

DIAKON CONNECTION

WINTER 2003-2004

Penn Lutheran 'races' to 'dough-raising' finish

Behind every great race car driver is a supportive team. Shelly Heasley, a certified nursing assistant at *Penn Lutheran Village*, Selinsgrove, can attest to that.

As part of Diakon's Recipe for Doughraising employee campaign, Penn Lutheran Village used a NASCAR theme, presenting the "Great Bake 500." Heasley and two other Penn Lutheran Village employees—Sally Diehl and Diane Graybill—were charged with rallying team support from the facility's 165 employees.

"I was asked to sponsor the employee campaign by getting other people involved. I agreed to do it, because I knew I would have a lot of support from the employees here. We all work together," says Heasley.

The "doughraising" campaign was the theme for Diakon's annual employee campaign. Just like any donor, Diakon staff members can designate any program or facility to receive their contribution. Overall, the campaign raised more than \$100,000 in pledges and gifts for agency services to people in need, exceeding the campaign goal by nearly \$5,000.

According to John Allison, social services director and interim nursing home administrator, village employees exemplify teamwork. "The way employees worked together during the campaign is symbolic of the way they function in the nursing facility to provide care to residents," he says.

For the campaign, the employees were divided equally into three teams—Team Pillsbury, Team Sara Lee, and Team Betty Crocker.

"Each team held events to raise money for Diakon. We turned the dining area into a raceway and pit area. Within the pit area, a theme table was set up with three lanes, representative of each team. Every Friday, cars could be moved depending on what campaign-related activities were carried out the previous week," says Allison.

During the weeks of Aug. 1 through Sept. 12, says Sandra Deppen, admissions and marketing director, "The three teams of employees became creative in their efforts to raise money."

Some of those efforts included bake sales, preparing and serving an employee breakfast, and hosting book, candy, hot dog, and hoagies sales.

"There were many different ways the employees reached out to

Please turn to Page 7



Two "dough-raising" captains, left to right, Shelley Heasley and Diane Graybill, with John Allison.

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

HEADLINES

Buffalo Valley

'cuts the rug' 2

Book details

WWII nurse's experiences 3

Ohesson resident

toured with Bob Hope 4

Health ministry

helps the helper 5

Faith-based counseling

instills sense of hope 6

Weis, Christ church

gifts brighten village 7

Buffalo Valley ‘cuts the rug’

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.

2004 Board of Directors:

- Emried D. Cole, Jr., Esq., Chair
- Lynn Cromley
- Donna Folkemer
- Robert Hobaugh, Jr., Esq.
- Peter L. Kern
- Anita Langford
- The Rev. Wayne Muthler
- The Rev. John Pearson
- Mitchell G. Possinger
- J. Douglas Price
- Cecile Reid
- Susan T. Schellenberg
- Susan Ebbert Wambaugh
- Jesse Weigel, M.D.
- Dr. Norma S. Wood

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

William Swanger, APR
V.P., Corporate Communications
Editor
(717) 795-0307
swangerb@diakon.org

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

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries is committed to a diverse workforce. As a result, qualified applicants are considered without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or the presence of a non-job-related medical condition or handicap.



Teaching is something J. Ben Austin has done most of his life.

As a retired college engineering professor, he is now taking his love of the teaching profession and combining it with his exceptional dancing talents to offer dancing lessons to residents of **Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village**.

“Dancing puts enthusiasm back into life,” says Austin with a sparkle in his eye.

Enthusiasm is something the 78-year-old holds onto despite the fact that his wife and lifetime dancing partner, Sally D. Austin, is a resident of the village’s Nursing Care Center.

“Sally was the best thing that ever happened to me,” he says. “Twenty five years ago, she was Buffalo Valley’s activity director. I never expected she would be a resident here,” says her husband.

In previous years, Austin and his wife were active dancers. From polka to ballroom, clogging, waltzing and even square dancing—you name it—they danced it, often to entertain others.

“We were very supportive of each other’s activities. Since she worked with elders, we



Ben and Sally Austin, in 1999.

performed at various retirement homes. Our first show was here at Buffalo Valley,” he says.

Almost two decades later, Austin danced again at Buffalo Valley, but instead of dancing with his wife, he was dancing for her.

“Mr. Austin danced at his wife’s birthday party. It was the first time I saw the residents so attentive. They were clapping and tapping their feet. Music and dance is something they could all relate to,” says Emily Kerstetter, administrative assistant/volunteer coordinator.

Austin’s dance moves were so popular he was invited to participate in the village’s independent living community’s theme meal—the 50’s. “He danced the night away with residents and staff,” says Kerstetter. “He is very knowledgeable about dance and its history as well as ‘cutting the rug.’”

Cutting the rug is exactly what Austin did—as his performance moved the residents.

“Residents approached me saying, ‘You don’t know how much this night and Ben’s performance meant to me.’ They also asked Ben to give lessons. He agreed, and we are all really excited about the opportunity,” says Kerstetter, “I am even taking lessons to prepare for my daughter’s wedding.”

Lessons are held weekly in the Village Common and are open to all residents and



Ben Austin provides dancing instruction to Emily Kerstetter at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village.

Please turn to Page 7

Book recounts WWII nurse's experiences

Katharine Stitt Sausser has a story to tell—and Susan Wert Vogt, author and historian, captures it well in a new book.

As chief nurse of the 25th Hospital Train during World War II, Sausser—now a resident of Diakon's *Locust Grove Retirement Village* near Mifflin—has her experiences recounted in Vogt's book, *The World War II Years (of Pennsylvania's Heartlands) a Tribute to Those on the Battle Front and the Home Front*.

"The book is very interesting. I've read it and learned a lot. If I knew it, I forgot it," says Sausser, 85, modestly adding, "I am just a part of the book."

Although numerous others participated in research for the book—including approximately ten other Locust Grove residents—Vogt says Sausser plays a very important role.

"Kate's experiences show the war from both a humanitarian—or nurse's—and women's viewpoint. To date, most World War II accounts have been written by men. The World War II maps, photos, etc, also provided authentication for my book."

Growing up in the same area as Sausser and her family, Vogt decided to write the book for one primary reason.

"I wanted to compile an accurate portrayal of the common man or woman in our history during World War II. I wanted a well-rounded picture not only of the battles, but also what was going on at the home front—what people's emotion were. A lot of the history from Central Pennsylvanians falls through the cracks," says Vogt. "I wanted to preserve history."

When Sausser speaks of the World War II era, history comes alive.

"The American soldier didn't want to fight a war, but when they were there, you couldn't get any better. They were fighting for liberty. I was never asked if I thought a soldier would make it home, it was always 'will I get back to my unit?' They wanted to fight because this is a great county and they

knew it, and we, the nurses, knew it too."

Traveling on a train with two doctors, three other nurses, three medical technicians, and an administrative person, Sausser tended to wounded soldiers until they reached a hospital. Her most difficult experience during the war was her "first load of casualties."

"We were still in England on alert. At five in the morning, we got orders to go to South Hampton. We could hear non-stop bombing. The scariest part was not knowing what to expect. When I saw the wounded, my first thought was, 'can I do this?' That was the last time I thought about it. I did it from then on."

For 26 months, she endured the unthinkable as she dedicated herself to aiding soldiers. Living on a "cramped" train, with only cold water to shower in, she still kept a positive attitude.

"I always told the girls at least we were out of the rain and mud. There were other nurses who didn't have shelter," she says.

Even though she faced many hardships, she is proud she could serve the American soldier.

"I have never regretted a day of service. God pushed me in that direction," she says. "The love of my country, the soldiers, and the Lord got me by. I have a deep faith because of the upbringing my parents gave me."

When the war came to an end, she returned home to her family's 85-acre farm in Juniata County to live with the parents who taught her so much.

"It was just so good to be home and have some quiet," she says. "I wanted to stay home, so I resigned my commission and got back on the tractor and took care of my mother and father."

Sausser's dedication during the war is exemplary of her life, says Vogt. After her war service, Sausser served in one humanitarian effort after another—the visiting nurses, the American Red Cross, the United Way.

In June, a day before D-day, Sausser



Katharine Stitt Sausser

found herself surrounded by family, Vogt, and others for a book signing.

"I signed quite a few books," says Sausser. "I had others sign my book as well."

Vogt notes that it was fitting to host one of the first book signings at Locust Grove because she wanted to remember the Normandy invasion that Sausser speaks of in her book. She also wanted to pay tribute to Sausser and the other World War II veterans who live at Locust Grove.

"We owe them a world of gratitude," says Vogt. "I don't know if I could put it in words what their service means to me. Our society is based on what they did, and they gave up the best years of their life to fight for freedom."

Sausser admits the war put lives on hold for many, but she says all of those sacrifices were worthwhile: "This is the greatest county in the world."

World War II Years is the third volume in the *Pennsylvania Heartlands 1860-1960s* series.

Ohesson magician toured with Hope

Leading a magical life is something Georgiana Smiley, 94, knows all about.

As the wife and stage assistant of the late Josef W. Smiley, a well-known magician and illusionist, Georgiana entertained audiences all over the world for over 65 years.

Assisting with Houdini-caliber magic tricks, disappearing acts, and illusions such as being “sawed in half,” Georgiana still smiles when she reminisces about her show business days.

“You know why my husband sawed me in half?” she laughs. “He didn’t like me whole.”

As a resident of *Ohesson Manor*, Lewistown, Mrs. Smiley still captures the attention of an audience when she speaks of days gone by.

“She always entertains us,” says Wendy Knouse, admissions director.

“My parents, they always wanted to be entertainers. They ran away to get married, and you know what their marriage certificate said?” asks Josef E. Smiley, the couple’s only child. “It named my mother as a dancer and my father as an actor. My

father actually was an actor on Broadway for a short time, but he gave it up because my mother didn’t want to go to New York City to live.”

Instead of hitting it big on Broadway, the Smileys hit it big in the world of magic, but not before they got through humble beginnings in Lewistown, where they both grew up.

As Georgiana fingers her pearl necklace, she says she doesn’t quite remember where or when she first met her husband. “I don’t know when I didn’t know him. We did shows wherever we could when we were kids. We would lock people inside until we were done performing. Now that is one way to get an audience,” she laughs.

Over the years, they grew from performing to “captured” audiences to captive audiences.

“Their acts were really good,” says Georgiana’s son. “So good in fact, their agent found them.”

Before long, they were performing with shows that included Bob Hope, Mae West, and George Jessel. Georgiana says she had a “nice time” touring with great entertainers.

One of her more memorable tours came through efforts with the United Service Organizations—or USO—during World War II.

“At the height of the war, we went to every Army camp and toured with Bob Hope,” says Georgiana. “That Bob, he was a peach, and that Mae West, she was in a troop of her own. What I remember the most about the tour was the food. There was a smorgasbord of food wherever Bob went.”

Her son says that in addition to entertaining with famous people, his parents also entertained for famous people—including President Eisenhower.

“They performed at the Press Club in Washington, D.C., for President Eisenhower,” says Josef. “I was still small then, so I can’t remember much of it.”

Although Georgiana has performed with and for famous people, there is one performance she will never forget. The audience that time included a boy with only one arm.

“Since I was born with only one arm, I showed him how I could perform in front of

large audiences without reservation. This was a turning point in his life, and it sure made me feel good to help him.”

Josef said that sometimes his mother would perform using a prosthetic arm, which she didn’t enjoy wearing.

“As soon as I would get off stage, I put it right back in the box,” says Georgiana. “Occasionally,” Josef adds, “we’d leave it behind. Do you know how difficult it was trying to explain to someone that you needed to have your mother’s arm sent to you,” he chuckles.

Humor is something that comes naturally to the aptly named Smileys. Perhaps it is because they gave audiences a chance to smile for more than half a century. Yet, even though Mrs. Smiley stopped touring after the death of her husband in 1995, smiles still adorn all who listen to her show-biz stories.

“She makes us all laugh,” says Knouse. “Ohesson wouldn’t be the same without her.”

SERVICE-TO-DATE

Each year, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries touches the lives of thousands of persons throughout central and north-central Pennsylvania. From Jan. 1 through Sept. 30, the number served regionally totaled more than 5,500 persons.

Adoption Services, York
211 families*

Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village
357 persons

Congregational Health Ministries – Upper Susquehanna
704 persons

Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna
3,569 persons

Locust Grove Retirement Village
194 persons

Ohesson Manor
228 persons

Penn Lutheran Village
373 persons

TresslerCare continuum of services for adjudicated youths, 18 youths

*all of central Pa.



Joseph E. Smiley, with his mother, Mrs. Georgiana Smiley, at Ohesson Manor.

Congregational Health Ministries Helping the helper

Following knee surgery, Shirley Heasley needed physical therapy, but faced an additional challenge—she couldn't drive.

Wife of the late Rev. Glen Heasley, former assistant to Upper Susquehanna Synod Bishop A. Donald Main, she says her children were either too far away

to assist or unable to help transport her to and from appointments because of work schedules.

Although the situation would have proven stressful for some, Heasley turned to her congregation—First Lutheran of Mifflinburg—for help.

As a volunteer parish nurse, she knew firsthand that the church's congregational health program could help her with her quandary.

"Following my total knee replacement, I actually became a patient of the very program I work with—congregational health. As part of the program, I talked to the pastor. They helped me find rides after my surgery—even one of the pastors took me for my therapy," she says.

Providing peace of mind, the program alleviated transportation worries, freeing her to concentrate on recovery. "I could go and relax because I knew someone was going to pick me up and take me home. I didn't have to worry about it. They had it all arranged."

This is just one way congregational health ministries are working at First Lutheran.

"Developing health ministries is just an additional way for us to connect with our congregation and show that we love and care for each other. Caring is not only a spiritual thing, but it can be practical things too, such as taking care of our bodies," says the Rev. Dennis Beaver, First Lutheran's pastor.

Since the congregational health ministries program began last year, Heasley and several other parish nurses and volunteers have initiated health-related activities such as monthly blood pressure screenings. Additionally, they distribute health handouts, post bulletin reminders, and serve as information/

referral sources. Last year they even hosted a flu clinic.

"We also do other things. For example, the church's first aid kit was from 'Noah's Ark.' It hadn't been updated for years. We completely revamped it. We are working right now to have all of our staff trained in CPR and then open up training to the congregation," says Heasley.

All the health-related activities began through Heasley's desire to serve others.

"I never wanted to be anything other than a nurse. When I retired from my position as an occupational nurse, I wanted to help with parish nursing," says Heasley.

I just enjoy people and doing things for them even if it is just a band aid or my presence."

To begin the program, Debbie Best, coordinator of Diakon's *Congregational Health Ministries* within the Upper Susquehanna Synod, met with Heasley, the pastors, and others.

"Debbie lit the spark. My desire was there, but she helped move it along," says Heasley.

As the program moves forward, Beaver believes it will go as far as the volunteers take it and that if it is up to Heasley, it will go far.

"The program is one more avenue to encourage people to use the gifts God gave them," the pastor says. "The talent of nursing is a great talent. In a deeper sense, from a pastor's perspective, it is our job is to equip the Saints and teach them spiritually how God will use them. When you see them stepping out and doing that, it is truly seeing the harvest."

Providing peace of mind, the program, she says, alleviated transportation worries, freeing her to concentrate on recovery.

Penn Lutheran

Continued from Page 3

help. Almost everyone gave something. Whether they purchased an item at a bake sale or helped with one of the events, I would say we had 98 percent participation from our employees. We even had employees who came in on their days off to help with the events," says Allison.

"It was a real morale booster for everyone to see," adds Deppen. "There was real camaraderie."

That spirit even transcended team boundaries.

"By the end of the event, we had teams helping each other out. From that standpoint, the fruits of teams spirit are evident by what they accomplished."

The employees raised approximately \$4,250.00 for various services of Diakon Lutheran Services. On their way to the checkered flag, the employees at Penn Lutheran Village even won a "most creative" award from Diakon.

Overall, the campaign seemed to be win-win situation for all involved.

"I wanted to participate, because I knew it was a good cause. We have all talked about Diakon's different ministries, and we know how important they are in serving others," says Heasley. "The campaign gave us a way to help, and it made us feel good to serve others."

Dancing

Continued from Page 4

staff. "If you have something worth conveying, it gives you a sense of satisfaction when students learn it," says Austin.

First learning to dance himself in junior high school as part of gym class, he says over the years he used dance as a social tool. "Dancing is a social thing. I was very shy, and dancing helped with that to some extent."

The now-outgoing man is still dancing away and sharing his talents to help make life special for others. With a smile on his face, he says he wouldn't have it any other way.

"They touch my heart. That's what keeps me in it."

WISH LIST

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

Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, Lewisburg Nursing Care Center

Two televisions for lounges
 VCR/DVD players for lounges
 VCR/DVD player for Fisher Lounge
 Tape recorders for residents' use
 Portable stereo/radio for residents' use
 Resident-level carts for VCR/DVD players & televisions
 Display case for residents' crafts
 Portable telephones for resident use

Assisted Living

Two televisions for respite care rooms
 VCR/DVD player for lounge
 Portable telephones for resident use

Retirement Living Accommodations

Furniture for the Commons' lobby area
 Sturdy pots & pans for resident use in the Commons

Guest Cottage

Lamps (two floor lamps & two table lamps)
 Kitchen table & four chairs
 Sofa & loveseat
 Overstuffed chair
 Speaker/sound system for the Commons

Congregational Health Ministries

Portable multimedia projector
 Four-drawer file cabinet with high-drawer sides
 Transparency film for inkjet printers

Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna

Video projector

Penn Lutheran Village, Selinsgrove

TV/VCR combination
 Aromatherapy machines
 Cassette tape players
 Disposable cameras
 Projector for power point
 Electric razors
 Subscriptions to large-print Reader's Digest
 Sturdy lawn & patio furniture
 Electric keyboard
 Wall hangings & wall shelf units

Family Life Services Faith-based focus adds hope

When you think you are in a hopeless situation, think again.

Sarah Smith, Diakon's new clinical director for *Family Life Services – Upper Susquehanna*, has counseled people from all walks of life in varying situations using a faith-based approach, and she says hope is something that can't be lost.

"If we don't have hope when we approach a dire situation, it can look pretty grim. Hope helps us to find solutions to life's problems," she says.

Beginning as Family Life Services' clinical director in July, Smith brings a wealth of knowledge to the agency, says Mark Basinger, director.

"Because Sarah counseled in an urban setting before coming to us, she has encountered a significant range of issues facing her clients. We could say she came to us from the trenches," says Basinger.

To Smith, "being in the trenches" has provided tremendous growth opportunities. "My past experience has helped me to develop skills that help lift my clients out of the trenches," she says.

One success story is near to her heart.

"I counseled a man who had numerous life difficulties. Not only was he suffering from severe depression, problematic family relationships, and an alcohol addiction, but he was also facing a range of medical issues. He began as a court-ordered client, but he counseled with me for four years.

"When I first met him, you could barely hear him talk. He had low self-esteem and had his confidence shattered. By the end of our sessions, I saw before me a confident man who had repaired family relationships and who was making good decisions. He was sober, clean, and enjoying life. He had the support of friends and family and more importantly, he had formed a relationship with Jesus Christ. He took a faith-based approach to recovery."

Pam Hill, office manager, believes that Smith's talent has been a blessing to Family Life Services.

"Sarah is a real go-getter. She has a mission and goes to get it, but she puts her clients' needs above all else," says Hill. In addition to counseling clients, Smith is responsible for administrative responsibilities and maintaining the equilibrium of policy and clinical services.

"Administrative and clinical responsibilities provide a good balance. Paperwork and scheduling are just as important, so we can offer a quality outpatient program," she says. No matter what the job responsibility, Smith says, she feels blessed to be part of Diakon.

"My personal ministry is supported by Diakon's faith-based mission of serving others. I value its mission statement. Through my position, I look forward to the opportunity to help my clients have a more fulfilling life."



Sarah Smith

‘Forever Mom’ focuses on making children feel special

Lisa Gibson took her time in pondering adoption. “I had gone to college, worked several years, bought my first home. I wanted to pursue having children,” she says, “but I would be a single parent. Would that be enough?”

For two years she asked herself that question. Then, she discovered *Diakon Adoption Services*.

“I learned a lot through the adoption classes—parents who have adopted and their hurdles, interracial adoption, and more,” she says. “I didn’t know until then that [Diakon Adoption Services] deals mainly with children with special needs. The classes give you a background of where these kids are coming from, where they’ve been, and that there is such a need for adoptive placements of older children.”

By the time Diakon completed its home



Lisa Gibson with adopted sons Alberto and Manuel.

study for Gibson, she still wondered what type of child would be the best match for her.

“I really hadn’t made a decision at that point—infant or toddler, up to age five or six, not real specific,” she says. “I knew I would take almost any disability, as long as I wouldn’t have to be home to deal with full-time medical issues.”

Almost immediately, she began receiving information from agencies with custody of children available for adoption. “My case went relatively quickly compared to other people in my class,” she says. “I found a match in three to four months.”

The first time Gibson met with Alberto,

Please turn to Page 10

Weis, Christ Lutheran gifts brighten village

Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village has been made more beautiful, thanks to generous donations of fresh-cut flowers and potted plants by Weis Markets—and a stand-up garden by Christ Lutheran Church, Lewisburg.

The donated plants and garden center also have spurred lots of activity among village residents, who have begun their own garden club.

For the last year, Weis has made weekly deliveries of a variety of flowers and plants

including kalanchoes, ivy, begonias, impatiens, and more. “The fresh flowers truly brighten the day for our residents,” says Liz DeSantis, activities director.

“It makes Buffalo Valley feel more like home.”

The village has used many of the plants and flowers in landscaping the courtyard, as well as to begin the new garden club. “The club allows residents to nurture the plants, their peers, and themselves,” says DeSantis. “Taking care of the plants is a positive, active part of their stay here.” The stand-up garden system donated by Christ church through its Daisy Appeal allows residents to tend to plants year-round.

Residents also have assisted with planting flowerbeds and transplanting ivy for hanging baskets for resident rooms. They also arrange the fresh-cut flowers as bouquets for others when they are not feeling well.



Pictured, left to right, are Emma Gearhart, Marian Jarrett, both of Christ Lutheran Church; John Hendrickson, Buffalo Valley executive director; France Bowersox, village resident; Joe Keller of Christ Lutheran Church; Blanche Geiswite, village resident; and Bob King, floral manager with Weis Markets, Lewisburg.

'Forever Mom' Continued from Page 9

then eight years old, she didn't know what to think. "I wasn't sure how I felt about his age. But when I met with the caseworker and foster parents, I learned that it [could be] a benefit having an older child," she says. "They already have their personality and their behaviors formed."

Although Gibson quickly warmed to the idea, Alberto, one of six siblings in foster care, wasn't sure he wanted to be adopted. "It was tough. He didn't want to leave his brothers and sisters. He didn't know what adoption was," Gibson says. "We had to talk those issues out."

By the spring of the following year, Alberto had come to live with Gibson and her mother. "He had some adjustments coming from a foster family and some of his siblings to a home with me, my mom, and himself. He also had some challenges at school," says Gibson, explaining that the boy was diagnosed with ADD and Tourette's syndrome. "When you have a child thrown into a strange area, you do need time to adapt."

The new family was able to meet its challenges head on and, two years later,

agreed it was time to grow again.

"Alberto came from a large family. I also really wanted another child. But I didn't want to do it if it would be detrimental to Alberto," says Gibson. "Once I didn't see any harm [in the adoption], I kept Alberto in on the process, so he would always be special."

In fact it was Alberto who helped eight-year-old Manuel—or Juni—with the transition into his new family. "Juni was very attached to his foster family and he was very homesick for a couple of months, but Alberto was very supportive. Of course, after that 'honeymoon' was over," she chuckles, "we got right into the typical sibling rivalry!"

While Gibson has had her share of parenting challenges, even enduring a medical crisis with Juni, she credits a supportive circle of family and friends for her success.

"It would have been much harder had I not had the support of my family and friends," she says. "Everyone has treated them like my own [children] from the beginning."

That support has also come in handy when Gibson wants to spend individual time with her sons, now 11 and 13. "They

each have a 'Date Day' with Mom every month, when they get to pick a couple of things we can do together," she explains. "The other child stays with Nana or goes to a friend's house, so I can give them the individual time they want."

Gibson's focus on making her children feel special is something she has fostered since the beginning. "I always tell them that they have three moms—Birth Mom, Foster Mom, and Forever Mom," she says.

"They have a Birth Mom who loved them very much, but could not provide the care they need. They both had Foster Moms who cared for them. And, now, they have a Forever Mom, who loves them very much."



Alberto and Manuel Gibson with "Flash."

The Rev. Theodore Lindquist, right, of Selinsgrove speaks with the Rev. William Krenz during a recent luncheon honoring Tressler Lutheran Services-related donors and former Tressler board members. Tressler is now part of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries.



The following regional memorial gifts were received from July through September 2003. Diakon programs in the Upper Susquehanna Synod thank these donors for their generous gifts!

IN MEMORY OF

Ms. Gladys Blue

Gladys Donahey

Marie C. Jones

Elizabeth Marks

Ms. Mildred Nicholson

Janice Shover

Ruth Steeley

DONATED BY

Ms. Marie Maxwell

Mrs. Barbara A. Dunmire

Mr. & Mrs. Glenn L. Oppel

Class of 1941 – Lewistown High School

Mrs. Dorothy Printz

Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Local 3002

Mr. Harry P. Roberts

IN HONOR OF

Mr. Adam J. Swift, III

DONATED BY

Mr. & Mrs. Charles E. Sherry