

DIAKON CONNECTION

SPRING 2004

Rockin' to aid others

Fourteen-year-old Samantha Wood of Pottsville could have done just about anything Valentine's day weekend—play sports, relax, or even shop—but instead she wanted to demonstrate Christian love by “rocking” the weekend away.

Participating in “Kids Rockin' for Kids” at Trinity Lutheran Church in Pottsville, Samantha says she wanted to help others through her involvement in the event, which benefited Diakon's *TresslerCare Weekend Alternative Program*.

The program provides weekend care for at-risk youths at Diakon's Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa.

“Participating in the rock-a-thon is like loving your neighbor and showing that you are a good Christian,” says Samantha. “It shows that you want to help others and

even though we might not exactly know the people we are rocking for personally—we still love them and want to serve them.”

As part of the rock-a-thon's outreach ministry, Samantha and approximately 75 other youths rocked 12 or 24 hours straight to raise \$5,000—the most money ever raised through the event, which originated in 1977.

Proceeds will be used to purchase gear such as sleeping bags, coats, gloves, and boots for Weekend Alternative Program participants such as Brandon Shrawder, 18, of Middletown, Pa.

“It can really get frigid in the winter, especially since we sleep outdoors. Some people come up here with regular street clothes. They don't understand how cold it can get,” says Brandon.

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Those present for Trinity Lutheran Church's rock-a-thon to benefit Diakon's Weekend Alternative Program included, from left, Brianne Morgan; George Eckenrode, TresslerCare director of marketing/census development; Kaitlyn Torpey; Karen Wood, Diakon's director of community outreach services in Schuylkill County and youth ministry coordinator at the church; Anthony Stukes, Weekend Alternative Program assistant director; and Brandon Shrawder, WAP student.

Adoption Services

Community Services for Seniors
(Berks & Schuylkill counties)

Caum Assisted Living, Reading

Congregational Advocates

Family Life Services

Hospice Saint John

Luther Crest Retirement Community, Allentown

The Lutheran Home at Tipton

Luther Ridge Assisted Living, Pottsville

Lutherwood, Scranton

Pocono Lutheran Village,
East Stroudsburg

Pregnancy Services

RSVP Lehigh, Northampton, & Carbon counties

Saint Luke Village, Hazleton

TresslerCare Foster Care, Tipton

Volunteer Home Care

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DIAKON
LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES
www.diakon.org

Singles group offers friendship and opportunity

Mission: In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service.

Diakon serves nearly 60,000 persons annually in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware through adoption, foster care, refugee services, volunteer home care, retirement villages, housing accommodations, congregational ministries, hospice services, and more.

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Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries is committed to a diverse workforce. As a result, qualified applicants are considered without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or the presence of a non-job-related medical condition or handicap.



Life had changed for Eric.

A 50-year-old widower, he was finding a little time for interaction with others.

“My daughter went off to college and things were starting to wind down around the house,” he says. “When you get to my age, you have a full-time job, you run around doing things, and you find yourself running short of time to interact with people. You need something structured to help. It seemed like a good time to join.”

What he joined was Berks Single, a Diakon-sponsored support group for people who are divorced or widowed or who never married. A logical extension of *Family Life Services – Northeastern Pennsylvania’s* counseling services for divorced or separated people, the group meets at 7 p.m. the first Monday and third Thursday of every month at Reformation Lutheran Church, Reiffton.

The group began in early 2003 after a counselor brought the need to the attention of Diakon’s Family Life Services. “He felt there weren’t any resources in the Reading area for single people and came to us to see if we could start a support group,” explains Catherine Scott, program coordinator. After surveying area residents, staff members agreed a need existed.

“The people who responded were interested in a group that would meet a variety of needs,” Scott says. “We didn’t target an age range, but it has evolved into a mid-life group in their 40s, 50s, and early 60s.”

The group has a contingent of dedicated members and attracts new people every meeting. Although early meetings began with discussions centered on wellness and healthy relationships, the group now includes more social events.

“We’re doing more fun things where people can connect to each other. We have a planning session every few months where members brainstorm ideas,” adds Scott. “The game plan is for one member to host or direct each meeting.”

Donna, 55, joined Berks Singles after finding members of singles groups in nearby towns

uninterested in going beyond their borders. “When I heard they had a singles group in Berks County, I thought this way I could make friends and it would be easier to do things with them,” she says, noting that the group recently purchased discount tickets to go tubing at Blue Marsh. “We’re getting opportunities that otherwise we wouldn’t have.”

New members appreciate the fact Family Life Services does not charge a membership fee to offset the costs involved, asking only for a voluntary donation for regular meetings.

The group’s purpose is an important one that needs to be considered, says Scott. “The loneliness that being single can bring is a real issue that a lot of times is overlooked, especially in our society where a lot of people don’t have the social support that existed in the past,” she says. “Even in the church, there are a lot of programs for family. But oftentimes singles—especially the divorced—don’t feel part of things.”

For more information on the group, readers may contact Catherine Scott at (610) 682-1337.



Volunteer Home Care Love of dogs creates special bond

When she received a phone call asking her if she could spend time visiting with an elderly woman who had just lost her husband, Diakon's Volunteer Home Care volunteer Jacquelyn Dobrozsi of Orwigsburg didn't want to miss the opportunity to help.

But one of her two beloved dogs had just had surgery, and she couldn't leave him alone. Her solution proved to be a triumph for everyone involved.

What Dobrozsi didn't know at the time was that the woman she was to visit, Eva Moyer, was a fellow dog-lover and more. According to her son, Fred Moyer, Mrs. Moyer had attended dog-grooming school and was well-known in the Reading area for her dog-grooming skills. She also raised poodles and Yorkies.

"She was an artist and perfectionist where dogs were concerned," Moyer explains. "This is probably what broke the ice with Jackie."

His mother had had a stroke, but remained at home for a while. That's when she and Dobrozsi began their friendship. Dobrozsi visited regularly for nearly a year and a half, always with her two dogs, Dexter and Treze. Such was the bond that developed between the two women that Dobrozsi continued to visit Mrs. Moyer—again with the dogs—when she was eventually hospitalized. When Mrs. Moyer passed away at age 90, Dobrozsi and her dogs received a special invitation to the funeral.

"Jackie says my mother was like a granny to her dogs," Moyer says. "It was something to see them together."

"They bring me comfort and joy," she says, "and I know they can help other people, too."

Mrs. Moyer was very quiet on their first visit, says Dobrozsi, but soon "perked up" in response to the dogs. And the dogs became very eager to see the woman. At the nursing home and hospital, Dobrozsi would transport Dexter and Treze in a stroller.

"Wherever Eva went, we went," Dobrozsi notes, "and we

were always welcome. We just really enjoyed being with her."

Dobrozsi has rescued most of her animals from shelters and welcomes cats, birds and just about "any of God's creatures" into her home. Since Eva Moyer passed away, Dobrozsi has continued to visit with other Volunteer Home Care clients. And as long as their visits are welcome, Dexter and Treze will continue to accompany her.

"They bring me comfort and joy," she says, "and I know they can help other people, too."

Jacquelyn Dobrozsi took her dogs Dexter and Treze along on visits to Volunteer Home Care client Eva Moyer. Their mutual love of dogs helped forge a special friendship between the two women.



Luther Ridge inspires

Luther Ridge Assisted Living residents now have a quiet place to read, relax, or spend personal time reflecting on the importance of faith in their lives.

Located on the third floor lounge, the Pottsville assisted living community's "Inspiration Station" houses reading materials, videos, cassettes, rosaries, scapulas, prayer cards, religious medals, and church bulletins, says JoAnn Mikos, activities director.

"I thought it would be beneficial to have a quiet, relaxing place where residents can take time to reflect," she says. "Materials can be borrowed or donated by families, friends, and residents." The station is equipped with a television, VCR, and audiocassette player.

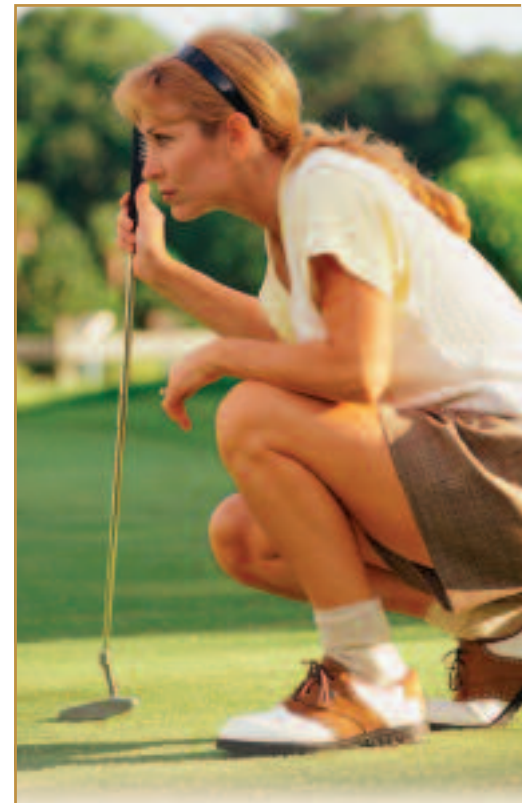
Although the Inspiration Station has been in place only since December, resident Isabel

Wiskerski says she uses it often. "Growing up, I never had religious materials to read, but now I do. I have started to read them already," she says.

Representing diverse faiths, the materials offer a range of spiritual insights. "Now when people talk of different faiths, at least I know what they are about," says Wiskerski.

Mikos agrees that station materials may offer a better understanding of others' beliefs and ways of life. "And we know how important faith is," she says. "When all else fails, we still have our faith."

However the station is used, it offers a reflective setting. "Sometimes I come out here and look at the materials," says Marion Ney, "but a lot of the time I just come to relax. I like it because it is nice and quiet."



Volunteer marshals needed

The Wachovia LPGA Classic, hosted by Betsy King at the Berkleigh Country Club in Kutztown, Pa., will be held Aug. 26 to Aug. 29.

Diakon's various services to children will benefit from a portion of the proceeds raised by the tournament.

Volunteers are needed to marshal hole #5. There are two shifts available each day. Volunteers must purchase a mandatory golf shirt for \$35 and attend a training session at Berkleigh Country Club (date and time to be announced). All volunteers will receive a volunteer badge which allows access to the clubhouse, a parking pass for the entire week of the tournament, and a lunch voucher per shift, providing an opportunity to watch golf by members of the LPGA.

If interested, please contact Heather Shallcross in Diakon's Office of Advancement at 1-888-582-2230, Ext. 1356, or (610) 682-1356.



Luther Ridge Assisted Living Activities Director JoAnn Mikos organized the effort for the inspiration station shown above.

Kutztown athletes get in the game at The Lutheran Home at Topton

Every month, a team of athletes from Kutztown University boards a bus and heads to *The Lutheran Home at Topton* campus for the “big game.” Though their athletic prowess is either in basketball or softball, they’re not coming to compete in sports. Instead, they make the trip to help residents enjoy the game of bingo.

“The whole team goes, along with the coaching staff,” says Janet Malouf, coach of the women’s basketball team. “I can tell by the comments on the bus-ride home that our players always enjoy themselves. They like the idea of making someone happy, of making a little difference in someone else’s life.”

The visits to Topton have occurred over the last 10 years Malouf has been at Kutztown, and actually began with the previous coach, Tom York, now on the men’s basketball staff. Both the men’s and women’s basketball teams volunteer at Topton, as does the women’s softball team.



Henry Health Care Center resident Frances Bernardo and Kutztown University women’s basketball coach Janet Malouf select a bingo prize.



Kutztown University women’s basketball team captains Danielle Warntz (left) and Amanda Zinobile prepare to call the next game of bingo.

“The residents tell us stories from their lives and they’re interested in hearing what the players think about things, too,” Malouf says. “I know that by the time they are seniors, many of the players on our teams have become very attached to the residents. I think it’s a real good thing for us and for the folks at Topton.”

“As soon as they hear the teams are coming, our residents are excited,” says Janet Blackwell, Topton director of activities, “especially the retired teachers. They like to ask about their majors, what they are studying.”

Blackwell compliments Kutztown’s involvement with The Lutheran Home at Topton, noting various activities and events that students have planned and supported.

“We know the athletes are very busy with their sports and their studies, and we are lucky to have them spend time with us,” Blackwell says. “When we see the kids and residents talking and laughing together ... well, it’s a real win-win situation.”

Meals on Wheels patrons cheered with flowers

In a first-ever partnership with the American Cancer Society, *Berks County Meals on Wheels* provided a “cheer bunch” of daffodils to clients, along with their meals, during Daffodil Days in March.

“It is a very fulfilling thought to provide seniors who are homebound and seeking the assistance of Meals on Wheels with a cheer bunch of daffodils,” says Stephanie McDonald, income development specialist for the Berks Unit of ACS.

ACS provided the flowers to at least 650 Meals on Wheels clients because of the generous sponsorship of several area businesses.

“We passed no cost on to Diakon [which operates Meals on Wheels] or the office of aging. We got sponsorship to underwrite this,” says McDonald, adding that this is the first time the Berks County ACS has broadened its available sponsorship opportunities.

“We hope, from this experience, that we can continue to provide this for all Meals on Wheels patrons in years to come. There is no better gift than a gift of flowers.”



WISH LIST

The following Diakon programs can use your assistance! If you or your congregation are able to donate any of these items or provide funding for their purchase, please contact Diakon's Office of Advancement at 1-888-582-2230, ext. 1219. Thank you!

Caum Assisted Living, Reading

Computer for residents
Outdoor benches
Television for public area
Stand-up garden for outdoor use
Cushions for outdoor furniture
Six-disc CD changer to be used for “hall” music

Diakon Adoption Services, Topton

PowerPoint projector
Digital camera
Digital camcorder
Overhead projector and screen
Recruitment posters and free advertising
Birthday cards for children
Blank cards for children
Bookstore gift cards
Video-store gift cards
Office desk and chair

Family Life Services – Northeastern Pennsylvania

Color printer
PowerPoint projector and screen
Laptop computer
Video to orient counselors to Family Life Services

TresslerCare Foster Care Services – Topton

Duffle bags/back packs
Diapers – sizes 3, 4, 5, 6 & pull-ups
Wipes
New car seats and booster seats
Digital camera with docking station
Disposable cameras with flash

Color printer
Gift bags (*all sizes*) and wrapping paper
New Pac'n Play

Pregnancy Services

Diapers – infant and size one
Wipes
Diaper bags
Formula – Similac Advance with iron
New infant car seats
Infant bath sets/infant grooming kits
Disposable cameras with flash
Gift bags (*all sizes*) and wrapping paper
Gift sets for birth parents
Scrapbook items for birth parents

Hospice Saint John

Cotton sheet sets (*twin size*)
Cloth underpads
Ensure
Hospital gowns (*male/female*)
Weekly pill cases
Sheep skins
Toiletries
(*talcum powder & liquid soap dispensers*)
Baby wipes
Baby monitors
Blankets
Children's bereavement books
Digital camera for wound-care patients
Camcorder, PowerPoint projector

Luther Crest Retirement Community, Allentown

Fitness equipment – new
High-low electric beds for health care center
Outdoor benches

Luther Ridge Assisted Living, Pottsville

Pool table with cues
Salt water fish tank
Indoor putting green
New outdoor furniture for the lookout and the gazebo
Automatic door for enclosed porch

Lutherwood, Scranton

Draperies – Pool-table cover (*community room*)
Clocks for common areas
Artwork for common areas

Pocono Lutheran Village, East Stroudsburg

Aquarium
French doors for dining room area
Furniture for new Activity Room

Saint Luke Village, Hazleton

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

Community Services for Seniors - Berks County

Volunteers to deliver meals to homebound elderly
CD player for exercise entertainment and musical activities
Video camera to record special events
Small coolers for homebound elderly
Sofa for senior centers

The Lutheran Home at Topton

High-low electrical beds
Mechanical lifts, sit-stand
Fireplace Halogen insert
Beauty-shop chairs and dryers
VCR and DVD players
Glider-rocking chairs
In-house television system
Holiday/special event table linens

Volunteer Home Care - Luzerne County region

Clients and volunteers needed in many areas. Especially helpful are volunteers who can transport and visit people who cannot drive or are living alone.

Diakon gets high marks as senior-housing provider

Lutherwood resident Jean Knickerbocker and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development have something in common.

They both believe *Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries* is doing a great job in providing affordable, secure, and comfortable accommodations for older persons and those with physical challenges.

Lutherwood Apartments in Scranton and Luther Meadows and Heilman House—both on the campus of *The Lutheran Home at Topton*—are HUD Section 8 facilities, meaning they offer rental assistance for those who are income-qualified.

In its annual review of Diakon—which also operates HUD-affiliated senior housing at Frostburg Heights Apartments in western Maryland—the federal department “rated us highly for the management and maintenance of our senior housing facilities. That favorable assessment seems to be one our residents share,” says Richard MacGregor,

who oversees Diakon’s housing program.

“Our maintenance is excellent,” Knickerbocker says of Lutherwood, “and the office personnel are very efficient. In all the years I’ve lived here, I’ve never heard a negative thing said.”

Knickerbocker, who has lived at Lutherwood nearly 19 years, is active with its resident association, helping to plan events and activities. She admits that she has “influenced” others to move to Lutherwood because of how happy she is living there. “I would recommend Lutherwood to anyone, and I do,” she laughs. “It feels like home to me.”

Bernadine Frey explains that, although she was born and reared in the Lehigh Valley, she married “a boy from Topton” and the town has been home to her ever since. Settling in at Luther Meadows was a comfortable and natural move, she says, and she has now lived there seven years.

“The apartments are very nice and well-kept,” she explains. We have a laundry



Diakon's Lutherwood apartment community in Scranton.

nearby and mail services right here. Everything is so handy. And the manager helps us with anything we might need.”

Also at Topton, Lorraine Jarrett says she finds living at Heilman House gives her peace of mind.

“I really appreciate the security here, as well as the convenience of having the van for transportation if we need it,” Jarrett says. “We also have a pharmacy on the campus that delivers if we need that. This is a great place to live. I’ve made many friends here. Coming here was the best move I made.”

Library thrives on volunteer support



William Bartholomew and Mary Jean Hovey commit countless volunteer hours to the success of the Luther Crest library.

Since the *Luther Crest* library first opened two decades ago, it has grown and thrived through residents’ volunteer efforts.

From the very first donation drive to present-day requests, residents have always responded in good measure, says William Bartholomew, former chairman of the library’s volunteer committee.

Beginning with an original donation of 1,000 volumes, the library today features more than 4,300 titles including everything from the latest fiction to all-time classics.

“In 2003, we received 252 new books from resident donations—books that are the latest on the market,” says Bartholomew, adding that roughly half of all volumes are large print. The library also has nearly 300 books on tape.

All of the books are catalogued on computer and shelved according to the Dewey

Decimal System. “We have a small committee of volunteers who spend time shelving books. From time to time, they ‘read’ the shelves to make sure [the books] are ordered correctly,” explains Bartholomew. “Mary Jean Hovey, a bonafide librarian [and chairperson of the volunteer committee] is always on the lookout for residents interested in helping.”

Although all book donations come from residents and local public libraries, Luther Crest’s gift shop serves as the library’s source of financial support. “From those funds, we have purchased two carousels to hold paperback books. We don’t have room to put them on the shelves,” he says.

The committee also has used the \$300 to \$500 the library receives annually to purchase encyclopedias. “We are planning to add a daily newspaper, such as *USA Today*,” he says.

Volunteer Home Care Volunteer provides 'sight'



Phyllis E. Girton, left, works on her new typewriter with the assistance of volunteer Betty Shuman.

Phyllis E. Girton has been blind for nearly 40 years, but recently was given an opportunity to "see," through the help of a very special volunteer.

Girton has accomplished much, including obtaining an education, holding full-time jobs, and living independently, but recently found herself challenged when she purchased a new typewriter and couldn't read the operating manual or locate function keys.

"My typewriter had worn out and I knew I couldn't use the telephone to communicate all the time. I need to be able to type and reach people by letters, but I struggled with my new typewriter," she says.

Thanks to the help of Betty Shuman, a volunteer from Diakon's *Volunteer Home Care – Schuylkill/Dauphin Counties*, Girton didn't struggle long.

"I immediately thought of Betty," says Volunteer Home Care Manager Lois Sterling, when Girton inquired about the availability of a volunteer to read the manual while she translated it into Braille. "She has helped Phyllis in the past. She has even read her instructions to crochet a baby blanket."

Shuman was eager to help. While she read the manual, Girton tediously translated the instructions into Braille using a Braillewriter.

"Now I can sit and study the manual," says Girton. "I needed help and Betty gave that to me. It feels like a door has been

opened, and now I can see through it."

A volunteer with the program since its inception 14 years ago, Shuman says it doesn't matter if she is reading, taking someone to the doctors, running errands or doing someone's laundry, she just wants to help others in a time of need.

"I think of the prayer, 'Use Me Lord,'" says Shuman. "It also gives people a good feeling to know someone cares. I enjoy helping others. With Phyllis, well, she is just an inspiration and a pleasure to be around. We get along so well. We are very compatible, and I enjoy the time I spend with her."

The two may very well be spending more time together in the years ahead as Girton has a "can-do" attitude about life and Shuman has a sincere commitment and desire to help others.

"There are angels amongst us," says Sterling. "Our volunteers are truly going about God's work and there are angels out there that we serve."

Diakon's Volunteer Home Care, which also has teams in the Berks and Hazleton regions, is an ecumenical outreach ministry offering non-medical short-term or intermittent home care to people of all ages and of all faiths. For information in the Schuylkill/Dauphin counties region, readers may call 1-800-621-6325.

16th Annual The Lutheran Home at Topton

Benefactors' Dinner

Angels for children
Thursday, May 13, 2004

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries' *The Lutheran Home at Topton* Benefactors' Dinner will be held on Thursday, May 13, 2004, at the Reading Sheraton Hotel, Paper Mill Road, Wyomissing, Pa.

The event opens with a reception at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:30. The event will benefit Diakon's programs for children and youth, particularly those based at The Lutheran Home at Topton.

Speaker for the evening is Bob Danzig, retired CEO of Hearst Newspaper Group, whose stories of a childhood spent in foster care will inspire listeners.

For more information on the event, please call Diakon's Office of Advancement at (610) 682-1356 or 1-888-582-2239, Ext. 1356.



Bob Danzig

Rileighs owner cites good fortune as reason for success

It was two days before Christmas, but Robert Palmer wasn't thinking about what was going to be under his Christmas tree. The 88-year-old *Luther Crest* resident was overseeing the sale of his business' final property.

After spending the last 70 years with Rileighs, a landmark Allentown business, Palmer was in the process of cleaning up what was left. "It is sort of a mixed blessing," he says. "[My partner and I] decided six or eight years ago it was time to sell."

Palmer was only 33 years old when he and four other employees returned from serving in World War II to buy the company from their employer, Sam Rileigh. "I had been an employee for about 15 years before we purchased the company," Palmer remembers, adding that three of the partners would eventually leave the business. "When we first started, it was a company that did installation of window displays—point-of-purchase advertising for clients like Gillette, Bayer Aspirin and Alka Seltzer."

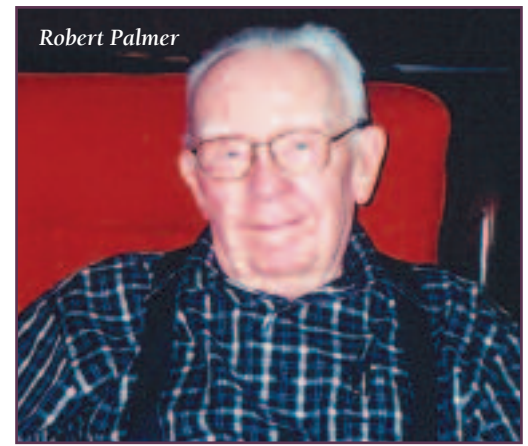
The years ahead would bring many

changes as the company evolved with the times. "When television came in the 1950s, point-of-purchase displays were out. We had branched out to display centers," says Palmer. "Then we started making a pitch for the public's money. We started to gear our saleable items to the homes. It got to the point, if you were having a party, you went to Rileighs for your decorations."

Next, Rileighs moved into the tradeshow business. "We spent 36 years decorating the Farm Show," he says. "We became a force in the East."

When shopping malls came into existence, Rileighs again expanded and began decorating malls. "We built that up to where we decorated malls as far away as the Carolinas, New England, and across Pennsylvania," he says. "In a year's time, we were decorating between 35 and 40 malls."

Exhibit services was one of the last additions to Rileighs' repertoire. "The exhibit business had changed dramatically at that time," says Palmer, recalling the



Robert Palmer

advent of portable display systems. "Until then, they had all been custom-made."

At its peak, Rileighs employed nearly 100 full- and part-time employees and branched out to a variety of services—including a Hallmark Gold Crown Store in the Lehigh Valley Mall. "The services were different, but they had a synergism," Palmer believes. "They all sort of applied to the decorating business."

Although Palmer admits the business was challenging at times, often requiring him to work through the night, he counts himself lucky for the opportunity. "We were able to cope with the times and change our line of endeavor. We have been very fortunate."

Support from funeral homes strengthens grief support program

A tragic fire at a family hunting camp took the lives of Lori Schmidt's husband and their two dogs. The Oley resident struggled with the fact her husband was gone. She tried to find comfort from family and friends, but her grief continued to overwhelm her.

Then a friend's mother told her about the Living with Loss grief support group offered by Diakon's *Family Life Services – Northeastern Pennsylvania*. After her first meeting with the group, she found what she describes as "a real connection."

"As much as my family and friends tried to help and support me, I was still struggling," Schmidt says. "I felt a real con-

nection to other people who had gone through what I had. We developed a friendship and we continue to stay in touch and help each other even now."

Schmidt's story conveys how valuable grief support can be in helping people to get on with their lives after the loss of a loved one. The service plays an important role in providing a forum for discussion, understanding, and

sharing and Family Life Services has been fortunate to have the support of two area funeral homes to help provide this valuable community resource. Bean Funeral Homes & Crematory has provided financial support for more than five years, enabling Family Life Services to offer Living with Loss grief support groups in the

"I felt a real connection to other people who had gone through what I had. We developed a friendship and we continue to stay in touch and help each other even now."

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Rockin' in service to others Continued from Page 1

Trinity Lutheran Church Youth Ministry members get comfortable to rock the night away.



Corey Carothers, director of the program, which serves some 325 individuals ages 13 to 18 each year, says that the program's structured outdoor activities, including hiking and camping, are important to the program's mission.

"The outdoor activities take the majority of the kids out of their comfort zones—most of them have never been in an environment like this. A lot of our students are used to standing on street corners under street lights and when they see all these trees, mountains, and animals with no pavement, they are not sure how to handle it. When we put them out here, it provides unique therapeutic interventions through which students can learn and grow as individuals. They are more reliant on us, so they build trust and the accomplishments they experience through our activities help them to develop self-esteem."

Brandon says he feels the program has also helped him change his value system.

"Before I came here, I valued things that I shouldn't have valued. Now I know there are more important things in life."

Anthony Stukes, assistant program supervisor, attended the rock-a-thon to support participants.

"When I first walked in the door, I couldn't believe my eyes. The place was filled with children of all ages—kids in their teens, late teens, and even younger children. Seeing these kids raising money for another program was really special."

Karen Wood, director of Diakon's Community Services to Seniors in Schuylkill County and Trinity Lutheran Church youth ministry coordinator, says there is a connection between the rockers and the Weekend Alternative Program.

"The Weekend Alternative Program is performing a ministry with kids. It intervenes in kids' lives when they need it the most. It teaches responsibility for the community they reside in and that is what we teach our kids here. It was a real nice fit."

Brother and sister "rocking" duo Sean and Angie Grube of Orwigsburg agree. Sean, 13, says, "It means a lot to be able to rock for them because I know I am helping them with problems I hope I'll never go through." Angie adds that she "thought it was important to support other kids. I feel like I am following what Christ wants me to do."

"I send out a heartfelt thanks to the rockers," says Carothers. "Their efforts mean a lot to us. The gear we utilize is extremely expensive, thus any support we receive is tremendous for us. I had been struggling to find the proceeds to get through next winter and this donation is the answer. We are very grateful."

DIAKON LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES *Service to people in need in the Northeastern PA Synod*

In 2003, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries provided approximately \$15.4 million in uncompensated care—including nearly \$6 million within the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The figures include the cost to provide service in excess of Medicaid reimbursements for skilled nursing care, benevolent care in other retirement services, and funding for children's and family programs that serve those unable to pay the full cost of service.

Diakon's commitment to provide greater hours of nursing care per resident day beyond state minimums, its policy not to discharge residents who have exhausted their financial resources, and its mission to serve those with limited financial resources are reasons for the agency's high level of uncompensated care.

Continuing donor support is crucial to the agency's ability to offer such a high level of benevolent care.

Hospice Saint John Help for a broken heart



Carol
Reisenweaver

Life is fragile and can be taken away very abruptly," says Carol Reisenweaver. Losing her husband of 42 years to cancer in Sept. 2003—approximately nine months after he was diagnosed—she says she knew time was running out when care from Diakon's *Hospice Saint John* was recommended. Despite several hospitalizations, surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation treatments, her husband's condition had deteriorated.

"My husband, Tom, just kept getting worse and worse. The doctors told us he couldn't take any more surgeries," says Mrs. Reisenweaver. "He was discharged from the hospital in a very weak condition, and that's when hospice care was recommended."

For four and a half weeks, Hospice Saint John nurses and support staff offered care.

"The hospice team stepped in right away and provided the care that was needed. They were here almost every day of the week," says Mrs. Reisenweaver. "They treated Tom with such care, and they developed a strong attachment to him. It takes a certain kind of person to work in hospice care. Tommy, he'd light up when they came in."

Susan Lasecki, RN CHPN, area director of Hospice Saint John, says, "Our team con-

siders it an honor and a privilege to care for our patients and their families. The love we witness between our hospice patients and their families leaves an indelible imprint in our hearts and memories. Our lives are enriched by sharing this special journey."

Accessible 24 hours a day, members of the Hospice Saint John team provided medical and emotional support that offered peace of mind to the Reisenweavers.

"After hospice stepped in, it took a lot of weight off my shoulders. I was much more relaxed. Tom was, too," says Mrs. Reisenweaver. "It was wonderful knowing you had a support system behind you. One of Hospice Saint John's chaplains—Rev. [Wayne] Lupole—offered spiritual support on several occasions. He was wonderful."

Mrs. Reisenweaver says it was also important to her that the medical staff kept her abreast of the situation. "They were always frank about Tom's condition. They didn't sugarcoat anything. Tom's nurses even told me, 'Carol, I don't think there is much time left.'" Even though it was difficult to hear, it helped her prepare for the inevitable.

After cancer won the battle with her husband, Mrs. Reisenweaver says, support from Hospice Saint John continued.

"I chose to have an on-going connection with Hospice. They keep in touch with you for a year after your loved one's death," she says. She also attends Hospice Saint John's bereavement support groups. Designed to help individuals gain insight into the grieving process while sharing with others in a supportive setting, the groups are often invaluable resources.

"When you hear others tell of their troubles, you realize you aren't alone. They are very informal sessions, but they are a benefit."

Although she was heartbroken to find herself in need of Hospice Saint John's assistance, she is glad the program was there when needed.

"The hospice team—they laughed with me and cried with me," says Mrs. Reisenweaver. "I couldn't have gotten through this without them."

Grief support

Continued from Page 9

Reading area several times a year.

Funeral Director Kevin Bean explains why he believes such support is vital: "Through the years, my experience has been that, following a loss, individuals have greatly varying levels of support within their communities and within their families. Of great concern to me was that, clearly, some folks had little or no support following a funeral. They may have had no children, or had no children in the local area. They may not have been involved in the community or in a church, and as such, had little community support."

He was often worried, he says, about those who had no support and may have needed professional help. "I felt that there was a void, an emptiness, work that was left undone."

The feeling ultimately led Bean to Family Life Services. Recognizing that grieving is a personal and sensitive process, he wanted to ensure that trained professionals would be available to assist those in need.

"That's where Family Life Services comes in," he says. "I know that competent, trained professionals manage the grief support sessions. It's a privilege to help sponsor the groups."

James Ludwig has had many of the same feelings as Kevin Bean. As director of Ludwig Funeral Homes in the East Penn Valley, he sponsors grief support sessions in the Kutztown area. He describes how "after-care" is an essential part of the service funeral homes provide to the community.

"Grief support is a natural outreach service for us to provide, but we want to do it well," Ludwig says. "We want to let people know the service is available but not to 'sell' it. We want people to know it is a free service for those who need it. We want families and friends who are grieving to know they can get help."

"The idea that sharing feelings is good may take some getting used to," he notes. "But the people connected with Family Life Services are very professional and caring, and the support groups are a good way for people to help each other. We're honored to be part of this service."

Luther Crest resident oversaw Dorney Park

Bob Ott loves people. It was that love that helped him make Dorney Park in Allentown a success, when the family-owned business was under his watchful eye from 1968 to 1985.

“When we were involved, it was [very] family-oriented. We had a close personal relationship with our visitors, guests, and employees. It was a big family affair,” Ott says of the amusement park, which is no longer owned by his family.

So it was more like a family reunion than a traditional book signing when *Luther Crest* resident Ott and fellow author Wally Ely unveiled their book, *Images of America—Dorney Park*, in June. Held at the park, the book signing attracted hundreds of people with a personal connection to the landmark park and its former owner.

“I renewed acquaintances with former employees. People would come up to me and say things like ‘I used to work in the French fry stand in 1957,’” says Ott. “I remembered them as kids; now they are grandparents.”

The nostalgic trip got under way about two years ago when Ott and Ely began

writing the book. “When you’re my age and you reflect on your life, it is amazing the things that come to the surface that you had forgotten,” he says.

Ott’s involvement with Dorney Park began in 1936 when he met his wife-to-be, Sarah, whose father owned the amusement park. “I did every job in the park, which was a great way to learn,” says Ott, who eventually took over in 1968. “In the last

10 to 15 years, I was the first one there and the last one to leave—maybe 8 a.m. to 1 a.m. the next morning.”

Ott saw phenomenal growth of the park under his guardianship, even adding a water park before he and his family sold the business in 1985. “If you had a good year, you know you had wonderful sun,” says Ott. “It is a very hard business, but it is nice selling fun.”

Bob Ott



Retired teacher honored on 100th birthday

Although Eva McGuire spent 40 of her 100 years teaching, she recently learned a lesson of her own—you’re never too grown-up for a birthday celebration!

McGuire, a resident of Diakon’s *Pocono Lutheran Village* in East Stroudsburg, was the center of attention in late January when she reached her 100th birthday. Surrounded by family, friends, and staff members, McGuire warmed the cold winter day with smiles and memories.

McGuire received four proclamations recognizing the occasion. Greetings arrived from the Retired Teachers Association, the Monroe County Board of Commissioners, State Rep. Mario Scavello, and the Office of the President of the United States. McGuire’s daughter,

Claire Parker, said she was “overwhelmed” and “very touched” by all the attention.

A native of Drums, Pa., McGuire earned her bachelor of arts degree from Bloomsburg University when it was a two-year program. She began teaching after graduation.

She had to put her career on hold when she married—at that time, young married women were not permitted to teach—but as soon as her daughter began school, McGuire was back in the classroom herself.

She completed her education degree at College Misericordia in Dallas, Pa., attending classes in the evenings and on weekends. She began substitute teaching in what is now the Dallas Area School District and was soon offered her own class. There she remained

for 26 years, teaching second grade. She continued to substitute teach after her formal retirement, and still talks passionately of her love for the classroom.



Eva McGuire (left) with her daughter Claire Parker.

‘Wonderland’ rekindles residents’ memories

While the winter months may conjure images of snow and frigid winds for most people, they prompt a different reaction from residents of Diakon’s **Luther Ridge Assisted Living**.

For them, winter means fashion shows, entertainment, good food, and a Mummer’s parade—all events of the Pottsville Winter Carnival.

“The carnival meant winter. Even though winter was a time when everything slowed down, we looked forward to the carnival. Everyone got out to the carnival if they could,” says Helen Mackey, a Luther Ridge Assisted Living resident.

“There was always something going on,” adds Calma Robbins, another resident. “There was special entertainment and lots of good eats.”

This year’s event—the 37th Annual Winter Carnival—was no exception, taking place in January. What was different this year, however, was that Luther Ridge residents held their own winter celebration.

“Just because our residents are getting a little older doesn’t mean they should not participate in the things they did before,” says JoAnn Mikos, activities director.

Hosting the first annual Winter Wonderland Week in early February, Luther Ridge became a “carnival ground”

on which residents enjoyed polka dancing, a fashion show, a King and Queen contest, and even a special appearance by Rita McGinty, a performer who focuses on the plight of the homeless, especially children.

“As an inspirational and humorous performer, she hosted an excellent show on love, kindness and God’s place in our lives,” says Mikos. “It was a great way to start the week.”

Winter Wonderland Week was designed to bring back youthful memories of the Pottsville Winter Carnival, says Mikos. “We

wanted residents to beat the winter blues and incorporate the Winter Carnival into their lives.” For many of them, Pottsville’s Winter Carnival represents a tradition passed from one generation to the next, and Mikos hopes the assisted living community’s Winter Wonderland Week will also stand the test of time.

“I hope this was just the first of many Winter Wonderland weeks,” she says. “We had so much fun—and laughter is what keeps you going and keeps you young.”

Luther Ridge Assisted Living resident Mary Wernosky dances with JoAnn Mikos, activities director while Martha Short (left) and Calma Robbins enjoy refreshments during the community’s Winter Wonderland.



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