

FAMILY CONNECTIONS



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www.diakon.org

GOLFERS HIT THE LINKS TO BENEFIT DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

More than 100 golfers, including Diakon Adoption & Foster Care recruitment and family development staff, participated in the annual Diakon Golf Tournament Sept. 8 at the golf course at Felicita Garden Resort and Spa near Harrisburg.

The event, which raised funds to support Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, included the Power Golf Trick Shot Show by PGA professional Ben Witter. Witter included several children awaiting adoptive placement in his program. Several of the children, Lance and Danny, both age 11, and Johnelli, age 15, were then filmed to be featured in “Val’s Kids” segments on abc27 News, Harrisburg.

All three youths were treated to a once-in-a-lifetime experience when Valerie Pritchett took the young men to the Channel 27 news station. They visited the weather room and learned about the meteorological instruments, visited the actual studio, and were able to experience how a live broadcast is done. The youths thoroughly enjoyed the tour and were filled with hope of finding a permanent and loving home.

The three youths featured at the event participate in Pennsylvania’s

Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network Older Child Matching Initiative grant, awarded to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care in July. The program is currently serving 64 young people over the age of 10, who are eagerly awaiting the recruitment of an adoptive family they can call their own.

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care is looking for experienced adoptive and foster families, single parents, empty-nesters, same-sex couples, middle- to lower-income families, and families who understand what their lifelong commitment means in the life of a child when they become resources for the very special children in our foster-care system.

If you are interested in learning how to become an adoptive or foster parent, please contact Elisa Esh at (717) 795-0479. If you are interested



From left to right, John, Lance, Danny with PGA professional Ben Witter.

in learning more about any of the children in the Older Child Matching Initiative grant, please contact Elizabeth White, (717) 795-0479 or Angie Gillen at (484) 300-2074.

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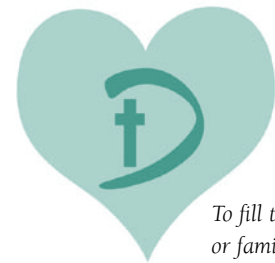


ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

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

For the children who don't have a permanent family to call their own this Christmas, the smallest gift can make the holiday so much brighter. Below are just a few of the gifts our families and children in foster care have asked for this year. Won't you please consider a gift today?

- Gift baskets for families welcoming a child into their home – \$50
- Winter coats – \$35
- Pajamas and personal care items, or new clothing (gift cards for discount department stores) – \$25
- Backpacks filled with school items – \$25
- Watches – \$25
- Sports equipment (soccer ball, basketball, football) – \$35
- Family activity gift cards (for restaurants, sports, etc.) – \$25
- Lego or craft sets – \$20
- Baby bath supplies, towels, washcloths, baby shampoo – \$20
- “Oh The Places You’ll Go” and “All About Me” books by Dr. Seuss – \$15
- Picture frames that say the word “family” (4 x 6 or 5 x 7) – \$15
- Hair-dryers – \$15
- Diapers (all sizes), pull ups, baby wipes, powdered formula – \$25
- Disposable cameras – \$10



To fill the wish of a child or family this holiday season, please use the enclosed envelope.



HELP US FIND FOREVER FAMILIES



Idris, age 11

Idris is a smart, friendly 11-year-old boy who has so much to offer! Those who know Idris have described him as respectful, polite, helpful toward adults, and protective toward younger children. He is a happy child and enjoys laughing, shopping, watching movies, playing board games, and performing magic tricks. Idris has an adventurous spirit and would love to ride on a four-wheeler one day. Feeling safe is very important to Idris and he would do best in a home with routine and consistency. Idris is developing skills to help him manage feelings of grief and loss, sadness, and frustration. While he works on these skills, it is best for Idris to be in a home that does not have animals, even though he adores them.

Tyler, age 13

Tyler is a 13-year-old boy who is eagerly waiting for his forever family. Tyler truly loves music, especially hip hop, and loves to play on the computer. Tyler is friendly and smart, and people describe him as always having a smile on his face and a friendly greeting when he sees them. Tyler hopes to find a kind, loving family to keep him safe. It's important for Tyler to know what to expect and he benefits from knowing what is expected of him. He is autistic so he needs a family with a stable, routine lifestyle. Tyler's family should have no pets or younger children. He would do best as the only child in a home.



Maria, age 14

Maria is a lovely young lady with a bright spark of personality! She is smart, athletic, and loves to sing. Maria has a wonderful sense of humor and loves to laugh, goof around, and have fun. She gets along well with adults and tends to be a leader around her peers. Maria deserves a family that is as full of life as she is and will keep her active and share her enthusiasm for sports. She will thrive with parents who can help her cope with disappointments and show her all the wonderful possibilities her future holds. All families will be considered for Maria.

If you are interested in learning more about any of these children, please contact Angie Gillen, SWAN OCMI child-focused recruitment specialist, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, at (484) 300-2074 or gillena@diakon.org.

HAUNTED HOUSE BENEFITS DIAKON

This Halloween, fright-lovers got a scare and supported Diakon at the same time! On Oct. 27, Laserdome in Manheim, Pa., held a “Scream in the Dark” haunted house to benefit Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. Half of all admission proceeds were given to Diakon. Participants also enjoyed a Halloween laser show, trick-or-treating, video games, and laser tag. Youths from the Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network’s Older Child Matching Initiative, who are available for adoption, were invited to enjoy the evening’s festivities.



Children enjoy arcade games during Halloween Laserdome event.



Ashley Wisner of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care mans the information booth during event.

DIAKON SPREADS WORD ABOUT ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE AT SEMI-PRO FOOTBALL GAME

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care staff members shared information about adoption and children searching for families during the South Central Yard Dawgs football game on Sept. 20 at Susquehanna High School in Harrisburg, Pa.

“This was a great opportunity for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care to reach potential adoptive and foster

families for our youths to assure that we don’t have children age out of the foster-care system to a very uncertain future,” says Elisa Esh, director, recruitment and family development, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.

Adoptive children were in attendance at the game and were taped for “Val’s Kids” on abc27 News, Harrisburg. Kenny, age 14, and JJ, age

15, part of Diakon’s Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network Older Child Matching Initiative, practiced with the team, helped with the coin toss at the start of the game, and distributed footballs to the crowd. Dee Dee, age 15, who was successfully matched with an adoptive family through Diakon Adoption & Foster Care’s Wendy’s Wonderful Kids program, sang the national anthem.

DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE STAFF WALK FOR AWARENESS

Local children, youth, and family agencies united on Oct. 2 at the “Child Abuse Awareness Walk,” sponsored by the York Children & Youth Services agency to help spread awareness of child abuse and prevention.

If you are concerned that a child or teen you know may be abused or neglected, please contact your local children & youth agency. All calls can be confidential and these agencies want to help. Only in dire cases are children placed into foster care or with relatives. Most often, helpful services are provided.



Karen King and Cara Kerr of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's York office walk for a cause.

TOPTON OFFICE OF DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE REUNITES ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Topton's second annual reunion picnic was held in August at Longswamp Park in Mertztown, Pa. Twenty-one families celebrated by enjoying crafts, food, face painting, and games.

“It was great to reconnect with those families who continue our mission of finding permanent homes for children,” says Kathy Roach, director of permanency services at Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's Topton office.



Children prepare for the marshmallow race during the family reunion.



During the picnic, children played in the sandbox.

FINALIZATIONS

JUNE 1, 2008

Arianna
David & Bridgett
Alburtis, Pa.

JULY 2, 2008

Teon
Catherine
Baltimore, Md.

JULY 11, 2008

Nicholas
James & Annette
Allentown, Pa.

JULY 18, 2008

Courtney & Jonathan
Ken & Dina
Harrisburg, Pa.

JULY 29, 2008

Fiona
Andrew & Angela
Conshohocken, Pa.

JULY 30, 2008

Kareema
Kharton & Sharon
Reading, Pa.

AUG. 8, 2008

James & Kelsie
James & Karen
Bethlehem, Pa.

AUG. 13, 2008

Luke
Ryan & Tarinda
Reading, Pa.

AUG. 19, 2008

Jennifer
Barry & Mary
Allentown, Pa.

AUG. 19, 2008

Savannah
Andrea
Harrisburg, Pa.

SEPT. 25, 2008

Thomas
Stewart & Heather
New Cumberland, Pa.



James, Nicholas, Calvin, Annette, and case manager, Angela.
Nicholas is from Lehigh County.



Jen, Caden, and Jason. Caden's finalization took place on Oct. 15. He is from Berks County.



Monica, Bob, and Marcus. Marcus comes from Berks County.



Kharton and Sharon with Kareema. Kareema's adoption was finalized on July 30.



Nicholas and Tami with Alyssa. Alyssa's adoption was finalized on Oct. 1.



Dean and Kathy adopted Dakota and Savannah on Oct. 15 in Berks County in front of Judge Peter Schmehl.

ADOPTION STAFF REACH OUT TO U.S. SOLDIER

Responding to an appeal from the Pennsylvania Office of Children, Youth and Families during the 16th annual Pennsylvania Permanency Conference, staff of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care and Diakon Pregnancy Services from the northeastern Pennsylvania office in Topton collected several boxes of toiletries, snacks, and stationery items that were shipped to soldier Quinton Brubaker, on active duty with the United States Army in Afghanistan.

Brubaker, adopted by a family when he was 17, has a wife and two sons.



Staff come together to support soldier.

OUR FAMILIES SPEAK OUT ABOUT SWAN'S POST-PERMANENCY SERVICES...

- “The post-permanency services for our family helped us to become one of the success stories.”
- “I would really recommend the post-permanency services. They’ve been a source of support for our family, helping us to function as a more typical family would.”
- “It’s been a wonderful experience to know that we still have that connection with SWAN.”
- “We love SWAN. We love that we have someone we can turn to when we need them.”
- “Sometimes it’s lots of little supports along the way that help a family stand up—it’s not something dramatic; it’s someone holding your hand through the journey.”
- “I can’t stress enough how lost I felt without these services and how I struggled and how I thought I didn’t do the right thing. Now I feel very empowered, even on tough days. There are resources available; I can call people. The SWAN network calls me periodically to see how I’m doing ... so you feel there is help out there. I can do this.”

OTHER HAPPENINGS IN DIAKON

DIAKON ACQUIRES NEW PROGRAM TO SERVE MORE INDIVIDUALS IN NEED

Diakon Kathryn's Kloset, now a service of Diakon, acts as a conduit between corporate gift-in-kind donors by connecting multiple partners to organizations serving those most in need in Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic States. The program's namesake was a mother who responded to the needs of everyone in her neighborhood. Acting as nurse and caregiver, she shared whatever she had to help any one of her neighbors. Her

giving was unconditional, whether the items shared were food, clothing, or school supplies. Her generosity and mission have grown into a distribution program that partners corporations with numerous 501(c)(3) organizations in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Since 2002, more than 750,000 people have been served, and in 2009 alone, an anticipated 250,000 will be served. By establishing and maintaining direct connections

between a network of partner nonprofit agencies and corporate donors, products are collected, stored, and distributed to the end user (people in need in the community) free of charge. The warehouse operations center stores and distributes donated products to partnering agencies, allowing a far greater capacity of donated products to flow to those in need.

E V E N T S

Palate & Perception

February 24, 2009 – The Wine Market

(Location address: East Fort Ave., Baltimore, MD)

Taste Spanish wines and delectable hors d'oeuvres while enjoying an art show featuring the works of several local artists. Proceeds will support the work of Diakon Adoption Services - Maryland office, Diakon Kidzstuff Child Care Center, and Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. Sponsorship opportunities are available as well as individual tickets (\$100 each).

Dining with Diakon-Capital Region

April 22, 2009 – Hilton Harrisburg

You won't want to miss being part of the 5th anniversary chef challenge event, Dining with Diakon. Socialize while tasting personal recipes from local business and community leaders who are acting chefs for the evening. All proceeds benefit the Diakon Wilderness Center in Boiling Springs, Pa., which provides specialized services for youth from across Pennsylvania, primarily those adjudicated, delinquent, or dependent by county juvenile courts or children and youth services. Sponsorship opportunities are available as well as individual tickets (\$100 each).

If interested in participating in the above events, please contact Dawna Trump at (717) 795-0464.

MAYOR OF YORK PROCLAIMS NOVEMBER AS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Mayor John S. Brenner proclaims November as National Adoption Month in the city of York to focus attention on the growing number of children in the system waiting to be placed with loving families.

Since 2000, the York Area Adoption Coalition, made up of three York area agencies, The Children's Home of York, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, and York County Children and Youth Services, has strived to place children with loving adoptive families and emphasize placement of children with special needs.



Front - Janell Wadlinger, Amanda Wilt, Tanya Almoney, and Rochelle Livingston of York County Children and Youth Services. Back - Mayor John S. Brenner, Kim Deiter of SWAN, Karen King, Cheryl Drake, Sarah McDevitt, Denise Roe, and Craig Gehosky of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, and Ashley Gross and Elizabeth Jansen of Children's Home of York.

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 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 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!

OBAMA VISITS LEHIGH VALLEY



President-elect Barack Obama is pictured holding a foster child from Diakon Adoption & Foster Care during his visit to the Lehigh Valley.

PLACEMENTS

MAY 28, 2008

Shania, age 12 and
Richard, age 14
Bryan & Lori
Hanover, Pa.

JUNE 6, 2008

Kenny, age 10
Jens & Annette
Annapolis, Md.

JUNE 13, 2008

Lynn, age 11
John & Lorrie
Hanover, Pa.

JUNE 13, 2008

Ben, age 12
Scott & Connie
Port Deposit, Md.

JUNE 13, 2008

Heather, age 10,
Christopher, age 9,
and Eric, age 8
Colleen
Edgewood, Md.

JUNE 14, 2008

Joseph, age 5 months
Joseph & Kathy
Mechanicsburg, Pa.

JUNE 18, 2008

Selena, age 3
Scott & Kimberlee
Macungie, Pa.

JUNE 21, 2008

Ebony, age 3
Terry & Rosemary
York, Pa.

JUNE 24, 2008

Savannah, age 2 and
Dakota, age 3
Dean & Kathy
Reading, Pa.

JULY 1, 2008

Neubry, age 2
Kevin & Deborah
Reading, Pa.

JULY 3, 2008

Violet, age 2
Craig & Danyell
Whitehall, Pa.

JULY 25, 2008

Krystal, age 10
David & Lisa
Scotia, Pa.

JULY 25, 2008

Hong Tao Qin, age 2
Ted & Karen
Baltimore, Md.

JULY 26, 2008

Etame, age 8 months
Calvin & Trisha
Baltimore, Md.

AUG. 1, 2008

Thomas, age 4
Stewart & Heather
New Cumberland, Pa.

AUG. 15, 2008

Nicholas, age 2
Dale & Stacey
Harrisburg, Pa.



Jason and Jennifer adopted Aubrey on Oct. 1 in Berks County in front of Judge Peter Schmehl.



Leah was adopted by Val and Tiffany on Oct. 23 in Berks County.

BIBLE SCHOOL DONATES TO DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

Children and group leaders from Nativity Lutheran Church's Vacation Bible School in Allentown, Pa., donated backpacks filled with assorted school supplies for the children of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. The activity was part of the VBS "Friendship Trek."



Bible School donates backpacks.

WHAT DOES A "CHILD PROFILE" PROVIDE?

Children and teens in foster care can experience dozens of moves throughout their childhood. Prior to being placed in foster care, many children move because their parents unfortunately lead transient lives or children are moved to and from relatives' homes.

When in foster care, children can be moved to and from several foster homes, back to birth family, and then the cycle can repeat. These moves, as well as their causes, can teach children that life is chaotic and unstable, relationships are impermanent, and caring only leads to disappointment.

As a result of these disruptions, it's not uncommon for foster children to have no childhood pictures, keepsakes, birth certificates, medical records, and school histories, as well as any significant long-term relationships. To help remedy these profound challenges, Pennsylvania's Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network (SWAN) developed the "child profile."

Essentially, the child profile is an extensive document that pieces together a child's history and documents his or her unique story. The necessity of the profile is to help the child, family (birth, adoptive, and/or foster), and child-care staff better understand and serve the child's life and, more importantly, the child's perspective.

Additionally, when children feel understood, they are more able to re-open their hearts and learn more gentle lessons that life has to offer, such as feeling a sense of calm that being loved affords, or that it's all right to make friends because you will not have to say goodbye before the school year ends, or that it's okay to make a mistakes because you will still be loved.

Family Connections is published by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, in cooperation with the Office of Corporate Communications of

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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Mechanicsburg and York offices
Elisa Esh, Director, resource family
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Jennifer Leonard, Editor

Visit our website at www.diakon.org

HELP US CONTINUE OUR MISSION

In 2007 the need for dollars to subsidize program operations of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care services exceeded \$550,000. With the financial status of the nation, our projected need in 2008 will well exceed \$900,000. Program executives are budgeting for an annual deficit in 2009 that will be more than \$800,000 across the four adoption and foster-care sites.



In retrospect, the programs have been serving more and more children and families on an annual basis. Please consider contributing to our program so we can continue our level of care to those we support.

Thank you!



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

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