



# Challenges

## *Community service gives youths new perspective*

With more than 7,000 hours of community service logged in 2003 by youth participating in Wilderness Center programs, the importance of giving back to the community is well documented as a long-standing element of the center's programs.

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In the Weekend Alternative Program, for example, community service accounts for 33 percent of the program. The other two thirds are divided between wilderness programming and counseling.

"We require that each participant gets 25 to 30 hours of community service in the program to graduate," explains Corey Carothers, director. While those hours have been earned in a variety of locations through the years, Carothers says he has narrowed that number down to a few specific projects.

"I try to stick to places where the people who are running the organizations are good for our kids. I like to go to projects where the people are nice, positive mentors for them, who are willing to work with them," he says. "You have to get that feeling of helping the community for the kids. You can't get that with organizations that aren't willing to stick around and interact with them."

Carothers has found that connection with long-standing partner, the Capital Area Greenbelt Association, as well as the Capital Therapeutic Riding Association, DCNR, and two of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries' retirement communities, Cumberland Crossings in Carlisle and Frey Village,

Middletown. "It is win-win for everybody when you get the right projects and relationships together," he says.

Josef Garrett, wilderness services supervisor for the 31-Day Wilderness Course program, agrees. With two days per course spent in community service, Garrett has built relationships with a variety of non-profit organ-

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# Wilderness Center *hosts* accident simulation

*Members of the TresslerCare Wilderness Center staff got firsthand experience in how to respond to a medical emergency in the wilderness during an accident simulation held in January at the center's Boiling Springs location.*

The simulation, part of a Wilderness First Responder course hosted by the center, used multiple patient-actors. "It was a great way to apply the skills we were learning in class," says Brad Glenn, climbing specialist. "[The simulation] feels real. You get drawn into the excitement. When the instructor is throwing questions at you [as the simulation unfolds], you really have to know the information."

The Wilderness First Responder course is an intensive backcountry medical-training course that teaches students how to deal with medical emergencies when they are miles from help and dialing 911 is not an option. Seven staff members of the Wilderness Center along with students from as far away as Florida, western Ohio, and New York participated in the training.

***The course helps students learn that wilderness medicine differs from traditional first aid in three respects:***

- First, transport times are measured in hours or days rather than minutes, so many phases of patient care that usually occur in a hospital must be carried out in the field.

- Second, severe environments dramatically increase the complexity of any emergency and heighten risks for patients and rescuers alike.
- Third, limited equipment makes improvisation and resourcefulness essential.

Professional instructors from Wilderness Medical Associates—leaders in the field of wilderness medical training—offered the Wilderness First Responder course. To participate in the training, students had to be at least 16 years of age and receive 72 hours of in-classroom training over eight days. Classes are fast-paced with an emphasis on practical skills. Mornings are devoted to lectures while afternoons and evenings are spent outside working on skills such as stretcher construction to full-scale rescue simulations.



*Wilderness Center participants in the accident simulation.*

These are important skills for Wilderness Center staff members to learn as activities in the center's study curriculum routinely take them into remote country locations with adolescents.

"Fortunately, we've only had scrapes, sprains, and abrasions, but it's always good to be safe," says George Eckenrode, director of marketing.

The TresslerCare Wilderness Challenge program includes backpacking and orienteering, rock climbing and rappelling, flat- and white-water canoeing, high- and low-ropes course and climbing-wall activities, 50-foot Alpine Tower climbing, 72-hour solo experience, marathon run, and community service projects.

# Foster Care – Mechanicsburg restructures Poe moves *to* Wilderness Center

## New perspective

*Continued from Cover*

izations, such as Cumberland County, Willow Mill Park, and Claremont Nursing Home.

“Whether we are running a bingo game with the elderly or cleaning up horse stables for the physically disabled, our kids are seeing the benefit of doing something positive for the community as opposed to doing something negative,” Garrett says.

One of his favorite experiences has been taking youth to Claremont Nursing Home to help residents play bingo. “A lot of the folks can’t move their arms well enough to mark their pieces. So we match a kid up with an elderly person. There is magic that happens,” he says. “It’s like being with your grandparents. A lot of these kids don’t have that.”

The benefits of community service extend to the Foster Care program as well, according to Nina Poe, family development/intake manager. Although requirements for community service are individualized and may be required only for certain youths, Poe believes everyone can benefit from the experience.

“I personally encourage foster parents to get their kids involved in service opportunities when I do foster-parent training,” she says. “There is so much value in the kids’ giving, rather than always being the recipient of help. It gives them a new perspective.”

After many years with TresslerCare Foster Care, most recently as family development/ intake manager, Nina Poe is taking on a new challenge that combines her love for the outdoors with her skillfulness at helping youth.

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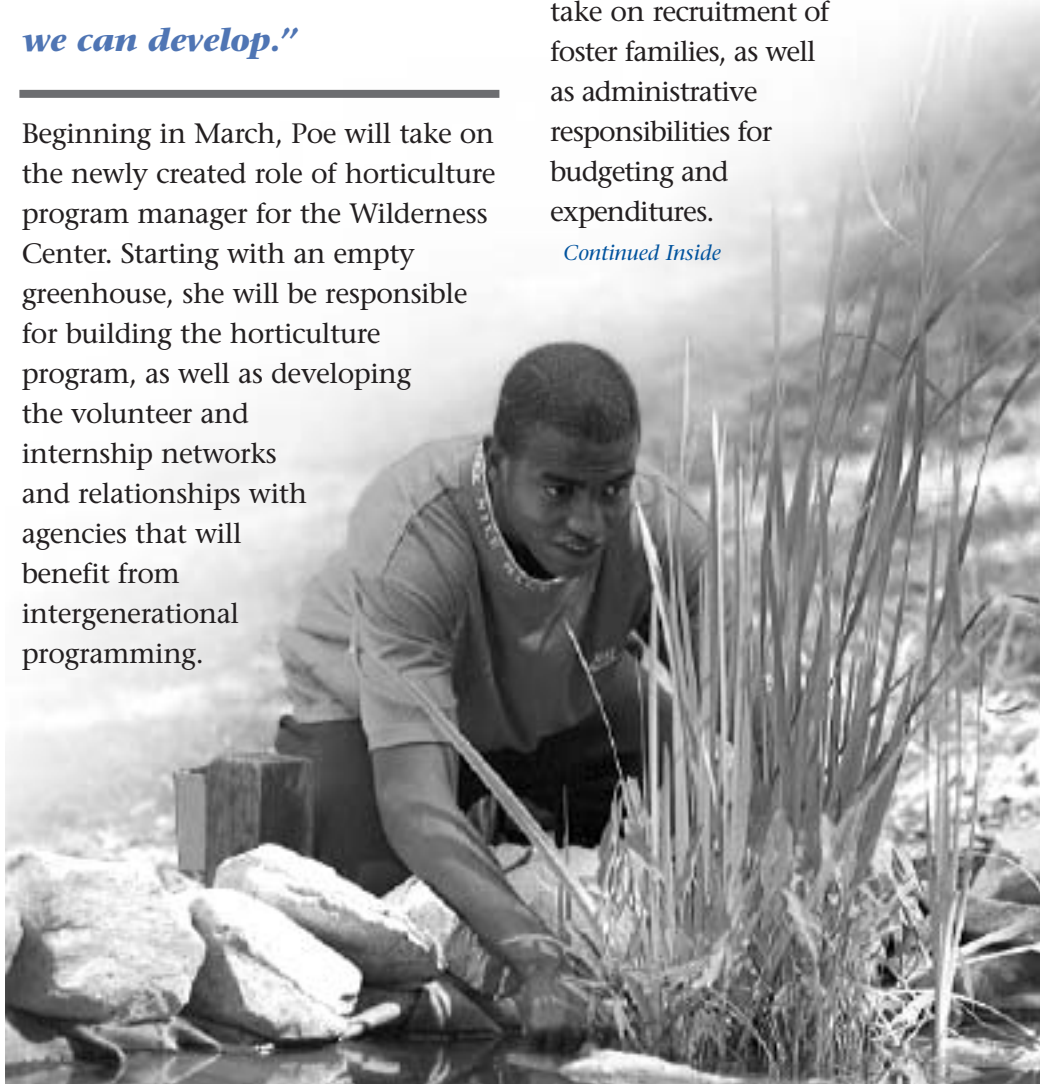
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Beginning in March, Poe will take on the newly created role of horticulture program manager for the Wilderness Center. Starting with an empty greenhouse, she will be responsible for building the horticulture program, as well as developing the volunteer and internship networks and relationships with agencies that will benefit from intergenerational programming.

“It will be a lot of work developing the program, but I am so excited to see what we can develop,” Poe says. “It is the perfect complement to the Wilderness School.”

Until Poe fully moves into the position, she will devote the majority of her time to the foster care program and her transition. Marilyn Sutton, a clinical supervisor who recently assumed the position of assistant director of Foster Care-Mechanicsburg, will take on recruitment of foster families, as well as administrative responsibilities for budgeting and expenditures.

*Continued Inside*





## Weekend Alternative Program

# Melder moves on *after* eight years

*For eight years Eric Melder was a welcome fixture at the TresslerCare Wilderness Center, spending the first four with the Residential Wilderness School program and the last four as a counselor with the Weekend Alternative Program (WAP).*

Melder recently left the program to devote more time to his family and to serve as the chief executive officer for the Foundation for the Scotland School for Veterans' Children, for which he had worked on a part-time basis since 1998.

"[Working with the Wilderness School] has been the most wonderful job of my life," Melder said in an interview before leaving. "It is really hard to give it up in some respects. I've been working two jobs for eight years. It is time for me to pay attention to family a little bit more."

In addition to his biological offspring, Melder's family includes some of the youths he has counseled through the years. "One of the first boys I [counseled] in 1995 was Anthony Stukes. I consider him like a son. We're very close," he says of Stukes, who now works for the Wilderness Center.

Stukes was just one of the more than 1,000 young men that Melder

impacted during his tenure, according to Corey Carothers, director of WAP and Melder's most recent boss. "What was unique about Eric in our field was that he was a father figure. He excelled at helping kids change their lives in the ways necessary," says Carothers. "In our work it is a balance between empathy and accountability. Empathy was one of his greatest strengths."

Melder was also instrumental in the development of WAP's needs-based counseling program. "They asked me to make the switch [from the residential program to WAP], so I could strengthen the counseling components," says Melder, who trained in college as a secondary education teacher; although he never taught, he has spent years working with programs dedicated to children and youth. "Over time I've worked with the staff and we've developed the curriculum, which has about 30 different topics."

Although Melder admits it was difficult to leave the family he has made at the Wilderness Center, he has many positive memories to take with him. "There comes a time to move on, but it is hard to do," he says, remembering the dedicated staff he leaves behind. "I love the fun. I love playing basketball, hiking and taking [the youth] to church. I've enjoyed every minute of it."



*Eric Melder (left) and Rick Street (right), a former WAP employee, share a happy moment with Anthony Stukes following his graduation from Temple University in May 2002.*

# Interim residential stay *available* for course *participants*

Thanks to its increased residential capacity, the Wilderness Center is now offering short-term residential stays for youths waiting to begin the 31-Day Wilderness Course program.

"Instead of youths waiting in a detention center until a course starts, we can offer a stay in our residential program," explains Jason Brode, director of the 31-Day

Wilderness Course. "This gives them the opportunity to get used to the environment and begin some of the education and wilderness programming. We also can get them on the counseling track and familiarize them with the issues they will be working on while they are here."

*For more information, contact Brode at (717) 258-3168.*

## **Poe moves** *Continued from 3rd panel front*

Cindy Garfinkel, clinical supervisor, will assume the additional responsibility of intake coordinator when she returns from maternity leave in early March.

This restructuring of Foster Care-Mechanicsburg was necessitated by Poe's move, but really an evolutionary step that had been planned, says Craig Smith, TresslerCare executive director.

"Recently, Nina had spent the majority of her time on intake needs, leaving little time for her to focus on the recruitment of foster parents," he says.

"With the growth of our Fost/Adopt program, we are turning over foster families at a higher rate than in the past. While this is great for the kids because it offers them the permanency they need, we need to put

more energy into recruitment and training of new foster parents. Our hope is that, in the long run, this will be a better-running structure that allows us to attract and maintain the families we need to keep up with the growing service area of Fost/Adopt."

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*"With the growth of our Fost/Adopt program, we are turning over foster families at a higher rate."*

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Additionally, TresslerCare continues to grow its Kinship Care Program and its associated specialized training and services.

*For more information about TresslerCare's Foster Care, Fost/Adopt and Kinship Care Programs, call us at (717) 795-0320.*

## **TresslerCare**

**31-day Wilderness Challenge**

**90-day Wilderness Challenge Plus**

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### *2004 Course Schedule*

Feb. 9 – March 10  
Feb. 23 – March 24  
March 8 – April 7  
March 29 – April 28  
April 12 – May 12  
April 26 – May 26  
May 10 – June 9  
May 24 – June 23  
June 7 – July 7  
June 14 – July 14  
June 28 – July 28  
July 5 – Aug. 4  
July 19 – Aug. 18  
July 26 – Aug. 25  
Aug. 9 – Sept. 8  
Aug. 23 – Sept. 22  
Sept. 6 – Oct. 6  
Sept. 20 – Oct. 20  
Oct. 4 – Nov. 3  
Oct. 18 – Nov. 17  
Nov. 8 – Dec. 8  
Nov. 22 – Dec. 22

For more information on course openings or to refer, contact Jason Brode, Wilderness Challenge director, at (717) 258-3168 or via email at [www.tresslercare.org](http://www.tresslercare.org). Openings are also posted on our Web site.

## TRESSLERCARE *Regional News*

- TresslerCare recently welcomed *Stephanie Light*, MSW. Light has resumed the group for youth ages 8 to 12 with sexual behavior problems. Known as STOP (Stop Touching Other People), the group meets on Wednesday evenings at TresslerCare's Mechanicsburg office.
- *KPMG's Harrisburg office* shared the Christmas spirit with 70 of TresslerCare's foster children and youth by providing gifts valued at \$25 for each child.
- Members of *Zion Lutheran Church* in Hummelstown continued their annual tradition of providing Christmas gifts for the children in TresslerCare's programs. This year, more than 130 gifts, valued at \$25 each, went to children in Foster Care, TAPP, Specialized In-Home Services, Wilderness Residential, and PerryFamilies Initiative.
- *Diakon's Mechanicsburg office* displayed an Angel Tree during the holiday season, gathering approximately 100 donated gifts for children in Foster Care, TAPP, Specialized In-Home Services and Perry Families Initiative.
- *TresslerCare Foster Care-Mechanicsburg's Cindy Garfinkel*, clinical supervisor, welcomed the birth of her daughter, Julia Noelle, on Dec. 5.
- *TresslerCare – Wilderness Center Deanna Davis*, the Residential Wilderness School's clinical director, welcomed the birth of her daughter, Maycey Elizabeth, on Nov. 16.
- *Jennifer Roe* has joined Diakon *Pregnancy Services*, Topton, Pa., as a pregnancy services counselor. Roe brings a variety of experience to the position, previously having dealt with wraparound services and childhood counseling.
- *TresslerCare Foster Care-Topton* has hired *Angie Crounse* as a caseworker. Prior to joining TresslerCare, Crounse worked for the Juvenile Law Center in Philadelphia.