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# DONOR BLESSINGS

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## CHILD DONATES BIRTHDAY MONEY IN HONOR OF ADOPTED SISTERS

The birthday present list for the average soon-to-be-8-year-old boy is usually quite long: a skateboard, the latest video game, a basketball, a shiny new bike. So what about the party invitation that asks guests not to bring gifts, but instead to donate the money they intended to spend to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, so that other children can have a home?

Rather than “average,” the word that comes to mind is “extraordinary.”

“I wanted to do this to thank Diakon for my sisters,” says Jeremiah “JJ.” Dey, who turned 8 in March, as he presented \$350 to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care employees in Tipton, Pa. Not long ago an only child, JJ. is now a member of a family of five.

Cindy and Stefan Dey of Berks County attended an adoption information night in September 2003, interested in the legal-risk foster-to-adopt program. In February 2006, sisters Summer, 8, and Danielle, 6, were in need of a permanent family.

“We contacted Cindy and Stefan and they showed great interest in the girls,” says Jessica O’Neil, recruitment and family development specialist. “Almost immediately they knew they wanted the girls to be a part of their family.”

In June of that year, pre-placement visits began. The visits went so well that the girls were placed in the home on June 23, 2006. The adoption became final this May.



*JJ. presents his birthday money to adoption and foster care director Kathy Roach.*

“It seemed a perfect match from the start,” O’Neil says. “The girls had been through a lot of loss, and Cindy and Stefan were excellent at making them feel safe, secure, and loved. The girls have been thriving in their home.”

So JJ. went from being an only child to having two energetic sisters with whom he would have to share his parents’ attention. But he has adjusted so well to the change, and is so happy to have siblings, that he was motivated to donate to Diakon.

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*From left to right: Danielle, Summer, and JJ. Dey.*

# DONOR PROFILES



Byron & Ann Lichtenwalner

## SIX DECADES OF GIVE AND TAKE

History, scholars say, tends to repeat itself. In the case of Byron and Ann Lichtenwalner of Stroudsburg, Pa., their history with Diakon's services continues to repeat itself. In fact, their association with the organization spans more than six decades.

Their experience with the organization began when Byron, as a small child, visited The Lutheran

Home at Topton orphanage with his grandmother, a member of the women's auxiliary of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Trexlertown.

Even at that age, Byron admired the traits that the orphanage instilled in the children. "The children were not only provided with an education, but were also taught work responsibility and self-reliance," he explains.

The Lichtenwalners' ties to Diakon resurfaced when Byron's parents became residents of Luther Crest, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Allentown, Pa., and Ann's mother moved to Pocono Lutheran Village in East Stroudsburg, Pa., another Diakon Senior Living Community. When Byron's mother passed away in 2001, she included Diakon in her will. "It was my mother's last wish to give back to the Lutheran Home," Byron explains.

Recently, when Byron was asked to provide a gift to purchase lighting for the Memory Garden at The Lutheran Home at Topton, he

instinctively said yes. "It is a natural way to provide something permanent in remembrance of my parents. I also want to help provide an attractive facility for the residents."

The garden, now in its second phase, is designed to provide an alternative setting for residents. Gifts designated for the garden help to ensure the maintenance, beauty, and longevity of the garden. Phase II of the project includes pergola areas and wheelchair-friendly sidewalks for residents to enjoy the peace and beauty of nature.

When asked how he thinks others can help Diakon, Byron has specific thoughts. "Support the Lutheran Church," he says. "Support its missions, of which Diakon is one. Choose one of the many things Diakon does and provide financial or volunteer support."

History may repeat itself again as the Lichtenwalners contemplate their own retirement. "When I go back and walk around that area, I want to know that people are enjoying the garden," he says.

*Honoring a loved one through a memorial or tribute gift is an especially meaningful act. Memorial and tribute gifts allow you to thoughtfully remember family members and friends who have been an important part of your life.*

*Your gift honoring a loved one also supports a ministry of compassion and service. Many of Diakon's programs and services are possible because of benevolent-care dollars given by others through the years. Your gift will bring multiple blessings to others now and in the future.*

*Gifts can be mailed to Diakon in the enclosed envelope.*

*Donor Blessings is published three times a year by the Office of Advancement of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries. Please direct comments to Carolyn Darnell at 610-682-1292 or darnellc@diakon.org.*

*If you do not wish to receive further requests for donations or information on other fundraising activities, please write to us using the enclosed envelope.*

## 'GOOD LIFE' LEADS DOCTOR TO SHARE HIS GOOD FORTUNE

### *David Masland led a boy's dream life.*

His family lived on a horse farm and he rode every day, favoring trails around South Mountain near Carlisle, Pa. Among his friends were Frank and John Craighead, who would eventually become the state's foremost naturalists of their time.

The boys camped out and shared countless outdoor adventures. Even as a child, he recognized his good fortune. At 12 years of age, he remarked to his brother how lucky they were to lead the life they did.

"I feel as if I've had such a good life," says the now-83-year-old, who expresses appreciation for his blessings by helping those whose lives have not been as bountiful. He and his wife, Elizabeth, are generous supporters of the Diakon Wilderness Center. They believe that offering a guiding hand to young people facing a variety of life's challenges can make a difference.

Masland comes from a long line of physicians on his mother's side—eight generations, in fact. Medicine was his destiny, one he embraced. As a doctor of internal medicine in Carlisle for decades, Masland cared



*Elizabeth & David Masland*

for hundreds of local residents. It was a different era of medicine then and middle-of-the-night house calls were common, he recalls.

"People were so appreciative that you would come to their house, and that you would come at all hours," he says. "I was lucky that I had a wife who put up with that."

Masland has known his wife since they were toddlers. Their parents were good friends living only a few blocks apart until Masland's family moved to the horse farm. Masland's father nicknamed Elizabeth "Trouble," a name that suits her still, he claims. Elizabeth was a physiotherapist and also worked as a teacher and camp counselor before she and David married. Then she turned her attention to rearing their three children.

For 14 years after he retired, Masland volunteered his medical skills at a health clinic he began in Carlisle to serve those with limited financial resources. He also provided health-care services for girls in an alternative rehabilitation program, impressed by the impact the program had on those young lives.

The Maslands also support several local initiatives focused on conservation and air quality. Originally they had named Diakon and other organizations in their wills, but decided to change that arrangement by making gifts now.

"I prefer to do it now," says Masland. "Then we have the joy of giving and we get the chance to see how it helps."

*The Maslands made a gift of appreciated securities that created an endowment to benefit the Diakon Wilderness Center. Gifts to Diakon can be set up in many different ways. For more information, please contact Diakon's Office of Advancement at 1-877-DIAKON-7, option 2, extension 21219, or visit <http://www.diakon.org/SupportOpportunities.asp>.*



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# SPECIAL EVENTS HELP DIAKON SERVE OTHERS



## Benefactors Dinner



*Ten Cura Hospitality chefs introduce the “Be Our Guest” theme at the Diakon Annual Benefactors Dinner.*

The Diakon 19th Annual Benefactors Dinner, held on Thursday, May 10, at the Holiday Inn Fogelsville, Pa., raised \$180,000 for services provided by Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries at The Lutheran Home at Tipton.

Mitch Possinger, president of the Onsite Brands division of Eat’n Park Hospitality Group and a Diakon board member, along with a procession of Cura chefs, introduced the theme for the evening, “Be Our Guest.” Featured speaker, Dr. Micah Sadigh, Associate Professor of Psychology at Cedar Crest College, gave a fascinating presentation on the mind-body-spirit connection to health and well-being. The Rev. Cindy Ray, pastor, St. John Lutheran Church, Folcroft, Pa., highlighted the work of Diakon Family Life Services, and Beverly and Marvin Smith of Macungie, Pa., shared the foster care/adoption journey of their four children.

## Dining With Diakon

On April 10, more than 300 guests gathered at the Hilton Harrisburg Hotel for the third annual Dining With Diakon. The event featured 10 guest chefs who submitted recipes which were prepared by Cura chefs for tasting during the evening. A new Golden Spoon winner was chosen, Joanne Judge, of Stevens & Lee, who raised the most money for her participation and recipe. Silent and live auctions featuring sports memorabilia, sporting events, gift certificates, and chef-prepared dinners added to the excitement.



*Guest chefs give a “thumbs-up” to another successful Dining With Diakon event.*

A grand total of \$90,000 was raised for Diakon programs serving children, families, and senior adults in central Pennsylvania.

## Spring Fling Luncheon

“Table Talk,” the 2007 Diakon Family Life Services Spring Fling Luncheon was held at Williamsport Country Club on May 4. The 200 women attending browsed 12 themed tablescapes with the opportunity to bid for them during a live auction. The event raised nearly \$10,000 to support counseling services provided by Diakon Family Life Services in the Williamsport, Pa., area.





Above, from left to right: Featured speaker at the Benefactors Dinner, Dr. Micah Sadigh, discusses the health benefits of intercessory prayer; Guests of the Spring Fling Luncheon browse the tables available for bidding; Joanne Judge of Stevens & Lee won Dining With Diakon's Golden Spoon Award for raising more than \$2,600 in cookie votes; Guests look on as chefs prepare their specialties at the Dining With Diakon event; Attendees browse through silent auction items at Dining With Diakon.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Adoption Night

Friday, July 6, 2007

Williams Grove Speedway, Mechanicsburg, Pa.

An Adoption Fair and Hospitality Event will allow waiting families to see beautiful pictures of the Pennsylvania Heart Gallery and meet and network with both public and private adoption agencies that have children available for adoption. Refreshments and games run from 3 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., with the race to follow. For more information, call John Allison at 717-795-0311 or toll free: 877-DIAKON-7, option 2, ext. 50311.

### 11th Annual Diakon Golf Tournament

Monday, September 11, 2007

Dauphin Highlands Golf Course, Harrisburg, Pa.

To receive sponsorship opportunities for this corporate golf outing call Dawna Trump at 717-795-0343 or toll free: 877-DIAKON-7, option 2, ext. 50343.

The 2007 Spring Fling committee includes, from front left, Kathy Wurster, Jen Lundy, Sara Henne, and Michele Williamson; back left, Rosemary Schranghamer, Lorraine Manos, Melissa Rogers, Frani Doherty, Lisa Cramer, Crystal Crane, Mary Engel, Anne Macdonald, and Bonnie Axeman. Not pictured are Crissy Matter, Michael Mault, Anne Marie Phillips, and Elsie Stopper.

### Child Donates Birthday Money

*continued from cover.*

"Diakon employees approached the placement as if it was the entire family adopting, not only the parents," says Cindy Dey, proud mother of three. "J.J. was always included in the journey that Summer and Danielle have taken to get to this point. He realizes how fortunate we have been, and he is happy that the girls' journey ended with our family. He wanted to thank Diakon, and he wanted to help other children find 'forever homes.' He has always had a very caring and loving heart."

Dey says she was surprised at how serious J.J. was about raising the money for Diakon. "As all parents do, you question some of the decisions that you've made. This helped us to realize we must be doing something right. We are extremely proud of him!"

Dey says the addition of two children to their home has kept them hopping. "Three children in a home is definitely different from one," she says. "Jeremiah went from being the only child and grandchild to being the middle child with two sisters." Summer is six months older than J.J.

Dey says all three children have adjusted well. "Our house is a lot louder, messier at times, and definitely more active," she says. "It is wonderful to see the three of them play together, and confide in one another. I love to watch the simple things, like the three of them walking down the driveway together to wait for the school bus, or how they interact at meal time. They have definitely bonded as siblings and demonstrate a strong love for one another.

"And they bicker as all siblings do, too," she adds. "It has been wonderful to watch all three of them thrive."



*The Dey Family*





## DIAKON'S NEW DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ADVANCEMENT HAS DEEP ROOTS WITH THE ORGANIZATION

Although Tim Bilger joined Diakon in April to continue his career in donor relations, he was already very familiar with the organization's ministry.

In 1975, Tressler Adoption Services—now Diakon Adoption & Foster Care following the 2000 affiliation between Tressler Lutheran Services and Lutheran Services Northeast that created Diakon—was asked to find homes for more than 200 children abandoned at the An Lac Orphanage in South Vietnam. Adoption staff members worked day and night to find families.

"They changed the lives of so many," says Elisa Esh, Diakon's current director of resource family recruitment, of the Vietnamese children. Some of those directly affected were Bilger and his family.

*Above: Tim Bilger, director of corporate advancement. Right: Sang and Georgia Bilger as children.*

"When I was 10 and my sister was 7, my parents adopted a 5-year-old boy, Vu Tien Sang, now Sang Bilger, from this group of orphans," says Bilger, who has more than 20 years of experience in fund development, corporate relations, and project management.

"The day we went to pick him up, I actually carried him right off the plane. I was so proud." Bilger, who grew up in Selinsgrove, Pa., notes that several years later his parents adopted another child, a 3-year-old girl from the United States, rounding out their family of six.

Bilger says two Vietnamese families settled in the area where his family lived. "Our church sort of adopted



*Sang was delighted to be in his new home.*

them and my family got very involved with helping," Bilger recalls. "I gave up a lot of my toys. We felt a special connection because of my brother."

The new neighbors were good for him and his community, he believes. "It taught me a great appreciation of different cultures at an early age," he says. "And for my brother, it allowed him to hold on to a piece of his own culture as well."



# SPOTLIGHT ON CONGREGATIONS

## CHURCH CONTINUES TO NOURISH LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH DIAKON

*Some people donate because it's simply the right thing to do.*

When asked what prompts his congregation to give to Diakon in the many ways it does, the Rev. J. Stewart Hardy, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Camp Hill, Pa., says plainly, "We just do it."

The Trinity congregation has been supporting Diakon for many years. From providing handmade quilts to adopted children and participating in campaigns for the Diakon Wilderness Center to serving as guest chefs for the annual Dining With Diakon event, Hardy sees the congregation's partnership as a mission to reach out to the organization and the people it serves. "They're an extension of our family," he says.

Several Diakon employees are congregational members, he says, and several additional members have served on Diakon's various board of directors over the years. "We have a long history. Our connections go back a long time."

A new venture for the pastor the last few years has been his participation in Dining With Diakon. During the event's first two years, he served as a guest

chef by submitting a favorite recipe and then taking part in the fund-raising event, at which



*Rev. J. Stewart Hardy as a 2006 Dining With Diakon guest chef.*

participants sample a wide range of tasty dishes.

"Last year we made cookies, sort of a meringue with fresh fruit," Hardy says. "We almost ran out!" The pastor alone raised more than \$450 as participants bought "cookie votes" to name his dish the favorite recipe of the evening.



*Rev. Guy S. Edmiston shares his recipe at this year's Dining With Diakon event.*

"The year prior we did seafood chowder. A lot of people in our congregation attend in order to support the organization. It's a great event." This year, Lower Susquehanna Synod Bishop Emeritus Guy S. Edmiston, who serves the congregation as support pastor in residence, participated.

Hardy says the relationship between his congregation and Diakon is more than a financial one—it's a partnership.

"While we've held special offerings for Diakon, we also open our facilities to them for conferences and seminars, and we send some of our folks to them for counseling," he says. "We also have people who go out to volunteer at Frey Village (a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Middletown, Pa.), and some of our members reside there. Our people are very aware of what Diakon has to offer. All in all, it's a very healthy relationship."



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## DONOR BLESSINGS

# EMERGENCIES ARE NOT ONLY EMOTIONAL, BUT COSTLY AS WELL

When children are removed from their homes suddenly due to abuse or neglect, they often come to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care with only the clothes they are wearing. At Diakon, our first responsibility to the child is to make him or her feel safe and cared for. That involves providing basic essentials such as pajamas, jeans, or even a pair of shoes. These essentials, along with personal care items and school supplies, add up. In fact, it costs Diakon about \$250 for each child who comes to us in an emergency, with nothing to call his or her own. In 2006, Diakon placed more than 200 children in situations similar to this.

Won't you please help children in emergency foster care by sending a tax-deductible contribution in the enclosed gift envelope? They need your help today.

*Thank you.*



*With many hands and one heart, together we can make a difficult situation less of a tragedy to the little one caught in the middle.*