

# DIAKON CONNECTION

FALL 2003

## Residents show enthusiasm for ways to better health

One resident says it makes him so relaxed he could drift off to sleep. Another wishes he could do the moves better, but is quite proud of what he has accomplished so far. And yet another says it is something she can relate to.

"It" is T'ai Chi, a dance-like form of movement and exercise that originated in China centuries ago. And a growing number of independent-living residents at **Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village** in Lewisburg are becoming real fans.

Sharm Liddick, a certified T'ai Chi guide, explains that the weekly classes she leads at Buffalo Valley are adapted just for seniors. But the fluid, no-impact, low-key movements are easy for just about anyone to do.

"That's the beauty of T'ai Chi," Liddick says. "Anyone can do it. The exercises help you move with more agility, balance, and grace. They increase your energy. These are wonderful exercises for older people."

While only a handful of residents showed up for the first class when it began several months ago, typical class sizes now number between 15 and 20.

"We are finding that many of our residents are interested in ways to be healthy without medicines," explains Dana Gorby, director of marketing and admissions. "So as I go out into the community, I look for things like the T'ai Chi program that will benefit residents and meet their interests."

Another program that proved popular at Buffalo Valley was a session on aromatherapy, which uses various naturally scented oils or candles to promote health and well-being. An additional program in the works for fall or winter will focus on self-esteem and ways to feel good about yourself.

"There continues to be more and more interest in wellness-types of programming, and we hope to bring a variety of opportunities to the campus," says Gorby.

*Buffalo Valley residents follow the lead of T'ai Chi guide Sharm Liddick.*



- Adoption Services
- Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, Lewisburg
- Congregational Health Ministries
- Family Life Services (Tressler Counseling)
- Locust Grove Retirement Village, Mifflin
- Ohesson Manor, Lewistown
- Penn Lutheran Village, Selinsgrove
- Refugee & Immigration Services
- TresslerCare

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# Pennsfield Apartments now offers dining program

**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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Mealtime at The Pennsfield Apartments has added variety.

The change is the result of a new dining option available for the independent-living residents of The Pennsfield, part of Diakon's *Penn Lutheran Village* at Selinsgrove.

Dubbed "The Pennsfield Café," the dining service includes catered buffet meals twice a week—one lunch and one dinner—a theme meal once a month, and a Sunday brunch each month.

Provided through CURA Hospitality, which manages dining services for Diakon facilities, the new service at Penn Lutheran mirrors what is offered at several other locations. Each facility, however, has a customized plan, says CURA representative Patrick Johnson, who notes that menu choices and dining options are designed to fit the "personality" of each Diakon facility.

"We talk with residents ahead of time to find out what they want," he says. "We always try to accommodate local and regional preferences, and individual dietary needs. We offer a good variety of foods of high quality and nutritional value."

Pennsfield residents receive a packet of menus for the following month so they

can choose which meals they wish to buy. No cash needs to exchange hands, because residents are billed at the end of the month for those meals they eat.

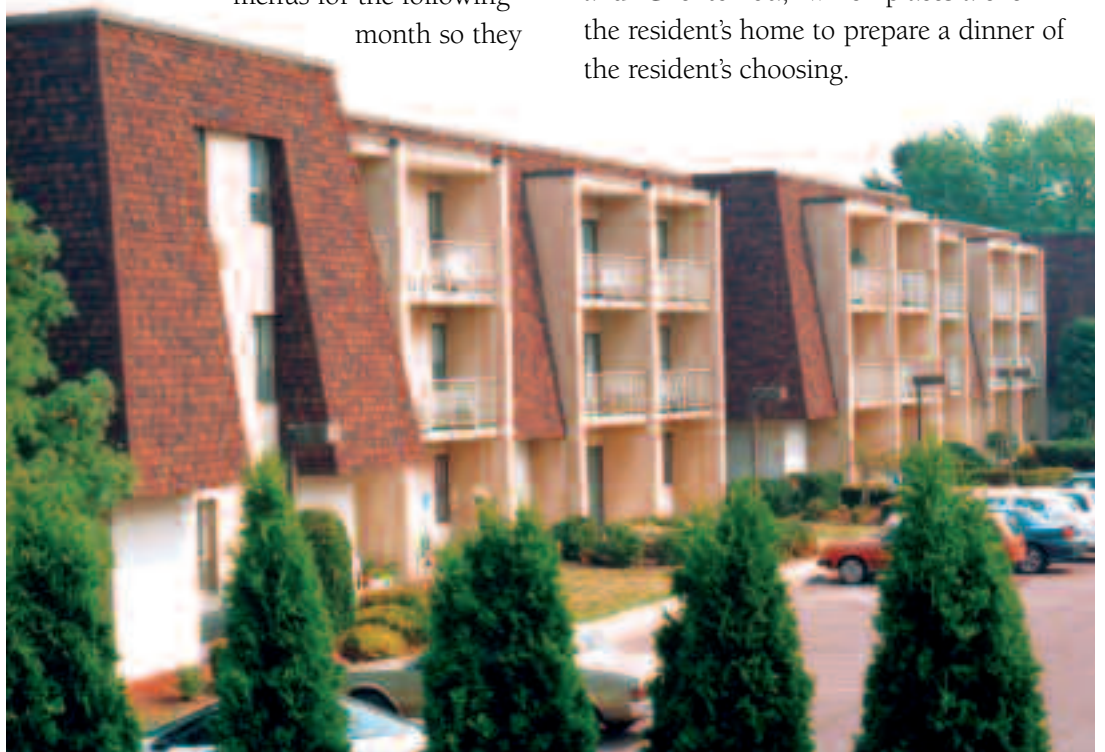
With 24 hours' notice, residents may add a guest to their meal plan, and there is no limit to the number of guests a resident may bring. Meals are served in the apartment building's dining area.

"We feel this dining option suits the independent-living lifestyle," Johnson says. "Many of these people are active and busy and this is a way to help them remain independent. The buffet style also presents a great opportunity for people to socialize, talk, and get together. It helps to enhance the sense of community."

Holli Wise, Pennsfield Apartments manager, says residents are excited about the dining option and have been eager to give it a try.

"It offers residents a convenient way to get a good variety of food and to get together with one another," she says. "It's also a nice way for them to entertain visitors."

Among options CURA has offered at various Diakon facilities are home delivery and "Chef to You," which places a chef in the resident's home to prepare a dinner of the resident's choosing.



# Family Life/Congregational Health

## Diakon provides pastoral support program

Some may believe that a pastor's job is easy, but the life of a pastor can be very demanding, says Mark Basinger, director of Diakon's *Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna*.

"When you look closely at pastors' lives, you understand that their job isn't just talking on Sunday morning and visiting a few people during the week. Instead, pastors are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and they are engaged in the lives of the people they love and care about, often during very intense times," he says.

The need to balance family life and congregational responsibilities and work unconventional hours with limited personal time and often a lack of social supports can lead to high stress levels for clergy.

In an effort to help alleviate some of these concerns, Family Life Services and Diakon's *Congregational Health Ministries* have partnered to offer pastoral support groups and congregational support workshops in the Upper Susquehanna Synod.

Currently, Basinger serves as a facilitator for two pastoral support groups, which provide an open setting where clergy can discuss the challenges of the profession.

"I believe that it is very critical that pastors today be involved in some type of support network. We need that peer support and Mark's facilitating the groups as a professional really helps make the time the pastors spend worthwhile, productive, and helpful," says synod Bishop A. Donald Main.

The two support groups, which meet monthly in Lewisburg and Williamsport, collectively attract 15 area pastors who use the forum for peer support and accountability.

"The group provides a place for pastors to come in and talk about their experiences of being pastors and the demands and stresses of the job. They also enlist the support of colleagues for accountability. Are they spending enough time with their family? Are they exercising? It is a positive and hopefully uplifting experience that helps them overcome challenges," says Basinger.

"It also helps them to continue to do ministry in a healthy way."

According to Basinger, the need for pastoral support programming became apparent during a Diakon assessment that surveyed the 140 congregations in the synod about congregational needs.

"As we were looking at the preliminary results and what services Family Life Services might offer in addition to our traditional programs such as parenting education, grief counseling, and drug and alcohol education, it became evident that pastoral support could be very helpful," he says.

When he was asked to facilitate the Lewisburg pastoral support group, which had been established earlier by a group of pastors, he knew the work was in line with Diakon's goals.

"When I joined the group, it was fairly early on in the needs assessment. Because I was recognizing the need of pastoral support through the assessment results, I thought it would be a great opportunity to learn about the challenges a pastor faces and perhaps contribute in some way," he said.

The second support group was formed following a presentation Basinger and Debbie Best, coordinator of Diakon's Congregational Health Ministries in the synod, hosted during a seminar on clergy health and wellness.

During the workshop, Best discussed a recent national church survey that revealed pastors have elevated levels of health risks related to high stress and other factors.

"We gave them an overview of the study and then tools to assess themselves, their stress level, their physical care, and overall health issues. It was during this seminar that the group identified a need for support and accountability. They decided that day that they wanted to form a second support group," says Best.

Pastoral groups may offer the support pastors need, but Best and Ann Karchner, Family

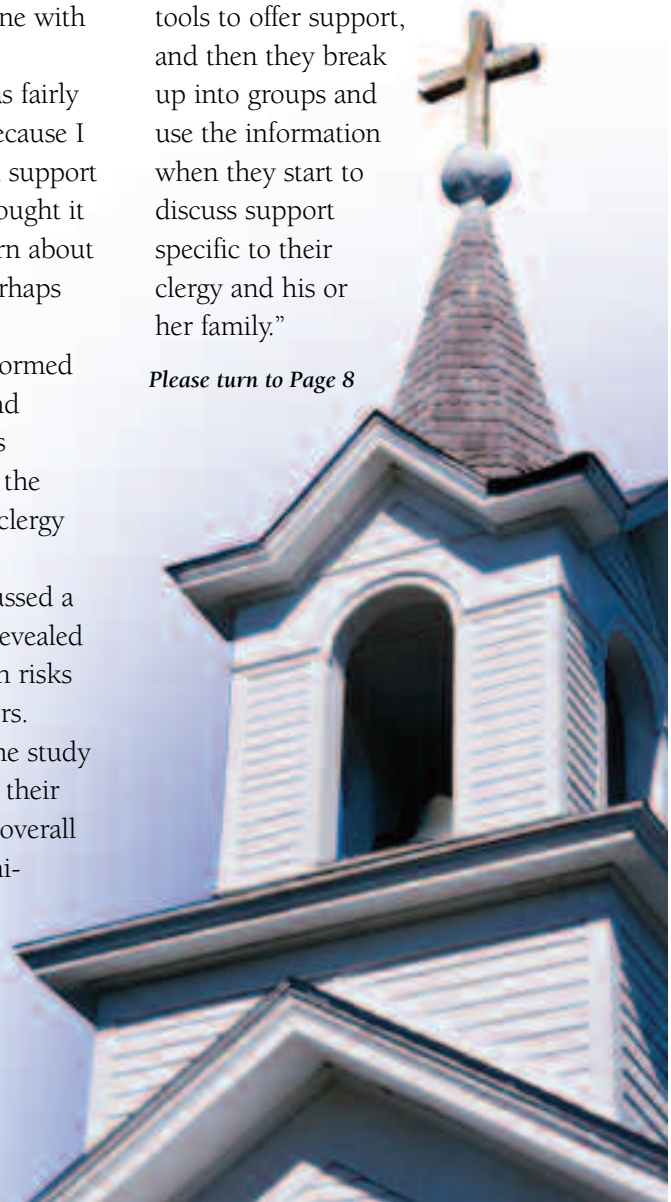
Life Services coordinator, are taking the effort one step further. They are offering congregational support workshops that provide tips on how to support clergy.

"Support is important because we want the pastors to feel valued for what they do. It is a unique occupation. If you think about it, they can't refuse someone who needs help. Doctors can say, 'I can't handle that. Go to someone else.' Pastors can't do that. They also deal with unique dynamics in a congregation," says Best.

Catered to each congregation, the workshops offer an opportunity to creatively learn.

"Each workshop is a little different," says Best. "We give them the tools to offer support, and then they break up into groups and use the information when they start to discuss support specific to their clergy and his or her family."

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# Sharing of cultures leads to gift

A young girl's interest in helping a friend turned into a \$500 contribution for Diakon's *Tressler Refugee Services* late last year.

Shannon Nabors, a member of New Hope Lutheran Church in Columbia, Md., originally co-authored the book, "Lost in New York," with classmate Rachel Lanspa as a way to help people understand the Muslim culture of a schoolmate.

"I thought it would help them to respect people's differences," she explains in the book's foreword.

Eleven at the time, Nabors had already decided to sell the books to earn money for Refugee Services when the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States occurred. The book suddenly took on new meaning.

"All of the Muslim people I have met are very nice. They feel as badly as we do about what happened on the 11th," Nabors continues in her foreword.

"Also, the people who attacked our country were not really practicing the Islamic religion, which I am sure would never allow the killing of innocent people. I want people to know that most Muslim people are very kind. They are pretty much just like the rest of us. I hope that kids and others who read this book will have a better understanding of the Muslim culture, and be kind to people who may be different from them."

The book sold very well, raising \$250. That amount was then matched by Aid Association for Lutherans, now part of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

In a letter enclosed with the \$500 check, Nabors expressed her wishes for her donation.

"I hope that the money will be used to help families and children who are new to this country," she wrote. "From my experiences with my friend . . . I know that it can be hard for people new to this country to find good jobs and make good friends."



Shannon Nabors

Abdelrahim Eldaw



## Sudanese refugee begins 'painting' new life

Some things in life are worth the wait. In November, Alan Dudley, executive director of Diakon's *Tressler Refugee Services*, received word that Abdelrahim Eldaw was coming to the United States. For reasons unknown, his arrival was cancelled and it wasn't until April of this year that the 27-year-old refugee from the Sudan arrived in Pennsylvania.

The wait was well worth it, says the young man. "America...freedom. America...good people," says Eldaw, who speaks limited English.

With the help of Refugee Services, Eldaw found an apartment that he shares with another Sudanese refugee. He also works two jobs, trying to build a savings while also sending money to his family—his pregnant

wife and two sons, now in Cairo, Egypt—whom he hopes will join him soon.

Like anyone, Eldaw has hopes for his future in America. "I hope for good life," says the talented artist who works in pencil, oil, and watercolors. Within one month of moving to the area, he had completed eight paintings, one of which is on exhibit at the Art Association of Harrisburg. Eldaw hopes it will attract a buyer.

Refugee Services has been very supportive of Eldaw's artistic talent, he notes, linking him with organizations that promote artists from other cultures and encouraging him to look beyond his current situation.

The former refugee is considering an education in art that would eventually lead to a career as an art teacher, notes Dudley.

# Diakon hosts legislative breakfast in state capitol

**Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries** hosted its first legislative breakfast earlier this summer. The event was held in the state capitol just off its main entrance.

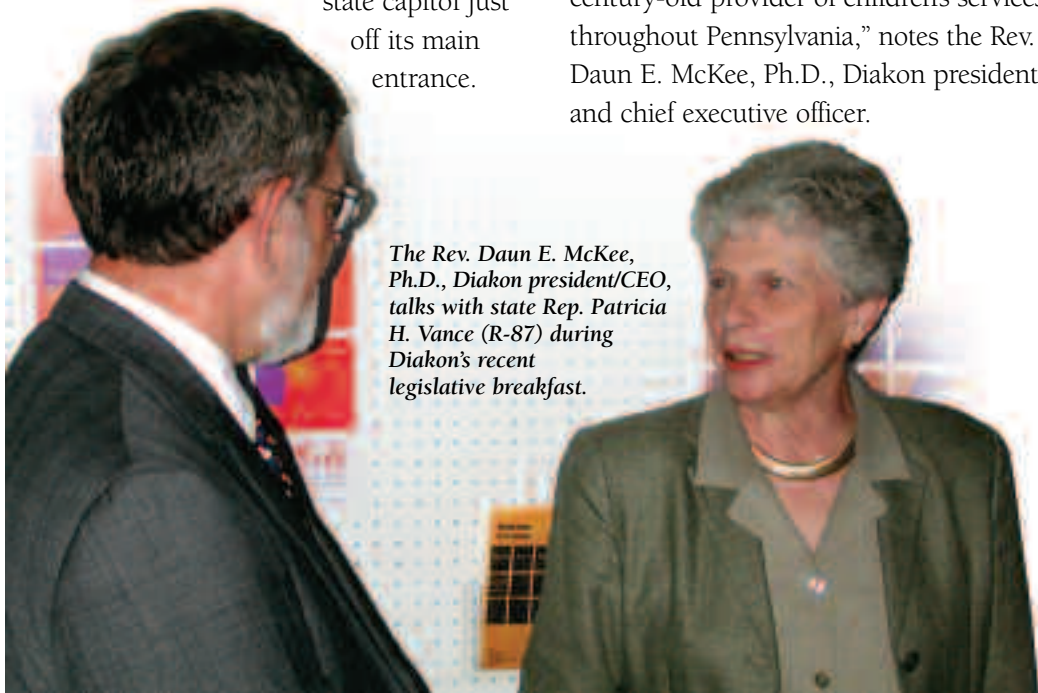
“Diakon is the largest non-profit, long-term care and retirement services provider in the tri-state area, as well as a more-than-century-old provider of children’s services throughout Pennsylvania,” notes the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president and chief executive officer.

“Not a lot of legislators may know that, and we wanted to help them to become better acquainted with us and all that we do in employing and serving Pennsylvania’s citizens.”

Numerous senators, representatives, and their aides attended the informal event, at which Diakon staff members described the agency’s historic mission, its vision for services, and the issues that confront health-care and social-service organizations today.

“We are grateful that so many of our elected leaders took time out of their busy schedules to be with us and to learn more about all that Diakon does,” McKee said.

Last year, Diakon served nearly 50,000 Pennsylvania residents, including those aided by the Statewide Adoption Network, which Diakon administers. Through its predecessor organizations, Diakon originated in Pennsylvania in 1868.



*The Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president/CEO, talks with state Rep. Patricia H. Vance (R-87) during Diakon’s recent legislative breakfast.*

## Former Pirate: ‘You can do anything’

“I wanted to let the youths know that a kid from Mount Savage, Maryland, was fortunate enough to play in the major leagues,” says former Pittsburgh Pirate Bob Robertson.

That message—that you can achieve your goals with enough hard work and determination—was one the baseball player tried to instill in teens served by *TresslerCare’s* foster care and wilderness-based

programs during TresslerCare’s annual trek to the Doubleday Country Inn and Farm near Landisburg, Pa.

The farm provides a “field of dreams” for local baseball fans to play with or be coached

by former big-league players. Having donned old-fashioned baseball uniforms, youths in the foster care program played against similarly attired teens from the wilderness programs.

Robertson’s goal, he says, was to teach the youths you can do anything if you try.

“I was fortunate enough to play in the major leagues and World Series and have a World Series ring and find myself with a locker next to Roberto Clemente’s,” he told a local newspaper. Yet, “it doesn’t matter how big your name is if you don’t have the kindness and rapport to sit down with the kids. You have to give something back.”

Robertson began his career in 1967 with the Pirates, playing for the team through 1976. He later played for the Seattle Mariners and the Toronto Blue Jays. He played first base most of his career, taking part in the 1971 World Series, when the Pirates defeated the Baltimore Orioles four games to three.



*Play ball!*

*Please turn to Page 8*

# Liberian has new hope



Esther Thomas

“When the situation improves, I am going to go home. I don’t think this will happen very soon, because it will take a while for the peacekeepers to come and set up. We hope by year’s end, the situation will be better,” she says.

Thomas, who received a master’s degree in theology, development, and evangelism in May from the seminary, was hoping to return home to begin a new life for herself and her family following the completion of her education, but her country’s civil unrest foiled those plans.

“After graduation, I was supposed to go home, but with the situation, it just wasn’t safe. The ELCA said I could stay here another year, but I had to find a job in the meantime,” says Thomas, who did extensive research into domestic violence. Her work, profiled along with her harrowing experiences in Liberia in the Winter 2002-2003 Upper Susquehanna edition of *Dialog*, involved

Family Life Services clients and aided the program’s outreach efforts.

Thomas says this isn’t the first time the rebel movement has prevented her from going home.

“Last summer I wanted to go home to do my research project for my master’s degree, and I couldn’t go. Rebels had raided my home and taken everything,” she says. “Instead of returning in the middle of unrest, I just stayed here and did my research project at Tressler Counseling [now Family Life Services]. I’ve been in the area ever since.”

Her spirit remains optimistic, however.

“God has a purpose for me,” she says. “God has helped me to accept my situation—my country’s civil unrest—as part of life, and I hope that there will be peace and I pray that things will work out.”

She hopes eventually to obtain a posi-

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With peacekeeping forces beginning to establish order in Liberia, Esther Thomas, a Liberian and former West Branch Seminary graduate student who has done research with Diakon’s *Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna*, may be able to return home by year’s end.

# Rendell visits Diakon site



Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell poses with Diakon staff members Linda Ciampi, center, and Rita Rousseau during the governor’s recent visit to the Diakon-sponsored Pottsville Senior Center. Ciampi is senior vice president for Diakon’s Congregation, Children, and Family Services while Rousseau is executive director for Community Outreach Services.

## SERVICE-TO-DATE

Each year, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries touches the lives of thousands of persons throughout central and north-central Pennsylvania. As of the end of June, the number served regionally totaled nearly 5,000 persons.

**Adoption Services, York**  
162 families\*

**Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village**  
288 persons

**Congregational Health Ministries – Upper Susquehanna**  
618 persons

**Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna**  
3,103 persons

**Locust Grove Retirement Village**  
130 persons

**Ohesson Manor**  
214 persons

**Penn Lutheran Village**  
315 persons

**TresslerCare** continuum of services for adjudicated youths, 14 youths

\*all of central Pa.

# Regional retirement services vice presidents named

Two new staff members are helping to oversee Diakon's *Retirement & Health Care Services*.

Tama Carey and Ann Molesevich recently joined Diakon as regional vice presidents. Carey oversees Diakon's Continuing Care Retirement Communities, while Molesevich is responsible for operations at the agency's numerous assisted living and skilled care facilities.

Within the Upper Susquehanna Synod, Carey's responsibilities consist of Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village in Lewisburg and Ohesson Manor, Lewistown. Molesevich's facilities include Locust Grove Retirement Village near Mifflin and Penn Lutheran Village at Selinsgrove.

Before joining Diakon, Carey served as executive director of Green Ridge Village in Newville, where she was responsible for daily operations of the accredited Continuing Care Retirement Community. She is a member of the American Association of Homes and Services for the

Aging, on whose National House of Delegates she was elected to represent Pennsylvania. She also is a member of PANPHA, an Association of Pennsylvania Nonprofit Senior Services, on whose board of directors she serves.

Molesevich held previous positions as president, Skilled Nursing Division, and vice president, Business Operations-Skilled Nursing, for Brandywine Senior Care in Exton. There she was responsible for the operation of 13 skilled nursing facilities and was integral to the development of successful nursing-staff recruitment and retention strategies. She also has held positions as regional director of operations for Genesis ElderCare in Kennett Square, and operations performance director for The Multicare Co. in Devon.

Molesevich earned a master's degree in public administration from Marywood College as well as a bachelor's degree in the same field from Kutztown University. She also is active in PANPHA.



## E.D. named at Buffalo

John Hendrickson is Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village's new executive director.

He is responsible for management of all levels of service offered at the retirement village including skilled nursing care, memory-supportive dementia care, assisted living services, and retirement living accommodations, as well as advancing Buffalo Valley's mission.

Before joining Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, Hendrickson served as executive director of Chapel Pointe, a retirement community in Carlisle, where he was responsible for community and church relations, strategic planning, and general operations.

Hendrickson has a bachelor's degree in social science from Nyack College in Nyack, N.Y. He earned a master's degree in counseling and personnel services from Fordham University.



Tama Carey, left, and Ann Molesevich recently joined Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries as regional vice presidents for Retirement and Health Care Services. Carey oversees Diakon's Continuing Care Retirement Communities, while Molesevich is responsible for operations at the agency's assisted living and skilled care facilities.

## 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!

### Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, Lewisburg

- CPR training equipment
- Electric low beds (10 @ \$13,000)
- Exercise equipment for independent living (\$3,000)

### Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna

Video projector

### Penn Lutheran Village, Selinsgrove

Proxima projector for presentations (\$3,000)

- Electric razors for residents in need (\$35 - \$60 each)
- Wall hangings and shelves for resident rooms
- Portable tape players or CD players for resident use

## Esther Thomas

*Continued from Page 6*

tion with the Liberian Lutheran Church.

Mark Basinger, Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna director, believes that no matter what the future holds for Thomas, she can conquer anything through her faith.

“Esther has a tremendous understanding of the power of God,” he says. “She will use this as a stronghold in her life.”

Thomas keeps faith that each day will bring her closer to returning home. Until then, she says, “I trust God can make the impossible possible. I trust there will be peace in my home country. In the meantime, I need to put it in His hands. I just need to trust him with everything.”

## Baseball

*Continued from Page 5*

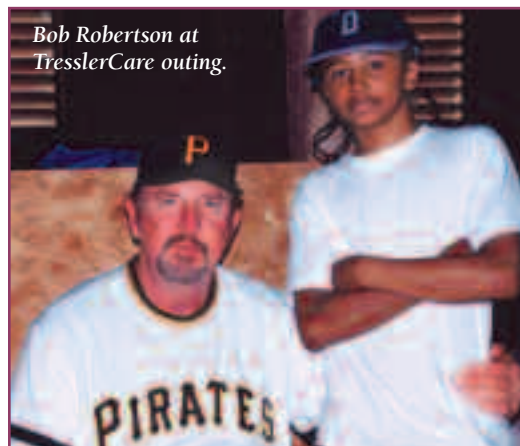
Craig Smith, TresslerCare executive director, regards the annual baseball outing as an opportunity for youths to enjoy an activity while learning that perseverance and hard work pay off.

“These kids have difficult challenges in their lives,” he says. “The idea is to bring them out to play ball, have fun, and see that being successful requires you to work hard, deal with diversity, and be persistent.”

Despite the day’s heat, the youths enjoyed the event.

“It’s neat to wear the uniforms and play with a guy who won the World Series,” noted one teen.

Following the game, Robertson joined the youths for lunch and an autograph session. Commerce Bank sponsored the outing.



Bob Robertson at TresslerCare outing.

## Pastoral support *Continued from Page 3*

This type of workshop is valuable, Best says, because “pastors need our support. Support contributes to the overall health of pastors. When we take a holistic look at support, we see that is what health is all about. When the pastor actively pursues healthy ways of living, he or she becomes a model to the congregation as well.”

Bishop Main believes the programs are of vital assistance to the church.

“It is one of the missions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to address self-care and emphasize whole care for pastors,” he says. “We also stress how we can be supportive to them in their ministry, and Diakon helps to do this.”

*The following regional memorial gifts were received from April through June 2003. Diakon programs thank these donors for their generous gifts!*

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