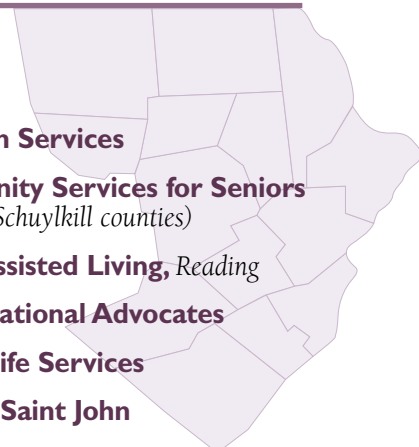


DIAKON CONNECTION

FALL 2003



Active Older Adults Program participants reap more than physical rewards

Older persons in Berks County who want to lead active, healthy lives don't have to join their local health club to get the exercise they want.

For them, there's the *Active Older Adults Program*.

Since October 2000, area senior adults have been participating in a range of sports-focused activities including cycling, water aerobics, strength training, roller-skating, canoeing, kayaking, volleyball, and even downhill skiing. The Active Older Adults program is administered by Diakon as part of Community Services for Seniors.

"We began this program as an expansion of the traditional programs offered through the senior centers," explains Karen Gottschall, Active Older Adults manager. "We try to promote all the activities that the American Council on Aging says seniors should take part in—endurance, strength, flexibility, and stretching. We have many activities that encompass all of them."

Each month, Gottschall sees more than 200 to 250 seniors involved in these activities, held in locations ranging from colleges and churches to hotel pools.

"Doctors are telling seniors to do weight-bearing and strength training-type exercise because it is very good for prevention of osteoporosis," she

says. "When we started our strength-training class, we had about eight people in the program. Now we have some 200 seniors."

The strength-training class isn't the only program activity that's gained in participation and popularity. Another long-time favorite is the senior cycling group, Seasoned Spokes.

"This group began before the Active Older Adults program and has been together for seven years," explains Gottschall, adding that 70 active members meet every Thursday morning and cycle an average of 20 miles.

"We have a ride leader and a sweep," she says. "The sweep's job is to keep everyone together."

People throughout the Active Older Adults program have taken on leadership roles such as that of the sweep. "It is really inspirational that they've stayed healthy and vibrant enough to be peer-group leaders," says Gottschall of her senior volunteers. "Many of our activities are led by older persons with expertise in a specific sport."

The program attracts seniors because there is no membership requirement and participation costs are low. and some of the program's benefits, she says, aren't readily measurable.

"The really good thing is that they are with their peers. They have formed really good friendships. This is an excellent opportunity for camaraderie."



Mae Gerhart doing strength-training.

- 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, & Carbon counties
- Saint Luke Village**, Hazleton
- TresslerCare Foster Care**, Topton
- Volunteer Home Care**

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Residents create a ‘haven’ of fruit trees for the future

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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A springtime labor of love will bring a lifetime of fresh fruit and enjoyment to residents of *The Lutheran Home at Topton*.

Several residents of Luther Haven—part of Topton’s retirement-living accommodations—spent several days in April planting two dozen fruit trees in a grassy plot near the campus community garden.

Plans for the mini-orchard began to take shape in conversations between residents Rudy Kroc and Al Fiori. A third resident, Jim Daniels, helped with planting.

Developing an orchard was nothing new for Kroc, who had owned several hundred fruit trees that he had planted, he says, as “a backup in case of early retirement.” His vision for Topton’s orchard intrigued Fiori, his neighbor.

Soon, the pair had negotiated with campus administration for the right space, selected and purchased the types of trees they wanted, and rented an auger to do the hardest part of the work—digging holes. “When we started planting, by

the third hole, I thought, “What have I gotten myself into?” Fiori says with a chuckle. Today the trees are growing nicely, tended with care by the trio, who include watering, fertilizing, pruning, and spraying as part of their job.

When the trees mature, a variety of plums, nectarines, pears, and apples will be available. Some fruit will be ready next year, notes Kroc, and will become more plentiful in three to five years.

According to the men’s plan, the various types of trees have “pick dates” ranging from early July—for golden plums—to mid-September, for Acey Mac® apples. The approximately 5,500-square-foot orchard also boasts two bluebird houses.

“We’re taking care of the trees for now, and we hope that someone else will take over when we’re gone because you can’t just count on Mother Nature,” Kroc says. “These trees should be here for years to come for everyone to enjoy.”



Al Fiori, left, and Ray Kroc in the “mini-orchard” they planted.

Congregation-Driven Mission Program helps congregations discern God's call

Have you noticed a pattern within your congregation in which small groups of people seem to be doing everything?

Is there limited financial support for the congregation's mission?

If so, your congregation may benefit from a new *Family Life Services—Northeastern Pennsylvania* program that helps the congregation discern what God is calling it to do.

The *Congregation-Driven Mission*, or CDM, program was begun as a way to help congregations understand their mission goals, says Jim Wesner, consultation services coordinator.

The underlying premise is that “there is a better response to mission goals when the entire congregation has a say in what the goals are,” he says.

Some signs that a congregation could benefit from CDM include a lack of energy or movement forward. “The council might be at the point where they are doing most of the ministry at the church and no one is volunteering,” notes Wesner.

Christ Lutheran Church of Lower Saucon in Hellertown—which began the CDM program a little more than one year ago—had just completed a building program and needed a jump-start.

“We needed to re-energize around something other than bricks and mortar,” says the Rev. Thomas Vega-Neel, adding that the congregation borders the grounds of a recently closed Bethlehem Steel plant. “It is going to be very important for us to have our mission very clear in our minds to help us reach out and address what are going to be some pretty dramatic changes in the community.”

When a congregation is ready to learn more about the CDM process, the council or the pastor contacts Diakon's Family Life Services—Northeastern Pennsylvania, which is based at *The Lutheran Home at Topton*.

“We explain that CDM involves a paradigm shift in the way they think about their role of leadership in the sense of involving the entire congregation and not

having just the elected lay leadership or the pastor set the direction for mission. They have to buy into that,” Wesner says. “Sometimes that is hard to do after years of the leadership doing everything in the church.”

Vega-Neel believes the change is good. “[CDM] will challenge the council to be more mission-oriented and be very involved in the life of the congregation, instead of being trustees,” he says. “We are changing their role, moving them into becoming ministry enablers.”

Following initial involvement in the program, the congregation develops a timeline of its history. “We ask them to go back a significant number of years in their history to recall important events in the life of the congregation. To help get things started, they might put on their timeline a building addition, a favored pastor, or other widely known events that add backbone to the timeline,” says Wesner, explaining that the timeline is posted so that members can add meaningful information.

Family Life Services then holds a workshop in which members discuss the timeline and even add to it. The review attempts to answer the question, “Where have we been

called as God's people?” That response prompts members to answer two key additional questions, “Where are we called now as God's people?” and “Where is God calling us to be in the future?”

The one-day workshop is normally held on a Sunday after the worship service. “As a result of the workshop, people start getting a concept of their church as a mission ground, not only to people inside the church, but also to people outside the church,” says Wesner. “Through a series of small and large group discussions, they start coming up with a list of mission goals. When they've narrowed the list to four to eight goals, they prioritize them and hand them off to council, standing committees, or a task force for action plans and implementation.”

When Jordan Lutheran Church in Orefield held its workshop, nearly 90 people showed up. “We had a lot of people. We had a few new participants and some youth,” remembers Bill Hendricks, a council member. “We developed so many small groups and so many goals we had to set up a second Sunday meeting.”

Since that time, the congregation has narrowed its goals and created a task force for each. As the congregation continues the process, Hendricks says he is hopeful more people will become involved.

Jordan Lutheran's pastor, the Rev. Don Hayn, believes the Family Life Services program can help to build the congregation's ministry upon its members' gifts. “In theory, this could empower a whole lot more ministry being done than can be done by any one individual,” he says. “And it puts the onus for the ministry on the people, as opposed to the pastors.”

Family Life Services continues to provide support after the workshop, contracting to meet with council, standing committees, or a task force to aid them in creating actions plans to implement goals.

“We don't want council to wind up with a list of goals and not know what to do with them,” says Wesner.



Jordan Lutheran Church

Hospice staffer gains national honors

“When you believe in yourself and work hard, anything is possible,” says Christina Fedorko.

She has taken her advice to heart.

Medical social worker and children’s bereavement coordinator for Diakon’s *Hospice Saint John*, Fedorko has numerous accomplishments—obtaining multiple educational degrees and certifications, actively participating in community programs and organizations, and excelling in professional positions—but recently she added another achievement to her list.

She received the 2003 Business and Professional Women’s Organization’s Virginia Allen Young Careerist Award for Pennsylvania.

The Young Careerist Program highlights the accomplishments of successful men and women between the ages of 21 and 35. This year’s seven contestants were judged on accomplishments, written essays, personal interviews, and public speaking around the theme “Imagine, Believe, and Achieve.”

The topic allowed Fedorko to discuss how she provides grief counseling bereavement services to children and teens throughout 14 northeastern Pennsylvania counties.

“I spoke in depth about my role in [Hospice Saint John’s] children’s bereavement program,” says Fedorko, who spearheaded the development and implementation of the children’s program.

“I like working with children and teenagers. It is very important—especially with grief. They are at a critical age where how they cope with a loss can determine how they will cope with other loss issues throughout life.”

“Christina brings a wealth of experience, enthusiasm, and a love for children to Hospice Saint John, with a true desire to help children through a very difficult time in their life,” says Deborah Search, hospice executive director. “We have a great deal of pride in Christina’s achievements and we are behind her and all that she represents as we all work together for end-of-life care.”



Christina Fedorko

Although Fedorko’s hospice work is very noteworthy, says Jennifer Forrest, 2003 chair for BPW/PA’s Young Careerist Program, Fedorko won the award also because she “is a dynamic, bright, and charming young woman who represents the best qualities in today’s young professionals in the business world. She has a solid resume and bio, good interviewing skills, and exceptional public-speaking skills. She stayed calm and confident as she conveyed her message to the crowd at the state conference.”

While Fedorko excelled at the conference, she says she wouldn’t have entered the competition without the support of others.

“I am a member of the Greater Hazleton Area BPW and I attended a meeting in which the District 8 director mentioned the Young Careerist Program. I was initially compelled by the program,

but I didn’t decide to enter the competition until I received encouragement from my BPW peers. It wasn’t until I entered the state competition that I realized how big the program truly is,” she says.

And, for her, it became even bigger.

Having advanced through local, district, and now state competition, Fedorko represented Pennsylvania at the BPW/USA national conference in July.

There, competing among the top candidates, she received a certificate of honor as well as the 2003 National Judges’ Choice Award for her first-place interview.

The experience has been one she will not soon forget. “I am very happy...It is truly an honor.”

Christina Fedorko’s work with *Hospice Saint John* has resulted in expanded services for youths.

Hospice Saint John’s bereavement program recently developed a new support group for teenagers between 13 and 18 who have suffered the loss of a loved one. The first group met in August at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hazleton.

The group encourages teens to share their feelings with others who have experienced similar loss. The youths also complete a memory book of writings and drawings about their feelings and the changes they have experienced.

“When faced with an untimely death of a loved one, teens often have many emotions that can be overwhelming and confusing,” says Fedorko, who adds that older youths often communicate feelings in ways different from those used by younger children or adults. “We are hopeful that specifically targeting the needs of young people will help them cope with their grief.”

The group will meet regularly if there is sufficient interest. To register for the free program or to request additional information, readers should call Hospice Saint John at 1-877-438-3511.

Bluebirds among newest Luther Crest residents

Two or three years ago, most Luther Crest Retirement Community residents didn't know much about bluebirds.

That all changed when a member of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program—a local program Diakon coordinates and houses on Luther Crest's Allentown campus—visited the retirement community and shared all he knew about the colorful songbirds.

Before long, several residents were hard at work in the woodshop making houses in the hope they could attract bluebirds to campus. Soon a half dozen or so bird shelters were mounted on fencing along the north side of the property.

Resident William Bartholomew remembers that the area needed something more. "A group of residents gave funds for a tree and Luther Crest added nine flowering pear trees along the road," he says.

The following spring, when residents were sure bluebirds were nesting in their new homes, they requested a new name for the area: "If this will be a bluebird haven, let's call it Blue Bird Lane."

Their request was honored and now Luther Crest residents walk the campus perimeter, enjoying the benefits of exercise and the "new neighbors" of Blue Bird Lane.



Residents show interest in legislative process

As part of Luther Crest Retirement Community's 2003 Legislative Series, eight residents climbed aboard a bus this summer and headed to Harrisburg to meet with Sen. Lisa Boscola (D-18).

Accompanied by former employee and now active volunteer Lois Eisenhard, the group shared their views on current legislation with Boscola, toured the Capitol, and experienced the legislature in session.

The residents are interested in politics and actively participate in Luther Crest's legislative endeavors, says Mary Louise Drosdak, activities coordinator. "This trip is just one way in which we hope to keep them actively involved."

Luther Crest's legislative series includes additional opportunities for Lehigh Valley legislators to visit the Allentown retirement campus to share their views and address residents' questions and concerns. Rep. Julie Harhart (R-183) will visit in September, while Sen. Charlie Dent

(R-16) and Rep. Pat Browne (R-131) will be at Luther Crest on Oct. 18 for the community's annual health fair.



Luther Crest residents in front of state Capitol.

Luther Crest celebrates 20th anniversary

Diakon's Luther Crest Retirement Community, Allentown, is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Among events was a reception this summer attended by 150 residents, administrative and Diakon staff members, and area dignitaries. On left, Jeanne Oski, left, Luther Crest executive director, speaks with resident Ruth Ludivico. On right, resident Judith Diehl, left, talks with the Rev. James H. Wolford, associate to Bishop David Strobel of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.



Luther Crest Walk Fit League promotes wellness

In July, *Luther Crest Retirement Community* residents literally took another step toward wellness for life by participating in a kick-off for the Allentown retirement community's new walking program.

Sponsored by the community's rehabilitation department and led by Heather Swierczek, physical therapist, the Luther Crest Walk Fit League is meant to help residents improve their cardiovascular health and promote weight loss.

"A lot of our residents already walk actively on their own," says Swierczek. "Our walking program, which runs two to three days a week for one-half hour, is a way for residents to get to know each other and for me to know them."

Swierczek, who mapped out the walk's

route, is teaching participants to take their pulse and to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress.

"I've tailored the program so people can join in or leave the course as they like," she says. "I want to focus on people who enjoy walking, but also motivate residents who never thought of walking as a positive form of exercise. For other residents who want a personalized program rather than a group session, I will help them design a program that they can do on their own."



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

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

Caum Assisted Living

Computer for residents
Outdoor benches
Cushions for outdoor furniture

Community Services for Seniors - Berks County

Sofa
Answering machine
Small insulated coolers for meal delivery to the homebound
Piano
Paper shredder

Hospice Saint John

Baby monitors (\$25 each)

Pill organizers (daily and weekly organizers)
Blenders
Pill crushers
Adult disposable diapers (large)
Chux (blue pads for bed or chair)

The Lutheran Home at Topton

High-low electrical beds (10 @ \$13,000 each)
Mechanical lifts, sit-stand
Fireplace Halogen insert
Beauty shop chairs and dryers
VCR and DVD players

Luther Crest Retirement Community

Window treatments for main dining room (\$8,000)
Wall hangings/paintings for assisted living (\$10,000)
Fitness equipment (\$10,000)
High-low electric beds for health care center (\$15,000 each)
Putting green (\$18,000)
Landscaping enhancements (\$25,000)

Lutherwood

Drapes - Pool table cover (community room)
Clocks for common areas (six)
Artwork for common areas

Pocono Lutheran Village

Aquarium
Lighting for flag pole
Gazebo (\$2,500)
French doors for side dining room

Pregnancy Services and TresslerCare Foster Care (Topton)

Highchairs, 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 and birthday and get-well cards

Saint Luke Village

Dining room draperies (\$8,000)
Resident room chairs (26 @ \$475 each)
Courtyard plantings
Courtyard benches (\$500)
Prints for walls
Shower stretcher (\$1,000)
Reclining shower chairs (\$325)

Volunteer Home Care

Display board (\$230)
More volunteers, all locations

‘Inexperienced,’ Luther Crest resident makes it to 100 years of age!

College is an adjustment for every student. Yet imagine what college would be like if you were 14 years old, had lived on a farm all your life, and had just graduated from a one-room schoolhouse.

For Edna (Bear) Best, no imagination is necessary.

That was her childhood, and life continues to be just as amazing for the *Luther Crest* resident, who recently turned 100.

Best was one of four children born to Peter and Alice Bear. Her father believed strongly in education and sent all of his children to school to become teachers. Best entered Kutztown Normal School—today’s Kutztown University—in 1917 and was graduated four years later with her teaching degree.

“There wasn’t too much difference in age between me and my students [when I started],” she says, laughing. “I taught for 18 years.”

During that time, Best also took care of her ailing parents. Unlike most women of her day, she put off thoughts of marriage as she focused on her family and job. But when she turned 36, she met Charles Best, a widower with two children, and decided it was time to settle down.

“I got married and I had three people to please,” she says with a smile, remembering that she didn’t know how to cook. “I told the daughter [who was doing the

cooking] to keep doing what you’re doing, and I’ll learn!”

In the 17 years of marriage that followed, Best and her husband would have two children of their own. When she was widowed at age 53, she thought to herself, “If only I’m here until [my children] are grown.” She never imagined she’d live to see six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren—and reach her 100th birthday!

Now in her sixteenth year as a Luther Crest resident, Best—who lives in her own apartment—exhibits the same strength she has shown throughout her life. “I still manage, though I need help,” she says.

The centenarian stays active by visiting with friends, playing cards, watching sports, reading, and doing crossword puzzles. She also walks to the dining room every evening for dinner.

The lives she has touched in her 100 years were evident during a surprise party in June. Planned by residents of her Luther Crest building, the event was held in the lounge to accommodate the many friends and family members—and even a former student—who attended the celebration.

The many well wishes and notes of congratulations, she says, caused her to stop and think, “Throughout my life, I’ve gone into everything inexperienced. But, somehow, I made a success of it.’ My goodness—the Lord has been with me all my life.”



Edna Best

SERVICE-TO-DATE

Each year, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries touches the lives of thousands of persons throughout northeastern Pennsylvania. From Jan. 1 through June 30, the number of persons served regionally totaled more than 21,000.

**Berks County
Community Outreach Services**
3,928 persons

Caum Assisted Living, Reading
40 persons

Congregational Advocacy
56 persons

Family Life Services
4,524 persons

Diakon Adoption Services, Topton
296 families

Hospice Saint John
1,037 patients and families

**Luther Crest Retirement
Community, Allentown**
385 persons

Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill, Pottsville
118 persons

Lutherwood, Scranton
137 persons

**Pocono Lutheran Village
East Stroudsburg**
117 persons

Pregnancy Services
Nine birthmothers counseled

RSVP
964 volunteers

The Lutheran Home at Topton
675 persons

TresslerCare Foster Care, Topton
74 youths in north- and southeastern Pa.

**TresslerCare Wilderness
and other services, 40 youths**

Saint Luke Village, Hazleton
516 persons

**Schuylkill County
Community Outreach Services**
8,007 persons

Volunteer Home Care (all regions)
599 persons

Volunteering leads to new home

Deliberating a move to a retirement community conjures up many questions for people—Will I be happy? What will my life be like? Am I old enough?

While many choose to make their decision based on instinct or the recommendation of family and friends, two *Luther Crest Retirement Community* residents chose a different method to evaluate their new home.

Both Dorothy Fagan and Jean Lee volunteered their time and energy to the retirement community to obtain first-hand knowledge of life at Luther Crest.

“I volunteered so I could see what Luther Crest was like,” says Fagan, who moved to the Allentown



area last year after having lived in Florida for 22 years. “I questioned people all the time.”

A widow, Fagan spent last

summer volunteering in Luther Crest’s office and gift shop and delivering the mail. Just three months later, she moved in. “I tried six other places; I even had a deposit on one I liked in Florida,” says Fagan, who continues her volunteer efforts as a resident. “At no place else were the people happy. Here, everyone is happy. When you walk into a room, everybody says hello.”

She also harbored the fear she wasn’t old enough for a retirement community. “It’s not that way at all. It’s what you make of it,” she notes. “I am very busy. Even my daughter says she never dreamed she’d have to make an appointment to see her own mother!”

Another busy resident volunteer is Jean Lee, who spent seven years volunteering at Luther Crest before moving in nearly five years ago. “My husband and I always liked [Luther Crest], and we liked the area,” says Lee, a native New Yorker.

She was volunteering at a local hospital when she inquired about similar opportunities at Luther Crest. “I walked in the door and the front-desk person called the volunteer

coordinator right away,” she remembers. “Every Tuesday and Wednesday after that from 8:30 to 4:00, I did an assortment of jobs.”

In 1997 when Lee developed macular degeneration, she and her husband made the decision to move into Luther Crest. “Everyone was so nice here,” she says. “Working in personal care and the health center, I liked the care I saw everyone receiving.”

Although Lee’s husband died one and a half years later, she continued to volunteer even as her sight diminished. “I have peripheral vision, and I know my way around,” she says.

Today she spends two to three days a week handing out water and ice in the health center and taking people to activities.

“Since I had such a wonderful life, I’d be a nut if I couldn’t volunteer,” she says. “I just thank the Lord every day that I can do it.”



Regional retirement services vice presidents named



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 numerous assisted living and skilled care facilities.



NEEDS

Clients in the Hazleton, Lehighton, Palmerton, Panther Valley, Weatherly, and Tamaqua areas await volunteers who want to provide transportation to physician appointments, grocery shopping, or to visit friends or relatives. Also needed are people willing to be a listening ear for a homebound person or to run errands to grocery stores and pharmacies for a couple who no longer can drive a car.

Since 1991, volunteers with Diakon’s *Volunteer Home Care* in the northern tier of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod have given more than 80,000 hours of their time to supply such services. If you think you can help, please call Edith Thrash, program manager, at 1-888-660-2566.

Williams Valley VHC Smallest volunteer efforts can be the most meaningful

The first time Carolyn Underkoffler met the elderly woman, she realized the woman needed more than just someone to visit with her.

“She loves to read, but needs large-print books,” says Underkoffler, who quickly volunteered to help. “Once a month I pick up books for her at the library, and we sit and talk.”

Her visits with the woman, who lives alone, have continued for more than a year and the two have developed their own friendship and communication style, says Underkoffler. “I spend anywhere from one-half hour to 45 minutes with her,” she says.

This is just one example of how Underkoffler, team coordinator for *Diakon's Volunteer Home Care* in the Williams Valley area, and other volunteers help their neighbors.

“Many times our clients and volunteers

develop good solid relationships and friendships,” she says. “It is always nice to have a friendly face and voice there when you don't feel good.”

Underkoffler works with volunteers from more than a dozen congregations in the Williams Valley area. “I call them the ‘cream of the crop.’ They are the ‘best of the best,’” she says of the 36 volunteers, most of whom are involved in transporting clients. “I can't say enough about how generous they are with their time and their caring for these people.”

Always on the lookout for more volunteers to help with the outreach ministry, Underkoffler says everyone is welcome.

“I believe that God puts something in you to call you to be of service to other people,” she says. “Sometimes the tiniest things we do are the most meaningful.”



Pocono Lutheran Village hosts Flag Day ceremony

Two American flags recently made the journey from atop the Capitol in Washington, D.C., to the flagpole at *Pocono Lutheran Village*.

The flags had been flown above the Capitol on Veteran's Day last year. With the assistance of U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), they were dedicated at Pocono Lutheran on Flag Day this year.

Donations of time and money needed to sustain Volunteer Home Care program

“*Volunteer Home Care* is a near-perfect example of what shared ministry can and should be,” says the Rev. Scott Lingenfelter.

Former pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Ashland and now pastor of New Life Lutheran Church in New Tripoli, Lingenfelter refers to Diakon's Schuylkill and upper Dauphin counties program, which relies on volunteers from local communities and congregations to provide non-medical assistance to clients.

“We're rooted in the congregations in the community,” explains Lois Sterling, program manager for the Schuylkill-Dauphin VHC. “We have many volunteers from different denominations, but they all come together with one mission—to

provide support to a friend, a neighbor, in need.”

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 repairs, all provided at not cost to the individual.

The Schuylkill-Dauphin program has eight geographic teams serving its region. Volunteer Home Care also maintains program offices in Berks and Luzerne counties that serve those and surrounding areas.

“We are growing, but we are limited in funding,” adds Sterling. “We have paid program staff. We provide volunteer liability insurance, mileage reimbursement, and

educational and recruitment tools. Our contributions are so important in continuing this outreach ministry for both volunteers and clients.”

Volunteer Home Care provides an ideal opportunity for members to fulfill Jesus' command to love God and love your neighbor, says Lingenfelter. “These expressions are just everyday things that so many of us take for granted. There are folks out there who cannot get to a doctor's appointment or use a dust cloth or who just feel lonely,” he says. “Volunteer Home Care is the matching process. It recognizes needs of individuals in our community and matches those needs with the gifts of congregational members.”

Rendell visits Diakon site

Pennsylvania Gov. Edward G. Rendell recently held a town meeting with approximately 200 older persons and community leaders at the Pottsville Senior Center in Schuylkill County.

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries sponsors the center, and a number of agency staff participated in the event.

Rendell visited the city to discuss the Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly, or PACE, as well as proposed state plans to lower property taxes.

Those present asked a variety of questions on medical care and prescription drug

coverage, including possible coordination among state and federal governments should the U.S. implement its own prescription plan. Rendell said he believes federal money would augment state programs and most likely provide better benefits for seniors.

Following his presentation, the governor took time to meet members of the center as well as area residents.

The Diakon-administered senior center is funded under a contract with the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services and the Schuylkill County Board of Commissioners.



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.



Michelle Klusman and Kathy Leahy, Community Outreach Services-Schuylkill County program managers, ride the "Molly Trolley" during the 2003 Miles for Meals on Wheels event.

Miles for Meals on Wheels arrives in Ashland

Numerous landmarks will highlight this year's Schuylkill County *Miles for Meals on Wheel* historically focused walking tour, set for Sunday, Sept. 21, in Ashland.

The annual walk—now in its sixth year—helps to fund special holiday meals for those who receive meals-on-wheels services.

Walk participants will learn about Ashland, first known as Patterson's Folly, in the 1840s and how it developed into a prosperous community of 8,000 by the 1920s. The town served as a major stop for lodging and entertainment on the Centre Turnpike that stretched between Reading and Sunbury.

Walkers also will learn how the mining industry influenced the development of northern Schuylkill County. Participants will visit several landmarks including the Pioneer Tunnel—one of Pennsylvania's top tourist attractions—the Mother's Memorial, and the Albert L. Laubenstein home. The tour will begin at the Pioneer Tunnel.

The Schuylkill County Meals on Wheels program, administered by Diakon, provides hot, nutritious meals to individuals as they strive to live independently in their homes. Approximately 90 percent of those receiving meals are age 60 or over. Currently, more than 300 volunteers deliver hot meals to some 500 clients.

For information on the walk, readers may call (570) 621-7309 or 1-800-621-MEAL.

Evening of Thanksgiving

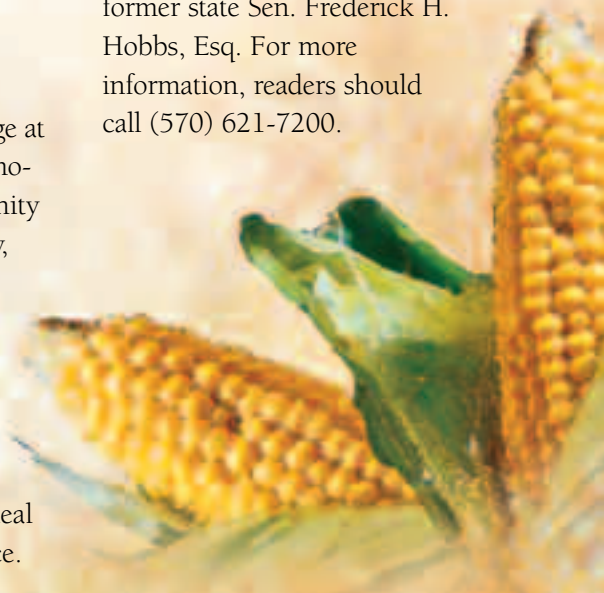
The second annual Evening of Thanksgiving, the dinner and silent auction in support of *Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill* and *Volunteer Home Care* in Schuylkill County, will take place on Thursday, Nov. 14, at the Pottsville Club. The event begins at 5:30 p.m.

This year's goal is to raise \$55,000 to support benevolent care at Luther Ridge and provide a "help connection" for Volunteer Home Care clients. Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill offers assisted living accommodations and serves as base for Community Outreach Services in Schuylkill County, including Volunteer Home Care.

Volunteer Home Care provides non-medical assistance to people in need of short-term or intermittent care in their home. Services may include errands, companionship, telephone reassurance, light household chores, meal preparation, or transportation assistance.

In 2003, Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill will offer more than \$200,000 in benevolent care to residents, while to continue the no-fee-for-service Volunteer Home Care program, an additional \$24,000 must be raised for its budget.

The evening's guest speaker will be former state Sen. Frederick H. Hobbs, Esq. For more information, readers should call (570) 621-7200.



Voting for a 'Bright' future

How does a former college professor, skilled bridge player, first-rate baker, devoted mother, and civic-minded woman fill her days now that she's 95?

If you ask Pearl Bright, a resident of Diakon's *Caum Assisted Living* in Reading, she'll tell you it's really not that hard. Just stay interested and involved in life as much as possible and don't worry about your age.

"I don't keep track of my age," Bright says emphatically. "What's more important are your interests, your abilities, and your education."

An advocate of lifelong learning, Bright finished her high school education early—at age 15—then went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Cedar Crest College. She put education on hold while her two daughters were growing up, but then completed her master's in education at Temple University.

In the 1950s and '60s, she taught home economics at Albright College and eventually chaired the department. One of her responsibilities was to supervise student teachers.

"I really liked working with the student teachers, and I like to think that I influenced them in good ways," she says.

"Pearl's skills in homemaking were fabled among her friends," says her friend, Pat Hummel. "She made special Christmas goodies and delectable pies, muffins, and other baked goods. and she really made a lot of us more conscious of food values and nutrition."

Bright admits to being a regular walker—"outside when it's nice and up and down the halls when it's not"—and has a special daily exercise routine. She reads the newspaper every day, goes to church regularly, and plays bridge twice a week. Crossword



Pearl Bright

puzzles are also a favorite pastime.

Among the many photos and mementoes in Bright's room is a framed letter from former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge in which she is named to the "Pennsylvania Voter Hall of Fame." The honor was bestowed on Bright in 2000 for having voted consecutively over the last 50 years in every November election.

"I never miss the chance to vote," she says. "It's important to be involved in what's going on around you."

Kite demonstrations to be part of Anniversary Day



When you think of a festival, food, fun and games naturally come to mind. And they are exactly what you'll find at the 107th Anniversary Day Harvest Festival at *The Lutheran Home at Topton*, set for Saturday, Sept. 21. Anniversary Day will feature activities, contests, and entertainment for the entire family. Activities begin at 8 a.m. and continue through 4 p.m.

This event this year will feature performances by the Anniversary Day Chorus—a singing group composed of residents and staff members of the Topton campus—the Allentown Band, and the Luther Haven Players, a theater group consisting of residents of the Topton campus's retirement-living community.

Other events include a bake-off contest featuring lemon recipes, scarecrow-decorating contest, craft sales and flea market,

Brandywine Library book sale, and lots of homemade

food, including a country breakfast.

Entertainment for children will include games and face painting as well as the annual Teddy Bear Parade whose theme is "Children Around the World Celebrating Cultures," sponsored by Diakon's TresslerCare Foster Care-Topton program. Additional activities will include the Marion Gehman puppets, a petting zoo, and kite building and flying demonstrations by the Lehigh Valley Kite Society.

Attendees will be able to visit retirement accommodations, as well as the historic Christmas Putz, on the Topton campus. The event also serves as a reunion for The Lutheran Home at Topton Alumni Association and families involved in the foster care and adoption programs.

During the reunion, alumni association member Donald Gum will unveil a scale replica he created of The Lutheran Orphans' Home.

Anniversary Day proceeds will benefit the dementia and memory support programs on the Topton campus.

Pocono Lutheran Village-Elementary school program

Lessons learned and friendships forged

At first some of the young students were “scared.” And, as a matter of fact, some of the older people were “uncertain” as well.

But it didn't take long for the third-graders from Arlington Elementary in the Stroudsburg Area School District and the residents of Diakon's *Pocono Lutheran Village* to warm up to each other—so much so that by the end of the special social studies project they undertook together this spring, they were calling one another “friend” and planning summer visits and letter writing.

The intergenerational interaction “evolved out of a social studies project in which we were looking for a way to help our community,” explains Dave Howell, the third-grade teacher who developed the project with Pocono Lutheran's activities director, Leslie Berger.

“We started with a list of ideas and the kids picked helping the elderly as what they wanted to do.”

Spanning several visits by the students

to the East Stroudsburg assisted living community and one visit by residents to third-grade classrooms, the project was designed to encourage communication and sharing between the two generations. It involved 52 students and about a dozen residents.

On their initial visit to Pocono Lutheran, the students were asked to bring along a shoebox filled with things important to them. They talked with staff members about aging and then were teamed with individual residents. Both age groups took time to get acquainted, an activity that involved sharing and story-telling. Residents took their new young friends to their rooms and shared personal mementoes with them.

“The kids learned about things like going to a one-room schoolhouse and having to leave school to work during the Depression,” Howell says. “They talked about how prices have changed, how a candy bar used to cost a penny. One resident told about growing up

in England. Another was a native of Germany. Another talked about being an RAF pilot. They were very open and shared so much with our students.”

Berger says on their visits to Pocono Lutheran, the children were always well behaved and polite. They were good listeners, she adds, and kept journals throughout the project to write about the experience and their feelings.

“I tried to help the kids understand assisted living by explaining that our residents were like them in some ways,” Berger says. The children “have their own room at home with their own things, but they live with their parents because they still need help with some things. Our residents are in the same situation,” in that they require some assistance with day-to-day tasks.

Howell says he also was very interested in making an academic connection between the two groups. When the residents came to the school, they read to the students and played a math game.

Beyond that, he feels the students also learned valuable life lessons.

“We had to deal with illness and even death, when one of the residents lost her son during the course of our project,” Howell says. “When a resident was hospitalized, they sent get-well cards. They came to really care about these people.”

Howell says there were some tears on the last visit, and promises to write and visit, which have been kept this summer. The students presented signed and laminated pictures of themselves with the residents as parting gifts.

“In their comments after the project ended, students said things such as ‘I've found a new friend’ and ‘I never knew the elderly could be so with it,’” Howell says. “It was a wonderful experience, and I would love to repeat it next year.”

Berger agrees. “It was just extraordinary, bringing them together in this way,” she says. “We need to keep doing things like this. Otherwise history will be lost if there isn't a connection between the generations.”



Friendships span years in Pocono Lutheran Village program.

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.”



Sen. Michael A. O'Pake (D-11) speaks with participants at Diakon's legislative breakfast, including (on right) Senior Vice President for Congregation, Children, and Family Services Linda Ciampi.

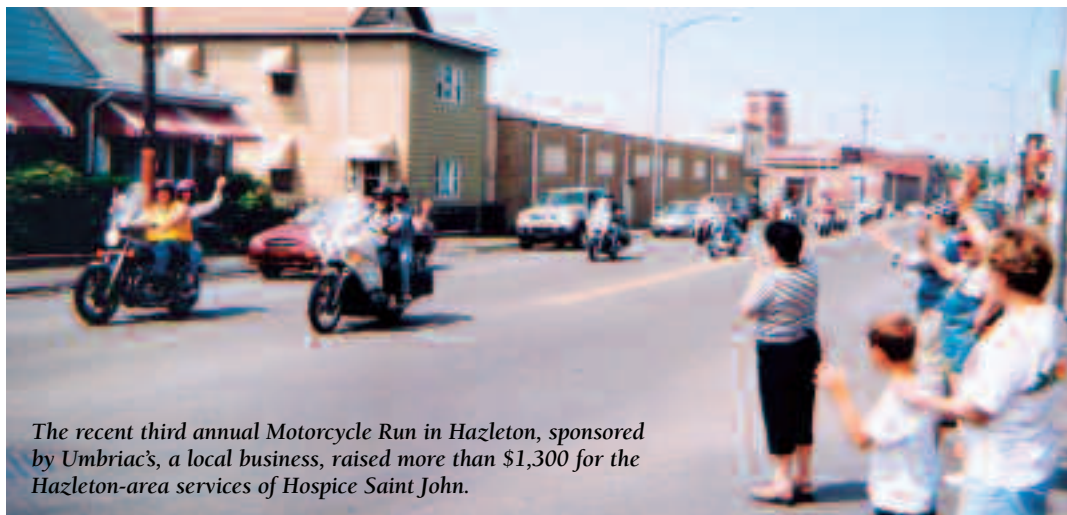
Numerous senators, representatives, and their aides attended the informal event, at which Diakon staff members described the agency’s historic mission, its vision for services, and the issues that confront health-care and social-service organizations today.

“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.



Rep. Todd A. Eachus (D-116), center, talks with the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president/CEO, and Garry Hennis, right, senior vice president for Retirement and Health Care Services.



The recent third annual Motorcycle Run in Hazleton, sponsored by Umbriac's, a local business, raised more than \$1,300 for the Hazleton-area services of Hospice Saint John.

COMING EVENT

The first annual *Celebrate Social Ministry* program in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod will be held Sunday, Oct. 19, from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, Fogelsville.

Sponsored by the Witness and Service Ministry Team and the three Lutheran social ministry organizations in the synod, the event will recognize and celebrate social ministry as it occurs within congregations and social ministry organizations. Similar celebrations have been held for several years in the Delaware-Maryland and Upper and Lower Susquehanna synods.

More information on the awards-nomination procedure and the event’s speaker was provided to rostered leaders in late August.

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