

FAMILY CONNECTIONS



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GOLFERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

On Sept. 10, Diakon held its 11th annual golf tournament at Dauphin Highlands. This year was a special year for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care as four of our waiting youths, Brian, Nickalas, Ray, and Taariq, participated in a golf clinic during the event. More than 100 golfers participated and almost \$100,000 was raised. All proceeds benefit Diakon's children's

services, including adoption, foster care, foster-to-adopt, wilderness center for adjudicated youth, behavioral counseling, and much more.

If you are interested in learning more about Brian, Nickalas, Ray or Taariq, please contact Jennifer Bircher, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, at (717) 795-0479.



Jim Harrington schools Nickalas on the basics of golf.



(From left to right) Taariq, Woody Maxon, Mary Ellen Dickey, Ray, Jim Harrington, Nickalas, Brian, and Tim Bilger.

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WAITING CHILDREN HAVE BEEN PLACED BY THE ADOPTION SERVICES OF DIAKON LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES... SO FAR!	From the Executive Director.....2 Pennsylvania Finalizations.....4 Pennsylvania Placements.....5 Maryland Finalizations.....9 Maryland Placements.....9



A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BY: **LAUREN CONZAMAN, MSW, LSW**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

I was speaking with a woman who grew up in an orphanage in the mid 1900s. She recently became a grandmother and was assisting her daughter with a photo album for her new grandchild. Her daughter wanted photographs of her to include in the child's memory book but, unfortunately, having grown up in an orphanage most of her life, she had no childhood photos of herself.

Please remember that youths placed in your home may have little memory of their younger years and many times few to no pictures to remind them of their past. It is very important for resource families to help children create and update photo albums or memory books whether the children are placed on a short-term foster care or long-term adoptive basis. These memories are irreplaceable.

MARYLAND ADOPTION OFFICE SECURES FUNDING FOR SUPPORT GROUPS

Adoptive families have a new resource for support and information, as the result of a package of grants awarded to Diakon Adoption Services in Maryland.

Awarded by the state Department of Human Resources, the grants fund adoption support groups in 10 Maryland counties and the City of Baltimore. Funding began in April 2007 and runs for two years.

Diakon partnered with congregations—10 Lutheran and one Baptist—

in each of the 11 jurisdictions to serve as support-group sites. The meetings are open to any adoptive family, not only those who have adopted through Diakon. Those who want to learn more about adoption or who are involved in foster care also may attend. Free childcare is provided.

The groups focus on topics of interest to adoptive families, says Ramona Hoyle, director of Diakon Adoption Services in Maryland, including attachment issues, positive

discipline techniques, child development, educational resources for the child with special needs, and loyalty and the birth family. Some topics feature guest speakers.

The grants include a requirement for community outreach, with one event in each area in November to celebrate National Adoption Month, and a second awareness event to be held during any other month. In May, adoption staff took part in Family Day, a community fair at Ravenwood Lutheran Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Hagerstown.

“We were already serving parts of Maryland,” Hoyle says, “and these grants extend Diakon’s service in counties where we previously had no presence, expanding our ministry.”

For more information about the location and times of our support groups please check our website at www.diakon.org/adoption.



IN MEMORY OF LOCAL SPRINT CAR DRIVER, A SUPPORTER OF ADOPTION NIGHT AT WILLIAMS GROVE SPEEDWAY

William James Allen Kimmel, 27, of Mechanicsburg, Pa., passed away in September as a result of a sprint car accident.

What Billy is most remembered for by the recruitment and family development staff at Diakon Adoption & Foster Care was his dedication and commitment to Adoption Night at Williams Grove Speedway. Adoption Night is a Diakon Adoption & Foster Care event that helps spread the word about special needs adoption and the need for more adoptive families for children in the foster care system.

Elisa Esh, director, recruitment and family development, remembers him fondly. "When we began getting support for the event this year, Billy was one of the first drivers we spoke to. He basically told us that he was working on limited funds [but] that he would be more than happy to feature a child waiting for adoption decal on his car."

As the event drew closer and the response from children around Pennsylvania to be a part of the event and featured on the cars grew



Billy Kimmel during Adoption Night at Williams Grove Speedway.

overwhelmingly, it was apparent that Diakon Adoption & Foster Care needed more drivers. Elisa Esh gave Billy a call and asked him again to help out. "He responded to me in such a way that you could tell his heart was really in to our mission. Billy told me that he had an engine that was terribly slow but that he would still love to run the child's decal in order to help get the child's

face out there and increase awareness," recalls Esh.

That night Billy raced his slow engine but 10,000 people saw the child featured on his car. Billy Kimmel put himself behind the mission of making sure that every child finds a family. He was a fine young man, racer, and friend of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. He will be missed.

TOPTON ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER FAMILIES GATHER FOR REUNION

When the decision was made to end the Anniversary Day celebration at The Lutheran Home of Topton after 110 years, our permanency staff decided to continue with our annual adoptive/foster family reunion.

This reunion had previously been

held as a part of Anniversary Day.

Successfully beginning a new tradition, more than 130 families, children, and staff gathered in August at Longswamp Park, near the campus of The Lutheran Home at Topton, a Diakon Senior Living Community in

Berks County, Pa. The day's activities consisted of lunch, games, face painting, door prizes, and the opportunity to reconnect with others.

Next year's reunion date will be announced early in 2008.

TIPS AND TRICKS TO PARENTING

- **Modify your vocabulary to match what your child understands.** Parents who use vocabulary beyond their child's understanding often receive blank stares and become frustrated when a child repeats the behaviors.
- **Increase your child's vocabulary about his or her feelings.** There is more diversity to human emotions than feeling either good and happy or bad and sad. Teach your children other "feeling words," such as feeling proud, satisfied, content or discouraged, embarrassed, or disappointed. This can be tremendously beneficial with helping children feel confident they can be understood and express themselves.
- **Remember your child's attention span when explaining, correcting, or simply conversing.** If a child's attention appears to be wondering, modify your communication style to ensure the child receives the message and simply isn't enduring a lecture.
- **Younger teenagers tend to perceive the world concretely and are only beginning to learn more abstract thinking.** Gradually help teens recognize the variety that life can offer and that ambiguity or uncertainty can be okay.
- **Keep in mind gender differences when parenting.** This is becoming an increasingly popular field of study and is demonstrating that gender differences exist and need to be accounted for when parenting. One example is that girls tend to learn language skills earlier whereas boys tend to acquire visual skills and recognize spatial differences at an earlier age. As a result, boys may need more time to conceptualize their thoughts and express themselves when answering a question, and girls may need additional practice when using motor skills at an early age.

GIVING BACK

Girl Scout Troop #1546, Kempton, Pa. donated 30 disposable cameras to the Topton office of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.

The girls raised the money during their annual cookie sale and decided to give funds to a local cause.



Girl Scout troop # 1546 presents donation to Kathy Roach.

Pennsylvania FINALIZATIONS

JUNE 6, 2007 Austin Todd and Arlene, Pa.	AUGUST 9, 2007 Corey Michael and Dawn, Pa.
JUNE 8, 2007 Ashley Dennis and Debbie, Pa.	AUGUST 16, 2007 Moehadeem and Mennon Benjamin and Deanna, Pa.
JUNE 20, 2007 Carmen Jess, Pa.	SEPTEMBER 5, 2007 Destiny and Nevach Richard and Paulette, Pa.
JUNE 20, 2007 Marasadies Cynthia, Pa.	SEPTEMBER 7, 2007 Thomas Steven and Beth, Pa.
JULY 5, 2007 Aaliyah, Hannah, and Sierra Brett and Heather, Pa.	SEPTEMBER 12, 2007 Steven Michael and Dorothy, Pa.
JULY 10, 2007 William William and Pam, Pa.	SEPTEMBER 18, 2007 Tommya Steven and Kathy, Pa.
JULY 18, 2007 Paul Ryan and Tarinda, Pa.	SEPTEMBER 18, 2007 Quydera and Sheila Eugene and Claudette, Pa.
JULY 18, 2007 Johnathan Thomas and Gloria, Pa.	SEPTEMBER 25, 2007 Anastacia Robyn, Pa.
JULY 23, 2007 Emijay Ukwanna, Pa.	
AUGUST 6, 2007 Anna Pamela, Pa.	

YOUNG GIRL'S DONATION HELPS FELLOW FOSTER CHILDREN

Seven-year-old Belle Endress had a unique birthday wish this year. Instead of asking for a new Barbie or set of toys, she asked for money to buy clothes to donate to the children served by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's Tipton, Pa., office.

"I thought it would really help children who didn't have clothing ... like in the movie Cinderella," says Belle. Adopted through the program a few years ago, Belle also donated more than \$400 to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care last year.



Belle Endress.

PLACEMENTS

June 1, 2007

Isaiah, 1, from Montgomery County joined Mike and Karen of Bernville, Pa.

June 1, 2007

Madison from Lehigh Valley joined Alfredo and Nydia.

June 5, 2007

Colin, 11, from Lebanon Valley joined Marlin and Mona of Mohrsville, Pa.

June 5, 2007

Alex, 1, from Guatemala joined Robert and Melissa of York, Pa.

June 21, 2007

Chad, 8, from Lehigh Valley joined Wayne and Steve of Kutztown, Pa.

June 21, 2007

Nicolas from Montgomery County joined Mark and Frederic of Harrisburg, Pa.

June 25, 2007

Paul, 1, from Berks County joined Ryan and Tarinda of Reading, Pa.

June 27, 2007

Arianna, 4, from Northampton Township joined David and Bridgette of Alburtis, Pa.

July 27, 2007

Joshua, 13, from Berks County joined John of Telford, Pa.

AUGUST 3, 2007

Tiffany, 12, from Florida joined Thomas and Michele of Jeffersonville, Pa.

SEPTEMBER 2, 2007

Nicolas, 3, from Lehigh County joined James and Annette of Allentown, Pa.

OCTOBER 1, 2007

Isaiyah, 7, and Destiny, 7, from Berks County joined James and Karen of Bethlehem, Pa.

WE'RE THANKFUL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

Your financial support will help to bring together more families through Adoption and Foster Care.

Through your support, you can help Diakon Adoption & Foster Care to touch the lives of children and youths in need. From donating books for our resource libraries to offering financial assistance to help subsidize adoption fees or providing items for foster children, your support is vital. Over the years, generous donations have helped our mission to become a reality in so many young lives.

You, too, can make a difference! Simply use the envelope in this issue of Family Connections or log onto our Web site's convenient and secure donation form to make your gift.

For further information on how you can support Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, please call our Office of Advancement at 1-877-DIAKON-7, option 2, extension 21219. Thank you!



Tia, adopted in September by Steve and Kate and adoptive sister, Zara.



Anna, from Lebanon County, was adoption by Alan and Pamela.



Bret and Heather adopted Aaliyah, Hannah, and Sierra from West Virginia on July 5.



Danica was adopted on June 8 by Dennis and Debbie.



Ryan and Tarinda Petersen along with Paul and their extended family. They adopted Paul on July 18.



Thomas was adopted on September 7 in Lehigh County.



William was adopted on July 10 from Diakon Pregnancy Services in Northampton County by William and Pamela.



Tom, Gloria, and Hunter along with Jonathan and their caseworkers. Jonathan was adopted on July 18.

maryland

FINALIZATIONS

JUNE 8, 2007

Jonathan and Joshua
Sylvia, Md.

JUNE 28, 2007

James and Eric
Chris and Graham, Md.

JULY 26, 2007

Garrett
Corey and Adrienne, Md.

AUGUST 7, 2007

Brittney
Joseph and Antoinette, Md.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2007

Dylan
Stanley and Brenda, Md.

PLACEMENTS

JULY 1, 2007

Dang Yu Mei, 3, from
China joined Drew and
Lisa of Maryland.

JULY 13, 2007

Julia joined July and Joe
of Maryland.

JULY 15, 2007

Mai Thi Yen, 3, from
Vietnam joined Siegfried
and Kathy of Maryland.

JULY 24, 2007

Jacob, 3, from Texas
joined Glenn and Mindy
of Severn, Md.

JULY 25, 2007

Norawitt, 1, from
Thailand joined David
and Becky of Maryland.

AUGUST 17, 2007

Teon, 7, joined Cathy of
Baltimore, Md.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2007

Kambria, 11, and
Heather, 9, from
Alabama joined Yanick
of Beltsville, Md.

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Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries

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Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries offers a range of specialized programs for children, individuals, families, and senior adults.

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Visit our website at www.diakon.org

WHAT IS ADOPTION FORUM, INC.?

Adoption Forum, Inc., was founded more than 34 years ago when two adult adoptees in the Philadelphia area began an adoption support group for fellow adult adoptees, biological parents, and adoptive parents.

Since its inception, Adoption Forum, Inc., has grown into a productive non-profit organization for thousands of Pennsylvanians affected by adoption. Its mission is to provide emotional support and a safe environment to all members.

The organization supports the shared belief that adoptees have a

right to know their origins, while remaining a “forum” for discussion on all adoption issues. Since its founding, the organization has expanded not only to provide support groups, but also to offer preparation for search and reunions, online search resources, search handbook, bi-monthly newsletters, speakers bureaus, conferences, and an educational resource for professionals and legislators.

For more information or to find a listing of local support groups, visit www.adoptionforum.org or call (215) 238-1116.



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