discussion took place during the third class, with a focus on the then-potential war in Iraq and comparisons to World War II. Vouter says students were touched by the war stories they heard from residents. "The students had fears about the idea of war with Iraq, and it helped them to talk about it with the residents who have lived through a war," she says. The fourth class focused on holiday activities.

Some residents were hesitant at first and wondered whether they could "keep up" intellectually and physically with college students, says Leslie Berger, village activities director. "Older people often wonder what they have to offer today's young people. This experience proved to be mutually beneficial. We would definitely do it again."

The success of the class is underscored by the after-class socialization. According to Vouter, one student arranged transportation for several residents to join him at the local student spot.

"The student did this all on his own and I understand they had a wonderful time," Vouter says. "I think the most important lesson the students learned is that there are older people in every setting in society and there are very rich experiences to be enjoyed when the generations get together."



WISH LIST

The following Diakon programs can use your assistance! If you are able to donate any of these items or provide funding for their purchase, please contact Diakon's Office of Advancement at 1-888-582-2230, ext. 1219. Thank you!

Adoption Services, Topton

Proxima (\$2,000)
Digital camera (\$400 - \$500)
Digital camcorder
Overhead projector & screen
Recruitment posters and free advertising
Photo albums and scrap books

Caum Assisted Living, Reading

Computer for residents
Outdoor benches
Cushions for outdoor furniture

Pregnancy Services & TresslerCare-Lehigh Valley Foster Care Services, Topton

High chairs, car seats, Pac'n Play (*new*)
Diapers and formula
Disposable cameras with flash
Duffle bags; bath items (*body wash, soap, lotion, shampoo*)
Crayola Wonder Packets (*set of Crayola markers and special paper*)
Gift-wrap, birthday and get well cards

Hospice Saint John

Baby monitors (\$25.00)
Pill organizers (*daily and weekly organizers*); blenders; Boost or Ensure
Pill crushers
Adult disposable diapers (*large*)
Chux (*blue pads for bed or chair*)

Luther Crest, Allentown

Auditorium chairs (\$10,000)
Landscaping enhancements (\$25,000)

Pocono Lutheran Village, East Stroudsburg

Market umbrellas with stands (4)
Aquarium
Outdoor benches and lawn furniture
Gazebo (\$2,500)

Saint Luke Village, Hazleton

Dining room draperies (\$8,000)
Resident room chairs (26 @ \$475 each)
Courtyard plantings

The Lutheran Home at Topton

High-low electrical beds (10 @ \$1,300 each)
Mechanical lifts, sit-stand
Fireplace halogen insert
Beauty shop chairs and dryers
VCR and DVD players

RSVP Volunteer

Missionary experience adds value to life

When people hear the words “senior citizen,” they often think of gray-haired men and women with walkers, says Diane Schraymeyer.

Frequently, nothing could be further from the truth. And Schraymeyer should know. She’s director of **RSVP** (the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program), which Diakon administers in Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon counties.

“We have hundreds of seniors out in the community providing services,” she says. “We have volunteers who begin at 55 and continue to volunteer into their ’90s. People that age want to give back.”

They also volunteer in a variety of places, offering diverse expertise and skills. “I have volunteers at 170 different places in the three-county area,” says Schraymeyer. “They are helping children in schools, working at the Red Cross, and with entities testing waters as part of the Growing Greener grant.”

The volunteer spirit even led one participant to Canada’s Northwest Territories, where she spent a week last summer teaching vacation Bible school to children of the Inuit Tribe.

“It was the highlight of my life so far,” says Sister Verna Meckes. “I’ve always wanted



Sister Verna Meckes with students.

to do missionary work with other people. It was an answer to a prayer. I had a chance to serve in a whole different situation.”

Retired as director of education at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Allentown, the Lutheran deaconess was one of a group of four to travel to a part of the world where summer is characterized by 24 hours of daylight.

“We taught in Fort Providence. We had to take all of our supplies,” she says. “I was in charge of music, so I took kazoos along from here. The children were really delighted to have them. They were very patient, very friendly, very open. It was just a delight to be with them. It was a wonderful experience at my age, and I thank God for it.”



The children enjoy their kazoos.

SERVICE-TO-DATE

Each year, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries touches the lives of thousands of persons throughout northeastern Pennsylvania. From Jan. 1 through March 31, the number of persons served regionally totaled more than 11,000.

Berks Community Services for Seniors
2,116 persons

Caum Assisted Living, Reading
37 persons

Congregational Advocacy
23 persons

Family Life Services
2,309 persons

Diakon Adoption Services, Tipton
161 families

Hospice Saint John
528 patients and families

Luther Crest Retirement Community, Allentown
379 persons

Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill, Pottsville
102 persons

Lutherwood, Scranton
130 persons

Pocono Lutheran Village East Stroudsburg
96 persons

Pregnancy Services
Five birthmothers counseled

RSVP
947 volunteers

The Lutheran Home at Tipton
615 persons

TresslerCare-Lehigh Valley, Tipton
52 youths

TresslerCare Wilderness and other services
30 youths

Saint Luke Village, Hazleton
390 persons

Schuylkill County Community Outreach Services
3,214 persons

Volunteer Home Care (all regions)
391 persons

Pottsville congregation and Diakon join to help parents meet challenges

When Trinity Lutheran Church in Pottsville wanted to offer resources for parents to improve their parenting skills, the late Rev. Philip S. Bendle III, senior pastor, turned to *Family Life Services*.

“It was a ‘no brainer’ for us when the question was raised as to what provider could do the most effective job in helping to provide that service,” Bendle explained. “FLS provides well-qualified leadership.”

Sponsored by the congregation, the Parent-Child University featured sessions that focused on communication between parent and child and conflict resolution between parent and child.

“The first program was two hours on a Sunday evening. We had wonderful representation,” remembers Rich Adam, one of the FLS counselors who led the sessions. The sessions included presentations by the counselors, role-playing, and question-and-answer periods.

“They were very open, listened well,

and had a lot of questions and interactions,” Adam continues. “So often you hear about parents not being involved, pushing off parenting to the school and church. Here, they were in full force.”

Pastor Bendle said his congregation recognized that the middle-school population was an area in which they saw periodic struggles between parents and children. “We thought that if we provided some resources they could have at their disposal early, it would be a help to them,” he said. “As it turned out, we guessed right. We had very positive feedback.”

In addition to the middle-school children and their parents, Trinity Lutheran opened the program up to high school children within the congregation. With some 70 children and 90 parents attending the first program, the FLS counselors and Bendle were pleasantly surprised.

“It exceeded our expectations in terms of what we had hoped to accomplish.”



IN MEMORIAM

Staff and board members of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries express their deep condolences to the family and congregation of the Rev. Philip S. Bendle III, Diakon board member and senior pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Pottsville, who died unexpectedly in mid May.



Bendle had been a long-time board member of Lutheran Services Northeast prior to the affiliation that created Diakon in January of 2000. He then served on the Diakon board.

“Pastor Bendle was an active and involved board member who always challenged us to direct our mission to those who had the least resources,” says the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president. “We will sorely miss his guidance.”

When you look at Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries’ partnerships with Lutheran congregations, a number stand out. One of those partnerships is with Trinity Lutheran Church of Pottsville.

In fact, you might call that partnership extraordinary, with many Diakon services offered to the community through the congregation, bringing a range of social ministry programs to Schuylkill County residents.

That relationship, however, didn’t happen overnight.

“At one time, the most we had in common was our Harvest Home program, but that was about it,” said the late Rev. Philip S. Bendle III, Trinity’s senior pastor.

That all changed in 1978 when Bendle served on the advisory committee that helped to create *Family Life Services* as a

counseling and intervention program offered through *The Lutheran Home at Topton*.

“That program provided the strongest, most fundamental piece of social ministry in Schuylkill County. It was a real blessing,” Bendle said.

Later, when the congregation identified a need for a senior care facility in the area, parishioners called upon The Lutheran Home for expertise. Concurrently, the congregation received a large bequest and decided to use income from it to underwrite new ministries.

The result was the agency-congregational partnership that helped to make *Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill* Assisted Living a reality.

Through the strengthened partnership, a significant number of community ministries began to emerge and were based at Luther Ridge. The first was Diakon’s *Volunteer Home Care* program, followed by *Meals on*

Wheels, *PrimeTime Health* (a health and wellness program), and *APPRISE*, which offers insurance-related counseling services.

Many of Trinity’s members serve as program volunteers and auxiliary members, but some also benefit from the services, the pastor noted.

Karen Wood, Diakon’s Schuylkill County director of community ministries for seniors as well as youth ministry coordinator for the congregation, notes that Bendle constantly re-affirmed the need to serve others.

“Our congregation has a passion for helping others,” she says. “And to see the love they have for helping others for no other reason than to just to help is inspiring. And when the lines of those we serve and those who serve begin to blur, that’s when true ministry happens.”

Apprise outlines health options



Karen Wood and Heidi MacDuff

Rose and Philip Jones know firsthand the despair Bethlehem Steel Corp. retirees face in the loss of health benefits from the now-bankrupt company.

“My husband is ill and is on dialysis,” says Mrs. Jones, Mahanoy City. “He was the one who carried the family’s health insurance. For 37 years he was an employee at Bethlehem Steel and for 37 years of our lives, we were content with our health care, but now our insurance is gone. The whole thing is a situation and a half.”

Wending their way through that situation would have been even more difficult had it not been for a local program administered by Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries.

Fortunately, the family was referred to **APPRISE**, a free health-insurance counseling program Diakon operates in Schuylkill County under contract with the county Office of Senior Services. Before that referral, Mrs. Jones had tried to contact representatives from health-care and insurance entities to sort through her husband’s policy options.

“They would get upset because I didn’t know certain things, but then I was referred to Heidi [MacDuff, Schuylkill County coordinator for APPRISE]. She was wonderful. She explained everything fully to me,” says Mrs. Jones. “It was so nice to have someone to talk to that didn’t mind explaining what I needed to know.”

Because MacDuff was easy to talk to, Jones opened up and discussed her family’s

situation, allowing MacDuff to outline an option that allowed Jones’ husband to receive much-needed health care and prescriptions at lower cost.

“Without dialysis and his medications, my husband would die. Heidi is actually saving his life. I would not have found out half the stuff I know now if I hadn’t talked to Heidi. She is a blessing not only to our family, but to APPRISE,” says Mrs. Jones.

APPRISE has found itself particularly busy. With retired Pennsylvania Bethlehem Steel employees losing health benefits, APPRISE—which serves those who are on Medicare or 60 years of age or older—stepped in to help.

“What APPRISE did was partner with the United Steel Workers of America union. The USWA sent out letters to employees and former employees inviting them to informational mass meetings. APPRISE was invited to present at those mass meetings to introduce our services and to inform them about upcoming counseling sessions to help them figure out what their health-insurance options were,” explains Karen J. Wood, a Diakon staff member who serves as APPRISE regional coordinator for northeast Pennsylvania.

Personally making presentations to more than 11,000 retirees on such topics as continuation of benefits under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, open-market health-care insurance plans, Medigap plans, and PACE, Wood says APPRISE’s mission was simple.

“We wanted to make the retirees understand their options regarding health insurance. They may not have liked them, but they needed to understand them in order to make an intelligent decision about their health insurance,” she says.

For some, options included enacting their rights under COBRA and continuing their prior insurance by paying the full price of

coverage on their own or, if they were on Medicare, transferring their policy to other Medicare supplements.

To maximize their service, APPRISE staff members and volunteers from across the state counseled at many locations—Allentown, Coatesville, Steelton, Washington, Bethlehem, Lebanon, Johnstown, and Williamsport. Often, the meetings ran all day for three consecutive days to accommodate the large numbers of retirees.

MacDuff also attended meetings outside Schuylkill County because she recognized the importance of helping others. “I’ve been working outside of my county. That is not often done, but I wanted to help. I said to myself, you have the knowledge, you just can’t sit back and watch these people struggle without lending a hand.”

“It was so nice to have someone to talk to that didn’t mind explaining what I needed to know.”

The helping hand is needed because of the complexity of insurance issues.

“For many, this is the first time they have been faced with this. They never had to decide how they were going to get their health-insurance coverage. For all these years

Bethlehem Steel offered packages to them to choose from, and now they are forced to learn a whole new way of receiving their health insurance benefits,” says Wood.

The service is just one example of how APPRISE assists families free of charge. “This is a ministry. We are walking into people’s lives when they are in the midst of crises. All we have to offer is that we will walk with them for a little while, and help them find their way.”

Even though most health-insurance issues for Bethlehem Steel retirees will be resolved by the end of spring, APPRISE will continue to provide its service. Individuals on Medicare or age 60 and above who have questions about health insurance may call APPRISE’s telecenter, manned by volunteers five days a week from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., toll-free at 1-800-783-7067.

Program targets arthritis

The 92-year-old Schuylkill Haven woman has worked with her hands all her life. Now, she is wondering if she has arthritis.

Thanks to recent assessments held by Diakon's *PrimeTime Health* in Schuylkill County and St. Luke's Miners Memorial Hospital, the wait is over.

"Her assessment shows she has the symptoms of arthritis," says Teddi Cunningham, manager of PrimeTime Health, a health-education program operated by Diakon under a contract with the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services.

The assessments include an Arthritis Foundation questionnaire that helps participants to review their health by answering 12 simple questions. The questionnaires are then reviewed by a health care professional, who may offer advice and recommendations for further treatment.

Evaluating nearly 100 participants since the program began in March, assessments have been held at Schuylkill County senior centers and at the hospital.

"The screenings were made possible through an approximate \$10,000 grant received by the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services from the Eastern Pennsylvania Region of the Arthritis Foundation," says Kathy Leahy, Diakon's senior center program manager.

"The grant allows us to offer self-help classes free of charge, which makes it more

appealing for seniors to participate."

If an individual learns he or she has arthritis, several options are available through PrimeTime Health and St. Luke's Miners Memorial Hospital.

"The grant has allowed us to take the assessments two steps further," says Cunningham. "If the assessment reveals signs that a participant has arthritis, the participant should contact his or her doctor. Once the physician is aware of the patient's condition, we then encourage them to take the Arthritis Self-Help Course (ASHC), and eventually we would like to see them participate in the exercise program entitled People with Arthritis Can Exercise (PACE). The grant assists with all three aspects of the arthritis programs—even though it ends in June, we hope to continue the assessments and ASHC and implement a future PACE program."

A certified ASHC instructor, Cunningham says she teaches participants to manage fibromyalgia, arthritis, and rheumatic conditions through effective medication use and stress, fatigue, and anger management. She also reviews the role of nutrition in arthritis.

"Today, we know it is crucial to maintain strength, flexibility, and range of mobility in arthritis patients," she says. "In the past, arthritis patients were advised to rest, but not today. Exercise is important in arthritis management."

One area resident, 75, says she is already learning to cope with her pain through exercise. "I exercise in Teddi's group. I feel good after I exercise, but if I did it every day, I'd feel a lot better."

Teddi Cunningham with a screening participant.



Fred Fisher, right, a Volunteer Home Care Boyertown-area team member, visits with Joe Miller.

Volunteer Home Care receives grant

The Boyertown team of Diakon's *Volunteer Home Care* has been awarded a \$2,000 grant from the Boyertown Charitable Giving Program of Berks County Community Foundation.

The team will use the funds to provide non-medical, non-professional assistance to persons in need through caring teams of volunteers from local communities and congregations. In 2002, the area team, which involves 15 partner congregations of six denominations, served 31 persons through more than 400 hours of service.

Volunteer Home Care services include companionship, letter writing, telephone reassurance, errands, transportation, light household and outside chores, assistance with financial forms, meal preparation, and minor home repairs.

In Pennsylvania, Diakon offers Volunteer Home Care in Berks, Schuylkill, Carbon, Luzerne, and portions of Dauphin, Montgomery, and Chester counties.

For more information about receiving assistance or volunteer opportunities through the Boyertown area team, readers should call Volunteer Home Care at (610) 682-1412 or toll-free at 1-800-322-9597.

Luther Crest celebrates 20th anniversary Activities include Clarence Dreisbach art retrospective

As part of *Luther Crest's* 20th anniversary celebration this year, residents will have the opportunity to vote for the artwork they want to see in the retirement community's permanent collection.

The voting will occur during an artists' reception and tribute to Clarence Dreisbach planned for June 12. The program will begin at 5 p.m. in Crest Hall.

Clarence and Margaret Dreisbach were among the first residents at Luther Crest, says Rhonda Dietz, regional director of Advancement. An active member of the community, Clarence Dreisbach had been a teacher at the Baum School of Art and helped to found the Allentown Art Museum.

"He was considered artist-in-residence when he moved here," Dietz explains. "He did a lot of painting while a resident and those paintings were exhibited at Luther Crest."



After he passed away, his son, Don Dreisbach, donated 30 of his father's original paintings to Luther Crest. Dreisbach also gave two additional cash gifts to be used this year and next for the purchase of local artists' work.

The first gift will be used during the retrospective, which in addition to Dreisbach's work includes the work of regional artists associated with the Banana Factory in Bethlehem and the Baum School of Art in Allentown. Events sponsors are "Grand



Sponsors" Lois E. Eisenhard, a member of the Luther Crest advisory board, and Gayle Stoneback, a Luther Crest resident, and "Friend of Luther Crest" sponsor Gross, McGinley, LaBarre, and Eaton, LLP.

Also planned for Luther Crest's anniversary celebration are an all-campus picnic on July 5, a formal cocktail party and dinner on July 8, and a dance on July 11. The art exhibit will be open to the public through July 20.

Residents build camaraderie while working on publication outlining community's 20 years

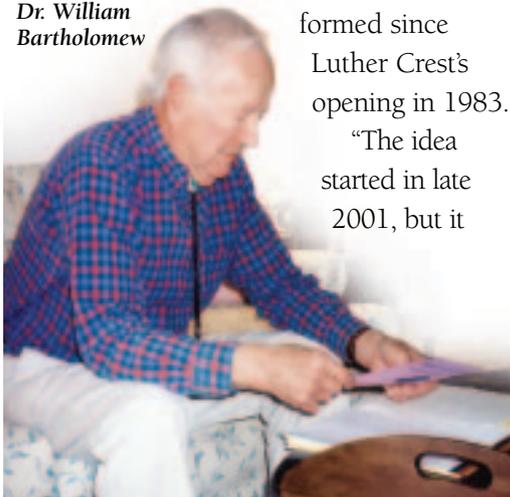
What began as a friendly discussion among fellow residents has turned into a two-color, 50-page booklet celebrating the 20-year anniversary of *Luther Crest*.

Led by Dr. William Bartholomew, at least 15 people—residents, staff members, and volunteers—came together to immortalize the memories

formed since Luther Crest's opening in 1983.

"The idea started in late 2001, but it

Dr. William Bartholomew



wasn't until February 2002 that we pulled people together," says Bartholomew. "We found about 10 [original] residents still residing here and we got them together to discuss memories."

Since that time, team members have assembled photographs, transcripts of interviews with original residents, records of Resident Council meetings, and stories from the library and gift shop to fill the booklet's pages.

"It's been very interesting to get the background on how [Luther Crest] has evolved into what it is today," he says. "The joy of it has been the cooperation of many ordinary people to put something together with great participation."

Kutztown University graphics arts professor Brenda Innocenti volunteered her time and talents to the project. "I originally took on this project when it was brought to

my attention that the residents of Luther Crest were looking for someone to design their 20th anniversary book. Before I began teaching at Kutztown University, I completed many design projects for The Lutheran Home at Topton," explains Innocenti.

"I thought the anniversary project sounded interesting, and I was happy to give something back to the community."

Working on such projects is just another way Luther Crest makes life interesting for its residents, says Dale Honig, director of admissions and marketing. "There are many opportunities for growth here at Luther Crest," she says. "Life is a continual learning process, and that is what we offer our residents."

Bartholomew says the team expects to have the booklet printed and ready for distribution during the 20th anniversary celebration scheduled for July.

Benefactors Dinner Adoption a 'slam dunk' for former 76ers manager

When Pat Williams was growing up in Wilmington, Del., his dreams revolved around sports. With a best friend whose father owned the Philadelphia Phillies, Williams spent every weekend at a baseball game dreaming of what the future could hold.

While he would achieve his long-held dream of a successful career in sports, Williams—the featured speaker at the May 20 *Benefactors Dinner of The Lutheran Home at Topton*, whose proceeds benefited a number of Diakon's services for children and youths—also found fulfillment as the father of 18 children, 14 adopted from four nations.

Not long after he and his first wife were married in 1972, Williams joined the Philadelphia 76ers as general manager. The ensuing years were busy as the family expanded with the birth of three children and Williams focused on helping his team win basketball games.

"Through this period Jill wanted to adopt children. She had this vision of an Asian child," he says. "For 10 years, I couldn't fathom it." Finally, he agreed and they adopted two young girls from South Korea. "At this point, we had five children. It seemed like the largest family in the world," Williams remembers. "A year later, another birth child arrived."

By 1986, Williams left the 76ers and moved his family to Florida, where he helped with the creation of an expansion team, now known as the Orlando Magic. "In the process, [we found out] about five-year-old twin boys from South Korea who were available," he says. "We looked at the picture, had a family pow-wow and said, 'Let's do it.'"

The adoption agency with which they had worked sent them a photograph of four brothers from the Philippines. "My wife and I went over that and debated it long and hard," he says. "I was into it now. [My wife] finally agreed after several months of discussion, and in November of 1988, these four boys arrived."

The latest arrivals added new challenges,



The Pat Williams family.

as the boys were 11, nine, eight, and six when they arrived. "We're now at 12 children. We have a full-time nanny, full-time cook and we've got a handyman/driver on board," he says. "Literally, we were becoming our own adoption agency."

The growing family meant Williams had to work harder to provide. "I'm trying to run a basketball team, speaking, writing books, doing whatever I can to provide the revenue," he says. "God kept providing. It literally became a month-by-month mission."

A few years later, the family grew with the addition of two four-year-old girls from Romania. Then, Williams and his wife visited friends in Brazil. "We were absolutely overwhelmed by Brazil. We couldn't fathom the needs of the children," he says. "Most people go to these countries and come back with postcards. We came back with children."

While there were continuing challenges—"We are now at 16," says Williams, "and my one son says, 'Dad, don't you think you could get some other families to help?'"—the family also rejoiced in the excitement of their new-found family members.

"When you are that age, it was like a big party," he says. "The amazing thing is the bond those kids have is pretty staggering."

On Christmas night 1993, the Williams family welcomed the last of their adopted children, a brother and sister from Brazil. "Shortly thereafter, there was a price to pay for all this. With the kids' pictures and the warm fuzzies

of adoption, there also is a real world," says Williams whose marriage then dissolved.

"For the better part of four years, I was a single parent. I'm not sure how I did it—by the grace of God, a strong will, determination and great help."

Williams then met Ruth, whom he married in 1997. "I call her Saint Ruth to have walked into that situation," he says, adding that his wife also has a grown daughter. "The older ones were moving on to college, but when she arrived, there were still 16 kids at home. She continued to work, but yet has really stepped into their lives."

Today, the youngest child is a sophomore in high school. "In two years when the last one graduates, it will mean 32 consecutive years of day-to-day parenting and 21 straight years of Little League baseball games—these are records that may never be broken," quips Williams, who says he always made a point of being around the breakfast table. "I was very much hands-on and still am."

Williams uses his high-profile career to spread the word about adoption.

"My contribution really is to be the visible adoption guy in the country. I see it as my mission," he says. "God called me to do it, but it took 10 years to get the message."

He and his wife also are writing a book about parenting. "It is called *Full House*, the ultimate parenting book," he says. "We've got stories that Dr. Spock and Mr. Rogers wouldn't believe!"

Mullens' menu a hit

Residents at *Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill* say they have it all when it comes to fine dining—delicious meals, entrée choices, and Kimberly Mullins, director of dining services.

“We think Kim is just great,” says 82 year-old Lois Young, who is a three-year resident of the Pottsville-area assisted living facility. “She is such a wonderful person. We are very much pleased with her. She always goes out of her way to accommodate us. We ask her for a special meal request, and she makes it happen. Not only is she dedicated to her job, but she is not afraid of getting her hands dirty and working in the kitchen or becoming part of the wait staff. To me, she is one of the greatest people we have here.”

Young and other residents aren't the only ones delighted with Mullins, who works for CURA Hospitality. Recognizing her outstanding contribution, CURA recently honored Mullins with its President's Award, the highest recognition awarded to a CURA hospitality manager.

“I was truly speechless and very honored to get such an award,” says Mullins. “I was overwhelmed.”

According to Mitch Possinger, CURA's president, Mullins was chosen for many reasons.

“Kim's relationships with her clients, customers, staff, and peers are consistently

managed to the highest of standards,” he says. “By using her creativity and focusing on details, she has been successful in making each meal an ‘event unto itself.’”

Additionally, he notes, Mullins has accomplished deficiency-free quality surveys, embraced her job to provide a fun work environment resulting in minimal staff turnover, and has volunteered time to coordinate facility events.

Jerri Kohut, Luther Ridge executive director, believes Mullins strives for perfection in everything she does.

“Resident meals, snacks, and special programs are always well done with an extra flare that assures detail and fine dining as the end result. Kim inspires her staff and instills in them the team concept. She is a pleasure to work with. The Luther Ridge family is very proud of Kim and her accomplishments.”

“I have close relationships with the residents,” notes Mullins. “They are very friendly. I make it a point to meet every new resident, and I see the residents on a daily basis—usually at all three meals. I am always in the dining room. I want to make the residents feel comfortable with me because this is their home.”

She encourages residents to submit recipes that she can reproduce for the whole community. This way they can enjoy food items “just like Mom used to make.”



Shirley Derr, a nursing assistant at The Lutheran Home at Topton, looks on as her grandson and another child take part in activities at the new Brandywine Library within Old Main on the Topton campus. The library was recently relocated to a refurbished section of Old Main from another building on the Topton campus. The retirement community is unique in being able to host a complete community library on site.

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Taking part in the May 12 20th anniversary celebration and rededication of Lutherwood, a Diakon senior housing facility in Scranton, were (left-to-right) the Rev. Kurt Garbe, associate to the bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod; Scranton Mayor Chris Doherty; Monsignor Joseph Kelly of the Nativity of Our Lord Roman Catholic Church; the Rev. Dr. Daun McKee, Diakon president/CEO; Cathy Wechsler, assistant to U.S. Cong. Paul E. Kanjorski; Richard MacGregor, Diakon's director of housing management; and Karen Nape, Lutherwood site manager.

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