

DIAKONNECTION

WINTER 2003-2004

Diakon aids in flood relief

Within 24 hours of Hurricane Isabel's devastating pass through the coastal regions of Maryland in late September, **Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries** was mobilizing a disaster recovery team to serve as the area's coordinating agency for Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR).

LDR, a cooperative ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, had contacted Diakon to see if it would represent the disaster agency in Maryland and Delaware.

In response to calls from Diakon staff, the Rev. Gerard Knoche, bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, notified Diakon of need in several communities in eastern Baltimore County that had experienced significant damage from the Isabel-related flooding.

Knoche pointed the recovery team—consisting initially of the Rev. Thomas H. Reinsel, Diakon's vice president of church relations, and Rebecca Albright, Diakon's housing development director—to two congregations immersed in the flood relief efforts—St. John Lutheran Church in Edgemere and St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Bowley's Quarters.

"What we found was that we had two communities under water and lots of devastation," explains Bettye Wolinski, Diakon's coordinator of **Congregational Health Ministries** in Maryland. "The church buildings were fine, but the communities were suffering."

Wolinski, based in Baltimore and familiar with the area and its people, turned to the Rev. Gerry Rickel, senior pastor at Prince of

Please turn to Page 5

Read how Lutheran congregations spearheaded disaster-relief efforts, Page 4.

Charity Poling looks over the damage caused to her home by the tidal surge from Hurricane Isabel. She was assisted in recovery efforts by St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Bowley's Quarters.



- Adoption Services, Maryland**
- Brandywine Program, Newark, Del.**
- Congregational & Community Ministries**
- Congregational Health Ministries**
- Diakon Housing & Development, Inc.**
- Frostburg Village of Allegany County**
- KidzStuff Child Care, Baltimore**
- Lutheran Village at Harbor Pointe, Salisbury**
- Ravenwood Lutheran Village, Hagerstown**
- Refugee & Immigration Services**
- The Village at Robinwood, Hagerstown**
- Volunteer Home Care**

HEADLINES

- Lutheran congregations**
aid those affected by flooding2
- Adoptive family**
opens arms to Liberian child4
- Thrivent for Lutherans**
funds urban parish nursing6
- Brandywine Program**
helps special youth7
- Harbor Pointe**
enables fast friendships9
- Refugee Services**
greeted Iranian activist12

Congregations reach out to community, each other

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.



Rosemarie Buckingham stood in what was left of her kitchen with a mask on her face, pulling the covers off her photo albums as she tried to save the pictures that told the story of her family's life.

Like the thousands of people in eastern Baltimore County whose lives were disrupted by the high winds, rain, and rising waters wrought by late-September's Hurricane Isabel, Buckingham asked herself why she didn't think to remove some of her most treasured items before fleeing her house.

"We could not fathom the water was going to come in the house at that level," she says, recalling the moment rain first started to fall. "[At that point] it was, 'Save the house.'"

The devastation, wrought by tidal surges caused by Hurricane Isabel, had taken so many people by surprise that many of them did not know where to turn or what to do in the days immediately following the storm. Fortunately, there were compassionate neighbors and congregational members reaching out to help.



Rebecca Albright, left, and the Rev. Thomas Reinsel of Diakon with the Rev. Eileen Kelley, right, pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Edgemere.

Small congregation does amazing things

"When you become a pastor you have no idea the things you have to field," says the Rev. Eileen Kelley of St. John Lutheran Church, Edgemere. "When I looked in the face of one of my members [who had lost her home], I knew that I had to do something. I'm in ministry because of human need. [Human need] stood right in front of me."

It wasn't long before Kelley was on the

phone to her peers and friends, asking for help for the people of Miller's Island, home to many of her members as well as others affected by the storm.

Within no time, St. John became a central distribution point for clothes and cleaning supplies, as well as a place where displaced homeowners could find an ear to listen. The congregation also worked closely with a nearby Catholic church to distribute food.

"As the crisis evolved, we had to evolve in what we are doing. I had no concept it would get this big," Kelley says. "I'm proud as heck of [my members.] This teeny little church is doing amazing things."

With eight to 10 volunteers a day coordinating St. John's relief efforts, members like Gloria and John Strasbaugh are committed to helping their neighbors fight back in the face of loss. When Kelley worked together with Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries to organize an informational meeting for the community, it was the congregation's members who took it upon themselves to spread the word.

"We were instrumental in getting information out to the community. We probably distributed thousands of flyers by foot [in the Miller's Island area]," says Strasbaugh. "Almost a week after the Hurricane, everyone knew that this church was right on top of things."

St. Matthew Church offers place of healing

Nearby in Bowley's Quarters, another Lutheran congregation reached out to Baltimore County residents hard hit by Isabel.

The Rev. Gerard Knoche, bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, had contacted the Rev. John Kulczycki of St. Matthew Lutheran Church, informing him of Diakon's offer to assist with the area's flood-relief efforts.

"We had to spread the word. It was a grassroots thing," says Kulczycki, who points to long-time member Dottie Coppel

Please turn to Page 7

Flood

Continued from Page 3

Peace Lutheran Church, Rosedale. “Gerry and I are used to doing interventions at times of crisis,” she explains. “That first weekend the congregation at Prince of Peace put a phone chain into action. We had clothing and food delivered here that Sunday [two days after the storm]. It was amazing to see the response.”

The response grew as the pair drew on their partnership, encouraging others in the community to reach out and help. “This was not our relief to own. It was our relief effort to share,” Wolinski says. “We started to work when people were still in shock and could not articulate what they needed. We tried to provide a place where there was an open door, so when the shock wore off, they had a site they could go to in that initial part of relief.”

The Monday after the storm, Albright arrived in Baltimore to assess needs and determine how Diakon could help. “As needs began to emerge, we were attempting to see where we could direct people to get their needs filled,” she says. “Out of those needs, we determined what we as Diakon could do. We had resources to bring to

Volunteers Paula Bales, Terry Reilley, and Diane Fletcher (left to right) help to prepare one of two daily meals served at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Bowley’s Quarters, for those affected by Hurricane Isabel’s tidal surges.



The Rev. Eileen Kelley (right), pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Edgemere, discusses Hurricane Isabel’s devastation with congregational volunteers John and Gloria Strasbaugh.

bear—experience in disasters, connections, media relations, tangible immediate staff.”

Albright immediately began to coordinate efforts with local, regional, and national relief organizations, which were already actively assisting victims. “We also represented Lutheran Disaster Response in the Maryland Volunteer Organizations Assisting in Disasters (VOAD). They coordinate efforts of

faith-based and other relief organizations with government agencies, such as FEMA, so efforts are not duplicated.”

Local efforts included helping St. John’s and St. Matthew’s congregations, which served as community distribution centers for food, clothing and cleaning supplies. Staffed by congregational volunteers who took on the burden of coordinating things on a day-to-day basis, the centers provided nearly round-the-clock support to those in need.

Challenges for volunteer centers can arise when the person in charge has donations and people coming in to help, but is unsure where help is needed on a specific day, says Dee Dee Mayer, program manager for Diakon’s Volunteer Home Care based at Topton, Pa. “When you’re working in that environment every day, it’s not easy and it’s also exhausting,” she says.

Mayer spent a few days in Baltimore soon after the storm cleared, sharing advice on the secrets of delegation. “I visited the churches and spoke with a couple of lay people who were taking on the burden of coordinating things on a day-to-day basis, trying to share some tips to help them function a little better,” she says. “Sometimes these folks, who are so wonderful, have a sense they have to do it all.”

Please turn to Page 8

Family opens its arms to follow what God has in mind

Last summer Naomi Talbott was lost in thought, planning for the years ahead now that her two older daughters were grown, when her husband, David, broke her reverie with an announcement that God had something else in mind.

“I was in prayer time, and I said, ‘All right, Lord. Where do you want me to go next?’” remembers Mr. Talbott. “Immediately he brought back a story I had heard about six weeks before. A young lady we met told me about how her mother had a heart for [orphaned] Liberian children and the experiences they were going through [with the war]. The story came back so vividly, I simply couldn’t ignore it.”

Although Mrs. Talbott was shocked by her husband’s revelation that he wanted to adopt, she was intrigued that she had been praying and asking God the same question. “It was pretty incredible we were both at the same point in our prayer lives,” she says, although “God didn’t tell me the exact thing quite so loudly!”

The Talbotts continued to discuss the possibility of adoption, although Mrs. Talbott good-naturedly pointed out that making several big changes in your life at one time is not a good idea. However, her husband insisted, “When you feel the Lord’s prompting and it is very clear and strong, you can’t ignore it.”

After the Talbotts had decided to take the next step, they turned to *Diakon*

Adoption Services of Maryland. “I had asked around and Diakon adoption was spoken of highly by some other folks. I called them first,” remembers Mr. Talbott. “I felt really welcomed by Ramona [Hoyle]. Their adoption classes were so open-ended that you just had to come, listen, and learn. That sort of takes the pressure off.”

In fact, until they finished their classes in mid October of last year, the Talbotts weren’t sure what they were going to do. “We’re 50 and 51, and we didn’t want a baby. We felt we could manage an older child and still have a reasonable retirement plan,” says Mr. Talbott, adding that they felt compelled to help a Liberian war orphan.

“Let’s face facts: American families don’t adopt African children. If we’re going to go down this road, and people seem to be pointing us to an acute unmet need, then let’s just

go meet that need.”

With that, the Talbotts began a journey that would take them thousands of miles from home and require them to have a great deal of faith in their decision.

Their search for a child began with an international adoption agency that worked with them and Diakon. “We decided on a boy. We were thinking seven, eight, or nine years old would still allow Kelly [their 11-year-old daughter] to have a younger sibling,” says Mr. Talbott. “Like any prospective parent, you hope for a healthy

child. The agency we selected didn’t provide a whole lot of information. It goes along with the faith walk we were

Please turn to Page 12



The Talbott family

Congregations reach out to help

Continued from Page 4

as key to local efforts. “She took the ball from there. Supplies kept coming and people started coming. It’s been marvelous to see people being very, very generous with their time, their resources, and their abilities.”

Coppell readily admits she has a gift for coordination. In the first days after Isabel moved through the area, St. Matthew served as a central location for clothes, cleaning supplies, canned foods, and a point for two hot meals a day.

“The [people affected by the storm] were just thanking us over and over again to be able to get out of the situation and come some place they could relax,” she says. “We hug them; they hug us. We cry; they cry. We laugh; they laugh. It has been a place of healing.”

Under Coppell’s direction a core group of volunteers, ranging from a college student

to several retirees, found fulfillment in helping those who lost everything.

“We were driving trucks down into Bowley’s Quarters delivering food to people whose automobiles didn’t work,” said Mike Gosnell, a young member of St. Matthew’s church who in the first weeks after the storm regularly spent 10 hours a day in relief efforts. “The need to help people kept me going. I wasn’t affected at all. I take what I have and give it back.”

The generosity of volunteers like Gosnell has meant a great deal to people like Emilie Cargile, who had seven feet of water in her basement and lost all of her major appliances, as well as her car. “It has been a wonderful response. The whole community is pitching in [to help],” she said in September, adding that she was grateful her house could be repaired, unlike those of several neighbors.

“I feel blessed. The tree didn’t come down on my house. The water didn’t come to the first floor. My pier stayed intact. The main thing was my family was safe.”

As the people of Miller’s Island and Bowley’s Quarters continue to reclaim their lives after one of the worst disasters in recent memory, the hardest part has been waiting for the “rebuild,” according to Buckingham. “You have to wait and see what you’re going to get back and what you can now take on financially,” she said.

“I try to make light of it, but it is mind-boggling. We stand alone, but we’re not. Individually you are by yourself, but you are really one of thousands or more” in the same situation.

The efforts by the two congregations—and by so many more—helped all of those affected realize they were never alone.

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!

Diakon Adoption Services of Maryland

- Proxima projector
- Digital camera
- Digital camcorder
- Color printer
- Overhead projector & screen
- Recruitment posters & free advertising
- Photo albums & scrap books

Brandywine Program, Delaware

- Computer software for children (*learning & recreational*)

Congregational & Community Ministries - Maryland

- Volunteers to phone or visit homebound elderly and others in north and northeast Baltimore
- Blood-pressure cuffs
- Stethoscopes
- Health-education materials (*or funds to purchase*) for parish nurses who serve in various congregations

Frostburg Village of Allegany County

- **Nursing Care Center**
 - Piano (*new or like-new condition*)
 - Indoor garden cart with hand tools
 - Patio furniture
 - Digital camera
 - Exercise equipment
 - Stereo system for multi-purpose room
 - Wooden rocking chairs for patio
- **Assisted Living**
 - Wooden patio furniture
 - Commercial gas grill
 - Computer for resident use (*Pentium 4 or 5*)
 - Digital camera
- **Adult Day Services**
 - Volunteers
 - Chairs for activity room
 - VCR
 - Commercial coffee pot
 - Wheelchair
- **Mountain Glade Adult Day Services**
 - Bird seed
 - Film for 35mm camera
 - Art supplies
 - Cordless telephone
 - CDs or tapes

KidzStuff Child Care - Baltimore

- Multi-cultural dolls
- Educational computer software
- Digital camera
- Board games (*such as Sorry and chess*)
- Educational & play toys for children 2 - 12
- Laminating machine/die-cutting machine

The Lutheran Village at Harbor Pointe

- Volunteers to lead activities and do one-to-one visits with residents
- Sound system for dining room
- Perennials for dementia-services courtyard
- Art supplies
- Treadmill

Ravenwood Lutheran Village & The Village at Robinwood

- Wall clocks for resident rooms
- Calendars for resident rooms
- Donations to purchase games for residents
- Donations to purchase pet supplies for Eden Alternative program

Refugee & Immigration Services

- TV (*new or used in good condition*)
- Vacuum cleaner (*new or used in good condition*)
- Telephone (*new or used in good condition*)
- Clock radio (*new or used in good condition*)
- Pots & pans (*new or used in good condition*)

Flood

Continued from Page 5

As the weeks following Isabel's wrath passed and the recovery moved past the rescue and immediate relief stages into long-term recovery, Diakon began the transition process to move the community forward. "I'll stay in as a bridge and as a resource, but I will transition my seat to local pastors," explains Albright. "The local community owns and directs the long-term recovery, using and allocating the resources we have brought in from the national agency."

These efforts include a subgroup of the Maryland VOAD, known as the Maryland Interfaith Response Team. This team was created specifically as a result of Hurricane Isabel and involves local representatives who will manage and direct long-term recovery activities, according to Albright. Serving on the team for Lutherans are Rickel, the Rev. Lans Alexis, dean of the Eastern Baltimore Conference, and the Rev. Norman Payne, a retired pastor, serving as the interim chair.

"The goal is to get everyone in a safe, secure, sanitary living situation."

"They are joined by representatives of other denominations, such as the United Methodist Committee on Relief, the United Church of Christ, and Catholic Charities, so that they can pool financial resources to have paid staff meet the long-term rebuilding, spiritual care, and case management needs of the communities," she says. "They will try to focus their resources on those with the greatest need and least amount of resources. The goal is to get everyone in a safe, secure, sanitary living situation."

The Interfaith team's efforts cover Baltimore County and up to Cecil County, as well as along the Western Shore, through central Maryland. A separate

Please turn to Page 13

Thrivent funds health ministries

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has awarded \$16,000 to **Diakon Congregational and Community Ministries – Maryland** for use in its congregational health ministries program.

Judy Logan, manager of Lutheran Community Services for Thrivent, presented the check during a celebratory dinner in September. Other Thrivent representatives in attendance were Donna Yorkston, Elizabeth Tweed, and Matthew Sherlock.

"This grant allows us to continue through 2004 what we have already started with our urban congregational health ministry," explains Terry Langdon, Congregational and Community Ministries director. "We will continue to work with Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in Baltimore, St. John's Church in Pimlico, and, in Highlandtown, Nazareth Lutheran and St. Paul Lutheran churches."

The Thrivent grant is just one source to which the program has turned in efforts to place parish nurses in urban congregations.

"This type of ministry is incredibly important and very successful in urban sites where there are few other resources," says Langdon. "The goal is to impact the health



Those involved in the grant award, left to right: Diakon's Bettye Wolinski and Terry Langdon, and Thrivent representatives Donna Yorkston, Beth Tweed, Judy Logan, and Matthew Sherlock.

of the congregation, to address the problems present in the particular community, and to support each member in taking responsibility for developing a healthy lifestyle." The ministry offers a unique opportunity to educate society on the concept of health maintenance, in the spiritual, emotional, and physical realms.

"Education allows for informed decision-making in health care and health maintenance," says Langdon. "Congregations have the opportunity not only to be role models, but also to share methods to embrace health ministry through education and advocacy outside the walls of the congregation."



Former Tressler Lutheran Services board member Stanley King of Taneytown, Md., center, chats with other former Tressler and Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries board members during a recent luncheon in honor of Tressler-related donors and leaders.

Brandywine achieves success with first Down's syndrome client

Despite the fact they had never worked with a child with Down's syndrome, staff members of Diakon's **Brandywine Intensive Outpatient Program** saw a need and knew they had to meet it. And so late last year they enrolled a 14-year-old girl who needed help in bringing behaviors under control.

The intensive outpatient treatment is one of two services the Brandywine Program offers in Delaware; the other is a crisis-intervention program designed to serve youths at risk of psychiatric hospitalization.

Although the girl's case presented a number of challenges, Monet Drummond, intensive outpatient therapist, and Daynell Wright, community interventionist, met their task head on.

"We had to do a lot of research on our own, learning about the behaviors and thought patterns [of a child with Down's syndrome]," Drummond says. "What we might use with other children typically would not work" in this case.

The Families And Communities Together program (FACT), a division of Delaware's Child Mental Health Services, had made the referral to Brandywine. The girl, who had recently experienced upheaval in her life and gained a significant amount of weight, previously had been placed in a hospital setting when care at home became too challenging.

"She was having a very difficult time at home. She was aggressive with her mom and she was missing a lot of school," explains Diane Wilson, FACT clinical services coordinator.

After losing 67 pounds and improving her ability to control her behavior, the girl was discharged to a day-hospital program and then referred to Brandywine.

"She was going to a brand new school," explains Wilson. "We wanted to stabilize her

and help her transition to a new environment. At home, we wanted her to keep the goals she had gained." Wilson turned to Drummond and Wright to provide therapy sessions in the home as well as community-intervention services.

"First, we had a meeting with the school where we tried to come up with different behavior plans that included incentives,"

explains Drummond. "The school was compliant, willing to let us come in and sit with her when she had difficulty and assist when we could. [Wright] even assisted with her gym class." They also

found that they could lessen the girl's outbursts in school by shortening her day. "She actually goes to school half-day and works half-day," Drummond says. "It helps because she was having so many difficulties when she was there for a full day."

Drummond and Wright also assisted the girl's mother, who hadn't been sure how to

deal with schools when discussing her daughter's education. "She didn't know how to be an advocate for her child," says Drummond. "It was good to have the assistance of myself and the community interventionist to support her in those meetings."

Brandywine's team asked other family members to support the process at home. "We had family sessions that consisted of mom, dad, and the girl's brother," says Drummond. "The brother helps her with her homework and tries to take her to the park," to provide breaks for the parents.

Nearly a year after Brandywine put the girl's treatment plan in place, the improvements are clear. "She still has outbursts, but she is able to function in the community with her job," Drummond says. "They love her there and they don't seem to have any behavioral problems with her." Wilson agrees that they have met their goal of keeping the teen in the community. "The whole process has worked well. She is doing well in school. She is working during the day, earns money, and handles herself well."

"We had to do a lot of research on our own, learning about the behaviors and thought patterns."

College students aid refugees

Students from Messiah College in Pennsylvania regularly work with clients of Refugee Services, which has an office in Baltimore, to learn English as a second language. Here, students Katie Grant, center, and Sean Going, right, work with Hatim Younis.



Continuous learning enhances resident care and staff commitment

The opportunity to hear how others in long-term care are dealing with various issues. The chance to gain a greater understanding of dementia. The desire to take geriatric nursing education to the next level—these are just a few of the reasons staff members at **Ravenwood Lutheran Village**, Hagerstown, take the time to keep on learning.

In doing so, says Executive Director Jodi Murphy, they are demonstrating not only a commitment to caring for the elderly, but also to understanding the concerns older persons face.

Ultimately, that commitment translates into enhanced resident care.

Advanced training in dementia care

Two resident care supervisors at Ravenwood recently completed an intensive one-week program in dementia care at the Copper Ridge Institute, a long-term care facility in Sykesville, Md. Affiliated with the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, the institute was founded to help long-term care professionals gain a better understanding of the impact of dementia and how to better care for people affected by it. It is one of only two dementia-related teaching facilities in the country.

Gail Bayer, evening resident care supervisor, earned a full scholarship to attend the program. Copper Ridge Institute has attracted acclaimed

researchers and teachers, one of the factors that impressed Bayer.

“It was exciting to meet physicians who are at the front lines of dementia research,” Bayer says. “I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to attend.”

Bayer’s colleague, daytime resident care supervisor Carol Dyer, echoes Bayer’s comments: “It was an honor to be in the same room with the research physicians, and to be taught by them.”

Both Bayer and Dyer say they learned a lot in their week at the institute and are planning in-service training for other Ravenwood staff to share what they learned.

“We learned how to increase the quality of life for those with dementia and how to help their families,” Bayer says. “We learned why they behave the way they do, and that understanding is half the battle. We discussed the varying degrees of dementia, and how to care for residents who suffer from dementia without interfering with the lives of residents who are alert and oriented.”

“We learned how to help our geriatric nursing assistants improve their communication with residents,” Dyer adds, “and that when you improve communication, you improve care and ultimately their quality of life. We learned how to help improve communication with other residents and visitors as well.”

Overall they learned that

dementia care should be very resident-oriented and individualized. “Each resident reacts to dementia in different ways,” Dyer explains. “Understanding that is a big step. And understanding what you are dealing with results in better care.”

Moving up in nursing education

Sarah Kelly, a geriatric nurse assistant at Ravenwood, has earned a scholarship to help with her education as an LPN. Becoming a nurse is something she’s always wanted to do.

And when she’s finished with the LPN program at Hagerstown Community College, she’ll be that much closer to her dream.

“I plan to continue and become an RN, and maybe even go for my master’s degree,” says Kelly, one of seven successful candidates for an LPN scholarship program this summer offered through The Beacon Institute. The institute is the educational affiliate of LifeSpan, an association of senior care providers in Maryland and the District of Columbia.

Kelly says she’s motivated to learn more about caring for older people. “Being here has helped me understand a lot about aging and everything our residents have to deal with,” she says.

Ravenwood Lutheran Village’s Assisted Living Center.



A place where strangers can fast become friends

Agnes Bassford didn't know Ruth Hogue when she moved to *The Lutheran Village at Harbor Pointe* in Salisbury, Md., this spring. But it wasn't long before the newcomer and the two-year resident became fast friends.

"Some people call us the Bobbsey Twins," Hogue jokes.

Neither woman can point to any single thing that triggered the friendship. There are some similarities between the two—both were widowed after more than 50 years of marriage. Both have sons living in the area. And both are 78.

But their backgrounds are different. Bassford was born and reared on a tobacco farm, and when she married, she remained in the same home for 44 years. She had one son.

The daughter of a draft horse expert and farm extension specialist, Hogue was

graduated from The College of Wooster in Ohio, with a major in religion. Her career included positions in a bank and as secretary to a minister and a multimillionaire. She has three children.

Yet the two have much in common, they say.

"We're of different faiths," notes Hogue, "but faith is important to both of us." They also share a good sense of humor and laugh a lot together. They live beside each other and watch out for each other. And they try to walk together every day.

Something else they agree on is their choice of *The Lutheran Village at Harbor Pointe*. Both had help from families in selecting the retirement community, and they say they both felt at home right away.

"I like the informality and the friendly people," Hogue notes. Bassford agrees, adding that she appreciates the storage space and roomi-



Agnes Bassford (left) and Ruth Hogue first met as next-door neighbors at *The Lutheran Village at Harbor Pointe*, and quickly developed a fond friendship.

ness of her cottage.

Most of all, she appreciates her new-found friend.

"So I'm a high school graduate and Ruth graduated from college," Bassford says. "So we have different religions. The differences just don't matter."

Volunteers' practice makes perfect

Frostburg Village has come to the rescue of the rescuers. To help firefighters train for real emergencies, fire departments conduct drills in preparation for true emergencies. That need is what brought members of the Frostburg Volunteer Fire Department to Frostburg Village earlier this year.

The volunteers needed a high-rise building for practice purposes, and Frostburg Heights came to their rescue.

"The firefighters had never had the opportunity to practice and train with their equipment in a non-emergency on a high-rise building until now," says Rebecca Brown-McCusker, manager of *Frostburg Heights Apartments*. "Arrangements were made for the drill after one of our fourth-floor apartments was vacated."

Firefighters acted as if this drill were a true emergency, says Brown-McCusker. The department used its aerial ladder to

reach the fourth floor. They also entered the building through a back door as well as from the ladder, simulating an actual rescue with a Stokes Basket.

"We were happy to help them with a trial run," says Brown-McCusker. "It's good to know that a rescue of this sort can be carried out if necessary."

Frostburg Fire Department firefighters conduct a rescue drill at Frostburg Heights Apartments.



Open arms

Continued from Page 6

taking that the child we ended up with would be a good fit for the family.”

Provided with photographs, birth dates, and information about the children’s parents, the Talbotts turned to other families who had adopted children from Liberia.

“We sent the photos to families we had known and asked them to show their children the photos to see if they recognized any of them,” he adds. One child recognized nine-year-old Baruch, who had already won the heart of Mrs. Talbott.

Although the Talbotts adopted Baruch shortly thereafter in March 2003, it marked only the beginning of their efforts to bring him home. “We were trying to work through the State Department to process the visas, understanding that the situation was going to get worse. We ended up seeking help through our senator’s office,” Mr. Talbott says, adding that they soon discovered that Liberia wanted to make certain that all orphan relinquishments were true and correct. “We had Baruch and 30 other children who were adopted stuck in the middle of a war zone, where the State Department policy was they had to do field investigations and they had no ability to do them.”

The uncertainties drew together the Talbotts and other adoptive parents in the same situation, leading to a grassroots effort to get their story out. “We formed a group called Save My Children,” Mr. Talbott says of the 14 families. “There have been about a dozen newspaper articles and we are working with humanitarian agencies. We exchange e-mails daily with the parents who are still waiting for their children.”

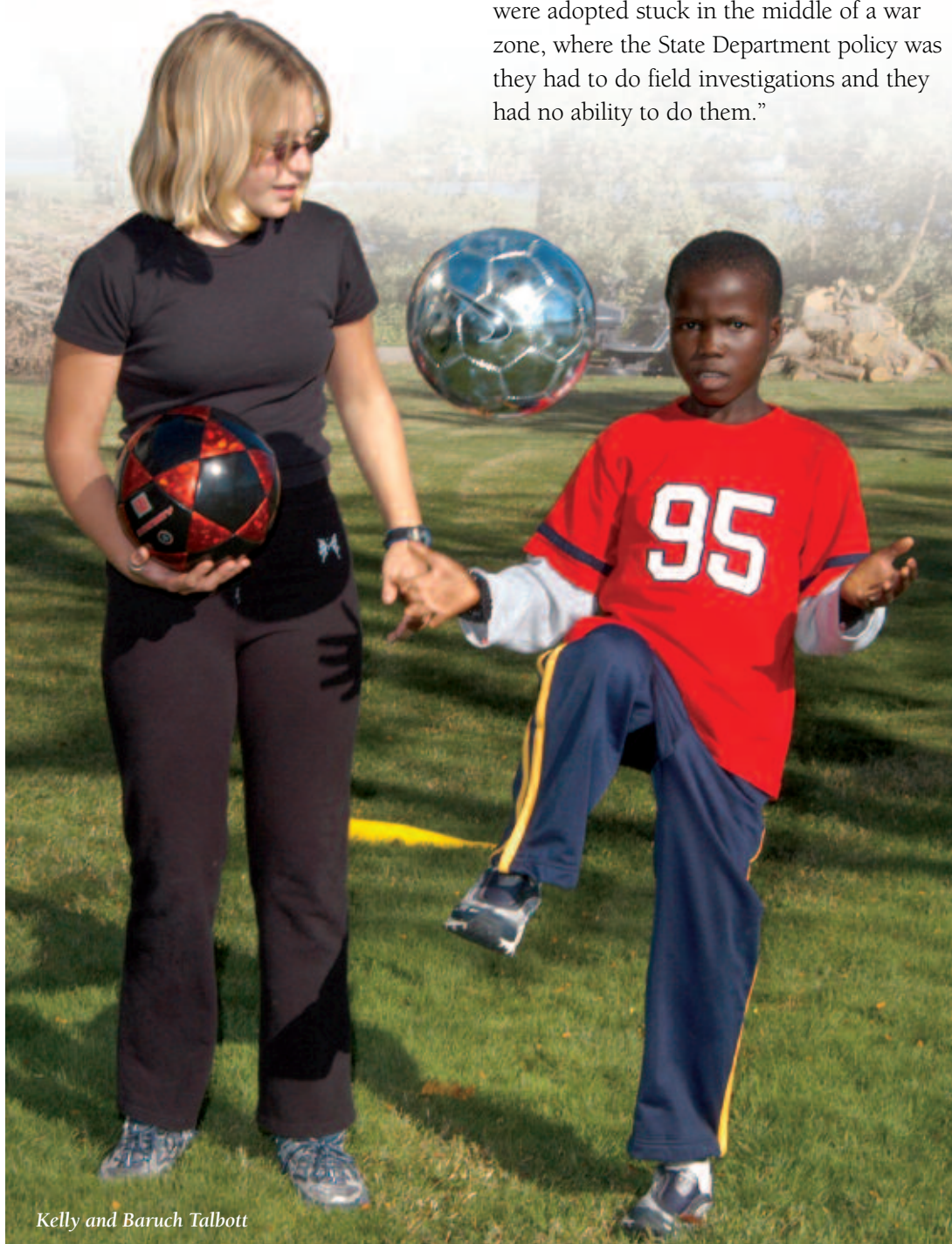
During the last week of August, the State Department approved Baruch’s visa and that of another child. Mr. Talbott and the other child’s adoptive mother flew to Ghana with her attorney. “Thank goodness we had [her attorney], who made a lot of arrangements for us. You needed someone to do the coordination,” remembers Mr. Talbott. The attorney “was able to do a lot from the U.S. side.”

Even as she did her part to help from home, Mrs. Talbott found the eight-day wait difficult. “Going through this has been like going through pregnancy—ups, downs, and uncertainties,” she says. “Waiting was really tough.”

One of the hardest things was waiting for her husband and son to get through customs when they returned to the United States. “We had all these thoughts [about our meeting],” she remembers. “He let us hug him. Kelly was looking for much more of an emotional meeting than what she got out of it.”

After Baruch arrived, he was hesitant to eat American foods and open up to his family. “He was unwilling to talk for the first couple of weeks. He would raise his eyebrows when he meant ‘yes,’” says Mr. Talbott, adding that while food is such a great reward for most children, it didn’t work with Baruch. “When he first came, you couldn’t get him to eat any U.S. food. Now he likes ice cream.”

In the months since he joined their family, however, Baruch has adjusted well. “The bonding has been unbelievable,” says Mrs. Talbott. “You don’t know what to expect when you get a child who has been an



Kelly and Baruch Talbott

Please turn to Page 14

Diakon purchases Robinwood village

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries has purchased Washington County Health System's interest in *The Village at Robinwood* in Hagerstown.

The decision for Diakon to assume sole ownership of the retirement community was mutual, say the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president/CEO, and James P. Hamill, the health system's president/CEO.

"With planning under way for a proposed regional medical center, we felt that our energies would be better spent focusing on the health system's core business, providing quality care for our patients," says Hamill.

"The purchase also made sense for

us," McKee notes. "The change will allow us to enhance our long-term commitment to providing senior care and accommodations in the Hagerstown area." The agency has operated Ravenwood Lutheran Village in Hagerstown since 1978.

The change further positions Diakon for offering its Ravenwood and Robinwood retirement services as a Continuing Care Retirement Community with the full continuum of residential accommodations and services for older persons.

Tressler Lutheran Services—now part of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries—and Washington County Health System formed a partnership in 1999 to build The Village at Robinwood, which consists of an

assisted living facility and retirement-living accommodations.



Flood relief efforts

Continued from Page 8

group is meeting on the Eastern Shore because the needs are different there.

"There will be a local board made up of local religious and lay people," says Albright. "The area is so sparsely populated that we will seek participation from community organizations, like the United Way as well, if they have ways to help and resources to bring to the table. A third group has been created to respond to needs in Delaware, which suffered effects from both Hurricane Isabel

and remnants of a tropical storm that had hit the region four days before Isabel.

The transition doesn't mean an end to the services Diakon is providing to the people affected by the storms, says Wolinski. "We are recovery that is constant, staying with them, being present," she says. "What's happening now is we are looking for the longer term healing that needs to take place."

Marilyn Davis, a former student at the Tressler Lutheran Home for Children and a member of St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Bowley's Quarters, wanted to give back to the Lutheran church by volunteering to help storm victims. She told Diakon staff members participating in the relief efforts that she knew Tressler—now part of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries—would assist with efforts to help those in need.



SERVICE-TO-DATE

Each year, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries touches the lives of thousands of persons throughout Maryland and Delaware. As of the end of September, the number of persons served regionally totaled more than 7,000.

Brandywine Program, Delaware
539 persons

Congregational & Community Ministries, Maryland
5,121 persons

Diakon Adoption Services, Maryland
384 families

KidzStuff Child Care, Baltimore
185 children

Frostburg Village, Allegany County
450 persons

Ravenwood Lutheran Village, Hagerstown
435 persons

The Lutheran Village at Harbor Pointe, Salisbury
159 persons

The Village at Robinwood, Hagerstown
106 persons

Tressler Refugee Services, Baltimore
93 persons

Open arms

Continued from Page 12

orphan. But to get a child who will bond with you rather easily is a welcome joy.”

Baruch also is doing well in school, where he was put in an age-appropriate class. “We are still feeling our way along to see where he is at,” says Mrs. Talbott. “School is very challenging for him, yet he feels very comfortable in some of his classes. The guidance counselor has taken him under her wing.”

According to his father, Baruch has begun to speak more freely than he did when he first arrived in the states. “He just now is starting to tell us some of the difficult things that happened that last month in Liberia. He is obviously feeling more secure. He feels safe enough to share those things,” Mr. Talbott says. “Everything so far has been very affirming—even the difficulty in wading through the war in Liberia. I never wavered from this conviction that this was the right thing to do.”

Although initially unsure where God was leading them, Mrs. Talbott believes adding Baruch to their family was a wonderful blessing.

“We have so many resources in this country, yet so many times we hold on so tightly,” she says.

“God blesses us in so many ways when we are willing to open up our arms and follow what He has in mind.”



Refugees greet Iranian activist

When Iranian activist Reza Baluchi ran through the streets of Baltimore on the final leg of his round-the-world bike and run for peace, staff members and those assisted by Diakon’s **Tressler Refugee & Immigration Services** were there to greet him.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service had invited Diakon to participate in the August news conference for the man whose mission for peace began six years ago in Iran. His trip began on a bicycle and has taken him through six continents. Baluchi, who had been running an average of 30-plus miles per day since May, passed through Baltimore en route to Ground Zero in New York City, at which he arrived on Sept. 11.

“We had very last-minute notice that Reza was coming through Baltimore,” explains Meg Arenberg, LIRS president’s office assistant. “I contacted [Diakon] and asked them to send anyone who could come. It turned out great because Reza was greeted by several new members of the Iranian community.”

In addition to the asylees and refugees who greeted Baluchi, Diakon caseworker



Photo by Neemah Aaron photographer, courtesy of LIRS.

Fathollah Rasouli (right), Tressler Refugee and Immigration Services caseworker, with Reza Baluchi (second from right) and LIRS Assistant Director for Grassroots Advocacy and Public Education Sarah Cross, who joined Baluchi for his run through Baltimore. LIRS Director for Communications Susan Baukhages is seen in the background.

Fathollah Rasouli was able to act as an informal interpreter for him during media interviews.

“It is always nice to have contact with folks at the local level,” says Arenberg. “We don’t frequently get to meet the refugees who are the impetus for most of the work we do.”

The following regional memorial gifts were received from July through September 2003. Diakon programs within the Delaware-Maryland Synod thank these donors for their generous gifts!

IN MEMORY OF

Ree Doughty

Tina Helsel

Ms. Margaret Hendrickson

Jayson Kordish

Paul E. Underwood

Jacqueline J. Wines

DONATED BY

Mr. & Mrs. Albert J. Wallace

Mr. & Mrs. Donald D. Clark

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Mock

Mrs. Martha E. Mosley

P&P Transport Employees

Ms. Barbara J. Shipley

Ms. Lisa M. VanMeter

Ms. Ann Marie DiLorenzo

Mr. & Mrs. Malcolm E. Martin

Synergy Software Technology

Mrs. Betty M. Underwood

Mr. Charles E. Wines, Jr.