

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA DIAKON CONNECTION

WINTER 2003 -2004

HSJ staffer began program

Cruise a 'breath of fresh air'

When Donald Christian became oxygen-dependent some ten years ago, he thought the constraints of his oxygen equipment would stop him from taking long-distance vacations.

Fortunately, he was wrong.

In September, Christian found himself submerged in the warm Caribbean Sea while tropical fish nibbled at his legs—as part of the Ninth Annual Better Breathers/Smooth Sailing Cruise excursion.

"The experience was incredible. After I developed lung disease and a dependency on oxygen, I thought I would never be able to do anything like this. I had seen the Caribbean on TV when I was younger, but I never made it there. I was always busy with family and such. To actually be able to experience it for myself was such a wonderful thing."

Christian's extraordinary experience was largely due to the efforts of Vicki

Lewandowski, American Lung Association volunteer and director of Diakon's *Hospice Saint John* office in Allentown.

"It frustrates me to see that oxygen patients are not often able to get out and about. Basically, it is difficult for them to leave the house and when they do, they only go as far as the liquid container can hold" sufficient oxygen, she says.

Ten years ago while recuperating from hand surgery, she began organizing a cruise vacation for respiratory patients. By reaching out to the American Lung Association, medical volunteers, and a travel agency, she pulled off the first cruise without a hitch. It was so successful it has become an annual event.

Since the first cruise, Lewandowski says, the event has "come a long way."

"The American Respiratory Alliance of Western Pennsylvania joined our effort for the third cruise and they have been with us ever since." In addition, she says, "the first

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COPD patient Donald Christian, center, of Easton, Pa., takes a dip in the ocean, assisted by Nancy Collins, a registered nurse at Palmerton Hospital, during the 9th annual Oxygen Cruise to the Caribbean.



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 Tipton

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, Tipton

Volunteer Home Care

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 **DIAKON**
LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES
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Oxygen cruise

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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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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.



couple of years we averaged 30 participants. This year, we had 99."

Ed and Jane Rickley, an oxygen-dependent couple from Kunkletown, are frequent Better Breathers/Smooth Sailing Cruise participants.

"This was our sixth cruise," says Mrs. Rickley. "My husband Ed and I, we look forward to it all year. It is the highlight of our year. We are both oxygen-dependent and can't travel anywhere else because of the fact we need two oxygen tanks. When we are on the cruise, the volunteers wheel us around so we get to see things we wouldn't normally see. Vicki and the other volunteers are so wonderful. The cruise brings us so much joy."

This year's cruise brought additional elation for some participants. Like Christian, some participants chose to use special adaptive oxygen set-ups and take a swim—something normally not possible.

"I never thought I was going to swim in the ocean ever again," says Christian. "I used the equipment, and I felt very safe."

Opportunities such as swimming and traveling "could not have been possible without everyone's help," says Lewandowski.

Air Products Healthcare, Conshohocken, is one of those "helpers."

"Air Products has been a real blessing," says Lewandowski. "This year they supplied all equipment"—including nebulizers, concentrators, wheelchairs and adaptive equipment—"and delivered it to the ship, which was a tremendous help."

Bob Cucuel, president and chief executive officer of Air Products Healthcare, says that "providing services for our patients who travel and supporting activities like the Oxygen Cruise are a reflection of our ongoing commitment to improving the quality of life for people with respiratory illnesses particularly chronic obstructive pulmonary disease."

As part of this year's cruise, Lewandowski assembled a volunteer medical staff to travel on the Norwegian Dawn during the seven-day journey to Nassau.

Two physicians, one nurse practitioner, six registered nurses, and five respiratory care providers assisted the participants and manned a 24-hour medical room.

"The participants are really well cared for—even better than home," says Lewandowski. "They can even use the cruise to start on a new medication prescribed by their primary physician, and they can be checked every day."

Daily informational sessions help participants to learn more about their disease, nutrition, exercise, equipment use, and preventive measures to lessen the disease process.

From seminars to swimming, every aspect of the cruise is meticulously organized.

"Vicki had everything planned out so well. I just can't say enough for Vicki and the rest of the helpers," says Mrs. Rickley. "The volunteer staff couldn't do enough for us. We just praise the Lord for all of them."

Lewandowski says that she is just happy she can put her talent to use.

"I have been blessed with nursing, respiratory care, and medical equipment knowledge. As we believe at Hospice, quality of life needs to supercede quantity of life. The cruise helps respiratory patients experience life, not just watch it pass by."

Vicki Lewandowski of Hospice Saint John assists an Oxygen Cruise participant onto the deck of the Norwegian Dawn for a long-awaited breath of sea air.



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Miniature 'Old Main' unveiled at A-Day

A lot of people “come home” during Anniversary Day at *The Lutheran Home at Topton*.

But for Donald Gum, coming home had special meaning this year.

Gum traveled from Gulfport,

Mississippi, to donate what he called his “labor of love” to The Lutheran Home at Topton. Over the last two years, Gum painstakingly duplicated the campus’ brick Old Main building in exact detail, complete with wrap-around porch, stained-glass

windows, and bell tower.

“For the most part it’s from memory, but I’ve used old photographs to make sure of the details,” he said during the presentation at the home’s 107th Anniversary Day celebration, held the last Saturday of September.

Donald Gum, center, of Mississippi talks about his replica of Old Main on The Lutheran Home at Topton campus with the Rev. Daun D. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president/CEO. Behind him are others who were served by the former children’s home.



Gum lived at what was then the Lutheran Orphans Home from March 1931 to May 1946. About 20 orphans home alumni were on hand to see the model and attend the presentation. Virginia Ebersole, who lived at the home as a child and is now a resident of the retirement community the campus has become, was amazed. “It’s exactly as I remember it—right down to the rocking chairs.”

“I couldn’t have imagined a more appropriate day,” said Gum in reference to Anniversary Day. “When I think back, the whole thing is a fond memory. There isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t think about it,” he adds.

The annual celebration also featured traditional events that people have grown to love, such as the adoption and foster family reunion, teddy bear parade, and Anniversary Day chorus, plus new activities including kite demonstrations, pumpkin painting, and a bake-off.

Topton tradition allows residents to share

The idea of shopping during the holidays makes some people shudder, who cringe at the thought of the season’s too-hectic pace.

But for residents of *The Lutheran Home at Topton’s* Henry Health Care Center and Buehrle Center for Assisted Living and *Caum Assisted Living* in Reading, Christmas shopping is met with cheer and anticipation.

“Christmas Sharing” is a Topton tradition 30 years’ strong. The project provides residents with the opportunity to shop free of charge so that they may share gifts with their family during the holidays. Residents may choose from a variety of gifts donated by area congregations, busi-

nesses, and individuals.

A volunteer committee works with Carol Miller, director of volunteer services, to coordinate the project. “This is a week-long event so we rely on volunteers to help with everything from donating items and organizing the shopping area to escorting residents and wrapping gifts,” Miller says. “The committee consists of residents from our independent living residences and they are invaluable in putting the event together.”

Members of the committee include Luretta Aukamp, Connie David, and Carole Fiori from Luther Haven and Mae Gerhart, Esther Jost, Dorothy Raubenhold, and Lydia Yeich of Tower Court.

In addition to the residents’ selection of gifts, the volunteers provide a gift for each resident, presented by “Santa Claus” during visits the week of Christmas. Last year, 36 congregations and 40 individuals donated gifts, with some 380 assisted living and nursing care residents doing their Christmas shopping during the week. In all, volunteers wrapped more than 800 gifts.

“Christmas Sharing means so much to the residents,” says Miller. “It takes the worry out of how they are going to shop for their family. It’s a truly wonderful event.”



Retirement-living activities abound at Luther Crest

Since Mary Louise Drosdak took on the role of independent-living activity coordinator for **Luther Crest Retirement Community** in Allentown more than six months ago, her efforts have focused on increasing program activity.

"We wanted to have someone dedicated to the activity needs of our independent residents," says Drosdak, who previously served Luther Crest as activities assistant. "I'm here to get ideas from residents. They enjoy having me here to listen to any questions and to follow up on their ideas."

The collaboration has led to an action-packed schedule that flows from Drosdak's ideas, as well as those of the resident activity committee.

"I try to have an in-house entertainment program every month, whether it is a choral group vocalist, magician, or whatever," says Drosdak, adding that she also is planning trips to educational, historic and arts-related venues, such as Philadelphia's Kimmel Center and the National Constitution Center.

"Along with our annual craft show, we

recently held our first classic and antique car show. And we're bringing back a Tai Chi instructor once a week for a class that is open to the public."

Other new programs include a monthly dance, movie matinee, aqua-aerobics at the Rhodale Aquatic Center at Cedar Crest College, and a Legislative Series, which featured visits from state and local representatives, as well as a trip to the state Capitol.



Mary Louise Drosdak

Senior Steppers move to the music

Every Wednesday and Friday over the last five years, the Luther Crest Senior Steppers have gathered in Crest Hall to swing and sidestep their way to good health.

Begun by Elizabeth Stemrich, activities

director, the line-dancing program regularly attracts about a dozen dancers.

"It's great exercise, and I love to dance," says Kitty Heydt, a regular participant. "It

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Luther Crest Retirement Community's Senior Steppers.



Warren Eck

Resident tackles television challenge

Warren Eck was into computers long before the rest of the nation was.

The **Luther Crest Retirement Community** resident spent 35 years working for IBM, servicing large computers. "I was in computers before most of the public knew what they were," he says. "In those days, computers were hardware. Today, they are mainly software. It was a real learning experience," making the transition.

That experience helped Eck take responsibility for Luther Crest's in-house television station, Channel 34, when its originator was no longer up to the task. Mastering the software needed to operate the station came easily to Eck.

"When I was doing this alone, it was every day," he says, adding that initially he was responsible for posting daily updates to menus and events. "Then three people were good enough to volunteer"—residents Carl Veit, Jean White, and Ella Ricci.

"I taught them everything I know, and we have a very good crew now," says Eck. "They each do updates two days a week. I do one day and take care of the upkeep when there is any."

The talented crew also provides voice updates for residents with sight problems, programs music from noon to 1 p.m., shows exercise videos that residents can do

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Luther Ridge staffer: dedication+

Flossie Shuey's husband often jokes with her that she is married to her job, but his statement may not be too far from the truth.

As a residential aide at **Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill** for the last 13 years, Shuey has shown love, dedication, and passion for her position—commitment you can see by taking one look at Shuey.

"I love my job," she says with a smile. "As long as my health is good, I am not going to leave."

That is good news to Luther Ridge residents, who see her as a staff member that "consistently goes out of her way to help others."

Mary Palsgrove, 88, is one of those residents.

"We just love Flossie. For me, she means so much. When I first came here two years ago, Flossie made a difficult situation less difficult," says Palsgrove, speaking about her recovery from a leg wound. "She gave my leg gracious attention."

Flossie Shuey talks with Mary Palsgrove.

Jeraldine Kohut, director of residential services, recounts numerous stories of Shuey's tender loving care.

"She goes out of her way to help residents and their families. She picks up things that residents may need on her way home from work. We also had a resident pass away, and the resident's daughter needed to move her mother's belongings out of the room. She asked if Flossie would be there because she knew Flossie could help get her through the move."

Shuey attributes her compassion to a life-altering event.

"I think I am the way that I am because my mother passed away at 51," Shuey explains. "When you lose a mother your heart is broken. I lean towards the residents as my motherly image. I treat them as I would treat my mother and father. I give my residents the best I can give them because they deserve respect."

"Flossie respects us all," agrees Pals-



Flossie Shuey arrives for work in a variety of ways, including motorcycle and National Guard!

grove, "and she gets along with everybody. She is also very dependable." Kohut adds that Shuey is "always willing to rearrange her schedule to accommodate us. She is very dedicated."

The blizzard of several years ago underscores that dedication.

"I don't drive," says Shuey. "I rely on my family or even one of my good neighbors to help me out." But during the snowstorm, which halted transportation, she contacted Pottsville City Hall to explain that she needed to get to work.

"I just called and told them I have an important job—my residents need me. So they sent the National Guard out to pick me up. When I arrived here, the executive director at the time asked me how I got here, and I told him the National Guard," she says.

Her unique transportation that day is not her only "unusual" ride home.

"Every now and then, my husband picks me up on his motorcycle," she says. "It surprises everyone, but I think they may be more surprised by the fact that I am 65 and still going strong."

She hopes to continue to serve the residents of Luther Ridge for years to come. "I look forward to coming in to work. I do my job, and my job is truly my reward."



Residents get a taste of chef's role

Pocono Lutheran Village residents recently rolled up their sleeves and played chef, stirring, slicing, stuffing, and then eating a variety of Italian favorites. The group was the first of the "Resident Chefs," a new program that allows residents to help create, prepare, and then enjoy a meal, from start to finish.

"They cut ingredients for the antipasto, made the fillings for three kinds of manicotti, prepared meatballs, and stuffed cannoli for dessert," explains Keith Miller, Pocono Lutheran Village's on-site certified dietary director. Miller is part of the CURA Hospitality team that manages dining services for Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries' retirement communities. "I think they had as much fun preparing the food as eating it."

The program began as a way to offer residents a chance to be more involved in

their meal preparations. A lot of residents have cooked for years or are used to their spouse's cooking, notes Miller, and they miss that part of their lives.

"We hear comments like 'This doesn't taste the way my wife made it' or 'I have a better recipe for this,' and we take those remarks to heart," Miller says.

Resident Chefs is limited to about a dozen residents, who sign up in advance.



The group's number must be limited each time because of the size of the area used for food preparation.

"We provide all the raw ingredients and do some of the initial preparation in the kitchen," says Miller. "The residents spend about an hour and a half on prep and then we take care of the cooking. They go relax and come back for the meal."

Some residents have brought Miller recipes and asked that they be considered for the program. November's menu was an old-fashioned Thanksgiving meal, while December is devoted to baked goods.

"The response so far has been very good," Miller says. "We've even had a resident's family member join us. I think it's also a social thing, a nice opportunity to enjoy each other's company over food they helped to make."

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!

Caum Assisted Living

Computer for residents
Outdoor benches
TV for public area
Stand-up garden for outdoor use
Cushions for outdoor furniture

Diakon Adoption Services

Proxima projector
Digital camera & camcorder
Overhead projector & screen
Recruitment posters & free advertising
Photo albums & scrap books
Disposable cameras with flash
Birthday cards for children
Bookstore gift cards
Video-store gift cards
Office desk & chair

Family Life Services – Northeastern Pennsylvania

Color printer
Video to orient counselors to Family Life Services
Proxima projector & screen
Laptop computer

Hospice Saint John

Cotton sheet sets (*twin size*)
Cloth underpads
Liquid dietary supplement
Hospital gowns (*male/female*)
Weekly pill cases
Sheepskins
Toiletries (*talcum powder*)
Baby wipes
Baby monitors
Blankets
Children's bereavement books
Liquid soap dispensers

Luther Crest Retirement Community

Window treatments for main dining room
Wall hangings/paintings for assisted living
Fitness equipment
High-low electric beds for health care center

Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill

Pool table with cues
Salt-water fish tank
Indoor putting green

Lutherwood

Draperies - pool table cover (*community room*)
Six clocks for common areas of the building
Art work for common areas of the building

Pocono Lutheran Village

Aquarium
Lighting for flag pole
Gazebo
French doors for side dining room

Pregnancy Services &

TresslerCare Foster Care (*Topton*)
High chairs, car seats, Pac'n play (*new*)
Diapers & formula
Disposable cameras with flash
Duffel bags; bath items (*body wash, soap, lotion, shampoo*)
Gift-wrap, birthday and get-well cards

Saint Luke Village

Dining-room draperies
Resident-room chairs
Courtyard plantings
Courtyard benches
Prints for walls
Wheelchairs
Reclining shower chairs

Community Services for Seniors – Berks County

Volunteers to deliver meals to homebound elderly
CD player
Video camera
Small coolers for homebound elderly
Sofa

The Lutheran Home at Topton

High-low electrical beds
Mechanical lifts, sit-stand
Fireplace halogen insert
Beauty shop chairs and dryers
VCR & DVD players

Volunteer Home Care/Luzerne County

Display board
Volunteers (*all areas*)

SERVICE-TO-DATE

Each year, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries touches the lives of thousands of persons throughout northeastern Pennsylvania. From Jan. 1 through Sept. 30, the number of persons served regionally totaled more than 40,000.

Berks Community Services for Seniors

4,987 persons

Caum Assisted Living, Reading

47 persons

Congregational Advocacy

86 persons

Family Life Services

6,290 persons

Diakon Adoption Services, Topton

371 families

Hospice Saint John

1,208 patients and families

Luther Crest Retirement Community, Allentown

395 persons

Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill, Pottsville

134 persons

Lutherwood, Scranton

146 persons

Pocono Lutheran Village

East Stroudsburg

126 persons

Pregnancy Services

21 birthmothers counseled

RSVP

996 volunteers

The Lutheran Home at Topton

717 persons

TresslerCare Foster Care, Topton

104 youths in eastern Pa.

TresslerCare Wilderness and other services, 376 youths in eastern Pa.

Saint Luke Village, Hazleton

502 persons

Schuylkill County Community Outreach

23,369 persons

Volunteer Home Care (all regions)

799 persons

Residents enjoy home visit



Luther Ridge residents enjoy a stop at director Jeraldine Kohut's home during a fall foliage tour.

Leroy Charles Miller, a resident of **Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill**, never expected to be sitting in the home of the facility's director of residential services—Jeraldine Kohut—but as a part of a fall foliage outing, he found himself enjoying finger sandwiches at her residence.

"Jerri is very nice and always talks to me, but I never expected that I would be eating at her house. It was so nice there. I enjoyed it," says Miller.

Miller and more than a dozen other residents gathered in mid-October to tour the area's autumn foliage. Beginning at Luther Ridge, the residents, staff member Lauren Shandor, and volunteer Grace Schuettler took in the sights of Hawk Mountain and McKean's Ridge, with the tour ending at Kohut's home in Orwigsburg.

"I live in the middle of a tree farm," says Kohut. "I thought why not have the residents enjoy the beauty of the area and stop at my house for tea and sandwiches."

Kohut prepared a formal setting for the residents.

"Jerri had fresh-cut flowers everywhere, and everything was decorated so beautifully," says resident Gladys Tobin. "She had candles glowing everywhere, delicious cookies, sandwiches, and candies. She even served us. I said to her she shouldn't be a waitress in her own home, but she said she was pleased to do it. It made me feel good."

Making residents feel special is something that is part of the spirit of the Luther Ridge staff.

"Luther Ridge doesn't have any boundaries. Our staff always goes out of the way to make residents feel special," says Kohut. "This is just something I wanted to do for our residents."

"We enjoyed the day so much," says Tobin. "We were just talking and laughing and having fun. We also enjoyed seeing Jerri's unique things. I can relate to so many of the items."

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Leroy Miller

Counseling helps boy 'to be who he used to be'

Robin was scared to death. Her nine-year-old son was threatening to kill himself and having difficulties in school. Recently divorced, the woman recognized that her son had hit a rough spot in their family's transition.

"First thing I had to do was call somebody," she says. As a college student, she had the opportunity to ask her psychology professor, also a counselor, for direction. "He gave me the number for **Family Life Services**."

When Robin called the Diakon program, the response was immediate. "Their concern and their urgency were what I appreciated the most," she says. "It wasn't shoved aside. They didn't say, 'See you in a couple of months.'"

The mother and son had had a previous experience with a counselor that didn't work out. "My son wasn't comfortable. He wouldn't say anything—he had no involvement whatsoever," she says, adding that it was different with the Family Life Services counselor.

"It was the atmosphere. His office was in

his home, not in a large office building. And it wasn't, 'The clock's ticking, your time's up.' The counselor was personable and he got the family involved. He helped my son be more comfortable."

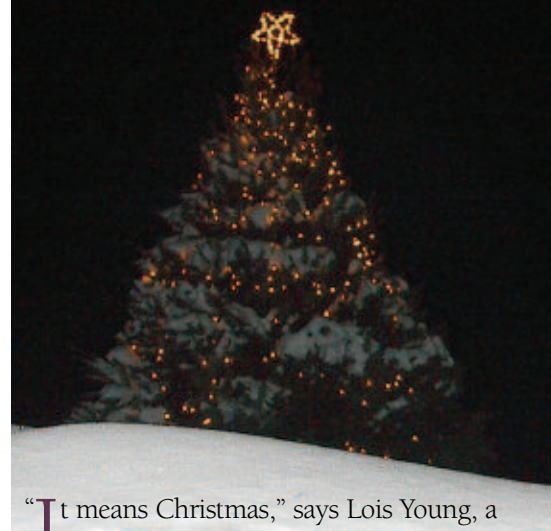
He also helped the boy to deal with his anger. "My son's attitude completely changed," she says. "You could see him using the things he was taught to control his anger. He would stop and think to himself, 'Is this worth it? Maybe I should walk away.'"

After four months of meeting with the counselor two times a week, both Robin and her son, who had gotten to the point he enjoyed the sessions, believed they had come a long way. "He said to me, 'Mom, I don't think I have to go anymore. I think I'm okay with it,'" she remembers. "It definitely took a load off my shoulders that my son was okay."

Now nearly a year after completing counseling, Robin says her son is a comfortable, fun-loving nine-year-old.

"My son's back," she says. "He is the kid he used to be."

Christmas on the Ridge



"It means Christmas," says Lois Young, a **Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill** resident. The facility's tree-lighting ceremony, she says, "is a symbol that Christ is the light of the world."

Carrying on the spirit of the season, Luther Ridge hosted its second annual tree-lighting ceremony in early December.

"We had an evening filled with beverages, holiday cookies, entertainment and Christmas caroling," says Jeraldine Kohut, director of residential services. "Of course, we lighted the tree, too."

An approximate eight-foot tree was placed on the facility's "ridge," which serves as a perfect location. "When all of the leaves drop off the surrounding trees, the Christmas tree is very visible for all to see," says Kohut. This year's tree is adorned with white lights and handcrafted red bows made by volunteers.

During the ceremony, a special gift was presented to residents.

"Last year, we organized a staff choir. We all worked very hard and the staff attended rehearsals on their own time. We did so because we wanted to give the residents a gift of music. This year we also had a staff choir." Directed by Young, the staff choir adds to the holiday spirit.

"Singing is an absolute necessary part of Christmas. For those who don't sing, they are missing out on something special," Young says.

Earl Daubenspeck, maintenance supervisor, agrees. During last year's ceremony, he sang "Violet in the Snow" while playing his guitar. "I wanted to give the song to the residents. It is a very suiting song—the violet is Jesus," he says.

Lippy new Topton director

The **Lutheran Home at Topton** has a new executive director.

Susan Lippy began work at Topton the end of September. She comes to Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries from Bethany Lutheran Village in Centerville, Ohio, where she served as administrator. Bethany is a Continuing Care Retirement Community about the same size as The Lutheran Home at Topton.

For a dozen years before that, Lippy was social services director, administrator, and acting executive director of the Otterbein-Lebanon Retirement Community, also in Ohio. A licensed nursing home administrator, she holds a bachelor's degree in gerontology from Bowling Green State University.



Susan Lippy

Saint Luke Village

Auxiliary renovates courtyard for residents

A sunny afternoon. Beautiful flowers. Bird houses. A memorial bench.

Residents of *The Manor at Saint Luke Village* can enjoy all of these things in their newly renovated courtyard, thanks to the efforts of the Lutheran Auxiliary of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Annually donating \$5,000 to The Manor—part of Diakon's Saint Luke Village—the auxiliary used this year's contribution to restore the north courtyard following a previous expansion project.

"In 1995, we extended the dining room, and through the large windows residents could look out into the courtyard. It brought the outside in, but we felt the courtyard could be rejuvenated," says Ann Quinnan, Saint Luke Village executive director.

Since the completion of the renovation in July, the courtyard has blossomed figuratively and literally. Not only did it bloom with colorful flowers, but it also grew into a more popular place for residents to visit.

"The residents use it quite frequently—especially in the evenings. I often see them visiting with family and friends. It provides a place for them to be able to enjoy the outdoors," says Quinnan. In addition, residents whose rooms are adjacent to the courtyard enjoy the newfound beauty of the gardens.

Lois Seip, president of the auxiliary, which supports Diakon's Hazleton-region programs, says the courtyard project falls in line with the auxiliary's mission.

"Our group has always been dedicated to serving the residents by providing the 'extras' that enhance quality of life. We were very happy to be able to assist with this project," she says.

A special part of the courtyard is a

memorial bench in honor of Catherine Rohrbach, a Saint Luke Village independent living resident, active auxiliary member, and a Manor volunteer.

"Hardly a day went by that she didn't stop at The Manor and help do something," say Seip. "We wanted to

do something so the residents of the Manor would have a reminder of Catherine. She brought so much comfort to them. She was so devoted—there was nothing

too small or great for her to do. We felt a memorial bench would be a fitting tribute."

Projects such as the memorial bench and the courtyard renovation were funded through such activities as the Auxiliary Festival, Trees of Love, membership dues,

and organizational contributions.

"All of the money we raise is solely for the residents and patients of The Manor and The Pavilion [at Saint Luke Village] and Hospice Saint John," says Seip.

The auxiliary's support plays a vital role at Saint Luke Village.

"I don't know what we would do without them," says Quinnan. "Auxiliary members put their the heart and soul into their work. Their generosity transcends throughout Saint Luke Village."

As Quinnan looks ahead, she is planning for renovations to the south courtyard this spring.

"One of the benefits of the courtyards is that resident rooms tie into them. Currently, with only one done, only half our residents can benefit from the change," says Quinnan.

Anyone interested in making contributions to the south courtyard renovation project, should contact Saint Luke Village at (570) 453-5100.

"The residents use it quite frequently—especially in the evenings. I often see them visiting with family and friends. It provides a place for them to be able to enjoy the outdoors."



Ann Quinnan, executive director of Saint Luke Village, fills a bird feeder in the village's new courtyard.

Family Life Services Support group helps inmates deal with loss

When Jordan Lutheran Church in Orefield and St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church in Douglassville heard that Diakon's **Family Life Services – Northeastern Pennsylvania** was looking for congregations to underwrite a series of support groups for Berks County prison inmates who have experienced the loss of a relative, friend, or loved one, they stepped up to the plate without hesitation.

"We have had the privilege of working with Family Life Services since 1988. [FLS Executive Director] Terry Lieb was very instrumental in us dealing with a

crisis situation and also giving us some different ideas of how to function as a Christian community," says the Rev. Canon Calvin C. Adams, rector of St. Gabriel's, adding that since that time they have had a growing association.

"When this came up, I took it to my lay leadership and said, 'This is a way we can support them, say thank you and monetarily assist them, at the same time making an important program available to people who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity.'"

Chaplains at the Berks County Prison contacted Family Life Services late last year when they could no longer provide the support groups themselves. "I came here in 1997 and we had under 900 inmates. We now have 1,300," explains the Rev. Patrick Tutella, chaplain supervisor. "What we are so grateful for is that we have a person here who is able to help."

Tutella is referring to Chris Wiley, MA, the group psychotherapist contracted by Family Life Services to oversee the grief support sessions.

"A lot of the inmates have never faced

any type of loss or dealt with issues in the past. Maybe they were strung out on drugs or, due to their lifestyle, they never faced any issues," Wiley says. "[In the group sessions] we are learning a lot of coping skills. It is different than the groups I run outside of the prison in that we are teaching social skills and also how to deal with your problems."

The skills are very important in the efforts to keep the

inmates from re-offending when they return to society.

"Simply incarceration, if nothing else, is a great loss that they have to endure. When you combine that with the

loss of a loved one on the

outside, many times that loss is so substantial that they find it very difficult to focus on truly being rehabilitated," says Tutella.

"The [inmates] going through the groups are getting some issues resolved, freeing them to spend their time here in a healthy way, dealing with the other issues that get clouded over by the grief reactions. They are able to deal with drug dependency, alcohol or other controlling issues in their lives."

While attending a viewing, funeral, or memorial may help some people deal with the loss of a loved one, inmates obviously cannot participate in this type of custom.

"We've had to adapt different ways to go through the steps of grief," Wiley adds. "Maybe they write letters to the person who passed on [which are never sent] or to other people outside the prison walls. I tell them, 'You are not the only one who has lost this person, there is someone else who is also grieving. Why not write that person a letter?'"

While the concept is new to some

inmates, it offers a model for social skills, according to Wiley. "If they can learn some good coping skills now, they can take these skills and tools and apply them when they are released," he says.

Response to the group has been positive.

"We have an overwhelming number of people who want to be involved," says Wiley, adding that they screen applicants before they can participate. "The individuals in these groups are very motivated. We often give them homework assignments and they all show up with it! Their motivation and enthusiasm in and outside of group is fantastic."

Because prison inmates are often wary of opening up, Wiley believes that the six weeks the grief sessions currently run could easily be expanded. "These folks need to let things out and there are very few resources for them to feel safe and let

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COMING EVENT

Women's retreat offers opportunity to find spiritual style

Diakon's Family Life Services – Northeastern Pennsylvania has planned a women's retreat designed to help participants explore their unique spiritual style.

The retreat will be held Feb. 27 to 29 at the Mariawald Renewal Center in Shillington, Pa.

Jane Williams, Ph.D., M.Div., an ordained Episcopal priest who has an interest in spiritual issues as they relate to holistic health, will be facilitator. Williams enjoys presenting workshops on the use of a variety of spiritual tools to enhance one's connection to God.

The weekend includes time for reflection as well as recreation, worship, and fellowship.

The price of the retreat is \$120, including two nights' lodging and all meals. Each room contains two or three twin beds and a private bathroom. Linens and towels are provided.

For more information, readers may call (610) 682-1337 or 1-888-499-2699. The deadline for registration is Feb. 5.

Fall foliage

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As an antiques collector, Kohut says she has collectibles from the residents' generation, which they enjoyed viewing. Additionally, the fellowship gave residents an opportunity to converse with one another in a different setting.

The view from Kohut's home was also something the residents took pleasure in.

"From the outside porch, you could see hills and valleys, and the foliage was every color of the rainbow. It was so lovely," says Tobin. "I love it here at Luther Ridge and I loved it at (my previous home), but some days I do miss home. So it was so nice of [Jerri] to open her house up to us. We really enjoyed it."

SLV provides leadership

Saint Luke Village resident Veronica M. Bunsa "feels like she is at her old job again."

Before retiring, Bunsa was a legal secretary very much in touch with the community and its happenings. Now, as part of Leadership Hazleton's Silver Leadership program, she is once again "back in the loop."

"I wanted to join because it gives me an outlet to meet with and converse with others. I can learn from them, and I can share my ideas," says Bunsa.

Designed to help seniors create new paths in retirement years by linking knowledge gained through the program with their experience and skills, Silver Leadership is a crucial part of Leadership Hazleton's three leadership programs—Junior Leadership, Leadership Hazleton, and Silver Leadership. All explore topics such as community trends, economic development, local government, community relations, education, and health-care issues.

"It is important to keep our seniors educated about the community," says Denise Corcoran, executive director of Leadership Hazleton. "They are great resources to tap into and we take advantage of what they have to offer through the program."

The four-week program is held annually in October and offers educational trips to places such as Eckley Miner's Village and tours of the Humboldt Industrial Park.

"Hearing more about our community resources and economic developments was an uplifting experience," says Bunsa. "I have high expectations for our area's development."

As part of the program, Silver Leadership participants interact with those in the other leadership programs, providing multigenerational perspectives on topics.

"I am 83 years old. I am old enough to tell of experiences and my thoughts from my time," says Bunsa, to which Corcoran adds: "It is beneficial for the younger participants to hear what it was like not having a cell phone or television."

Lois Seip, a past Silver Leadership participant, believes that through Bunsa's participation, she can demonstrate to those younger that you are never too old to make



Veronica Bunsa, front, with, left to right, Marian Papinsick, Jessica Papinsick, and Denise Corcoran.

a difference.

"Many seniors are active individuals. It is wonderful that Veronica can represent Saint Luke Village and show others just how active older seniors can be," says Seip.

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries has been involved in the program over the years, says Corcoran, because many individuals associated with Saint Luke Village have completed or are taking the leadership courses.

"The Leadership Hazleton programs have gone full circle here," says Ann Quinnan, village executive director. "Veronica is our first resident to participate, but we've had many others participate in Leadership Hazleton—including myself. This year Marian Papinsick, our office manager, is participating. Her daughter, Jessica, a volunteer here, is a member of the Junior Leadership class."

Quinnan believes the village's participation "spills down into the community and onto the Saint Luke campus."

"The program ties participants into the community. For me the program helped me to give back to this community what it has given to the campus. Since then, I have been involved with meals on wheels and the Lions. Our role is to always help others."

Bunsa says the program has "given her a better outlook on life. It feels good to be able to be part the program. It has been an enjoyable experience."

Corcoran agrees that Bunsa has been a valuable asset: "We will find a place for her to volunteer in the future—Veronica, she's an 'A' student."

Quilting created long-lasting bond for congregation groups

Their common interest was quilting. It brought them together initially and kept them together for decades. In some cases they passed their passion along to the next generation in their families. But the core group always stayed faithful to their art. And so the circle of quilters remained strong.

It all began when a group of women decided to get together and share their love of quilting. They came from two Lutheran congregations in the Shoemakersville area—St. Luke and Zion, Perry Township—and traveled to *The Lutheran Home at Topton*, where space and, eventually, supplies were made available to them.

No exact record exists of when the group originated. But Dorine Reichert, an activity leader at the retirement cam-

pus from 1979 to 1989, recalls they were a cohesive group meeting monthly when she arrived.

"It was my job to see that they had a room to meet in and supplies," Reichert says. "I often wished I could join them. They certainly enjoyed what they were doing." The Lutheran Home was one of the group's "beneficiaries," receiving quilts to auction for the annual Anniversary Day celebration. Proceeds from the quilt auction supported many programs at the retirement community.

Carol Miller, director of volunteers, says it's almost impossible to know who all the members of the quilting group were over the many years it was active. But everyone knew of them and their dedication to their art. "The quilts they made for Anniversary Day were simply wonderful," Miller says. "They were such a great group of people.



The 100th Anniversary Quilt that hangs in the senior center at Topton.

The opportunity for a new quilting group is always here!"

Reichert agrees and laments the fact that the group's tradition has ended. "Maybe if they could have gotten more young people interested in quilting, it would still be going strong," she says. "At least their quilts will be around for a long, long time."

Support group helps inmates

Continued from Page 12

their feelings out," he says, adding that he loves to work with the prison population.

"They realize that they need and want change in their lives. I really feel as if we are changing some lives there."

Outside of the prison chaplains, Wiley believes no other agency is reaching out like Family Life Services to help inmates.

"FLS realizes that they are human beings and that they will be part of our society again," he says. "Whether a month, two, three or five years, if we don't help them now, we will have these same lost souls back in the prison system."

Family Life Services continues to look for groups of congregations or others interested in funding a series of four grief support programs throughout the year. For more information on how you can help, contact Louisa Weber, counselor/program specialist, at 1-888-499-2699.



The second annual Evening of Thanksgiving was held recently at the Pottsville Club in Pottsville, Schuylkill County. The dinner and silent auction raised more than \$53,000 to benefit benevolent care at Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill and Diakon's Volunteer Home Care. Pictured left to right are William Schuettler and Herman "Sonny" Fenstermacher, co-chairs of the event; the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president and chief executive officer; Frederick H. Hobbs, Esq., guest speaker; Daris C. Hosler, mission speaker, resident of Luther Ridge, and recipient of Volunteer Home Care services; Jeraldine Kohut, Luther Ridge at Seiders Hill director of residential services; and Lois Sterling, Volunteer Home Care program coordinator.

Topton Putz brightens holiday

The Lutheran Home at Topton's Christmas Putz is a centerpiece of the Advent season in Berks County, Pa., and beyond. The name putz comes from the German verb "putzen," which means to brighten or display. The traditional miniature village was created as a Christmas gift for the children at the former orphanage by Ida Henry, matron of the home; her spouse, the Rev. Dr. J.O. Henry, was the home's superintendent from 1909 to 1945. Each year, Mrs. Henry added a new scene or new features to the village. The display, housed in the campus' "Old Main," features 17 scenes including a church (shown below) complete with tiny hymnals, baptismal font, and a pipe organ.



To help residents of Diakon's retirement communities visualize the scope of the agency's services, tours of the TresslerCare Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs have been arranged by Diakon's Office of Advancement. In mid-October, 30 residents of The Lutheran Home at Topton and Luther Crest Retirement Community in Allentown visited the Wilderness Center campus, which serves court-adjudicated delinquent and dependent youths from across Pennsylvania through short- and long-term residential care, 31-day Wilderness Challenge course, and Weekend Alternative Program. "It was very interesting and informative," says The Lutheran Home at Topton resident Dorothy Dickert. "They do some wonderful things there. We hope to go back when all of the new buildings are completed."



Steppers

Continued from Page 6

is a lot of fun with a group, and I enjoy going to other locations to perform." Heydt refers to the fact the Senior Steppers take their show on the road to different facilities, as well as perform during Luther Crest's dances and annual health fair.

Mary Louise Drosdak, independent-living activity coordinator, believes dancing helps residents to feel younger. "They enjoy dancing to the music from their era and they take pride in their ability to put on a good show," she says.

Although the group consists mainly of women, two or three men participate on a regular basis. "I had my doubts about it from the word go," remembers Bill Howell, adding that he now finds it relaxing. "When I'm done, I feel a lot better. It's good fun."



Resident tackles television challenge

Continued from Page 6

in their apartments, and coordinates week-end movies on the in-house channel.

"The [television software] program has a lot of possibilities that Carl and I would like to get into, but we never seem to have the time," says Eck, whose active volunteerism keeps him busy. "I like helping other people."

He also likes the variety that volunteering brings to his days. "When I worked in computers, every day was different," he says. "I like TV for the same reasons."

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