



DIALOG

Small accomplishments lead to big success for Turning Point program

HEARING A CHIME, THE WOMAN PULLS OUT HER PHONE

to read a text.

It's from her son's teacher.

Uh-oh.

This text, however, is most likely different from many such notices. The teacher's text details positive educational progress—and for a young man who just months earlier had little interest in his studies or even in graduating.

The texts are deeply appreciated. "They help me to know how he is doing, so I can talk with him and keep him motivated," says his mother, Angelina. "I am so proud of him right now."

What made the difference in the young man's life and in his focus on obtaining his GED is an approach now being used by Diakon Youth Services' Turning Point program. Based in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the program provides an alternative academic setting for males who have been adjudicated by county juvenile probation or children and youth services.

Turning Point recently has experienced a record number of students on track to complete their GEDs.

"Although GED preparation has always been something we've offered, this year has been much more successful," says Tanisha Negron-Bailey, director of day and evening programming. "This year alone, we will have six students who will be done with their academics." Past statistics were a third of that number.

Negron-Bailey credits the uptick in success largely to the teaching approach of Kristyn Whisman, who joined the program last fall. Whisman previously served as dean of corrections education for Edmonds Community College in Washington state.

Turning Point "is a very different, but hopeful experience," says Whisman, whose previous students were incarcerated adults ages 18 to 70. "I am excited that I have the opportunity to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline earlier in the process."

Whisman is a great motivator and has a firm grasp of the obstacles youths face if they don't complete their education, notes Negron-Bailey. "She does a great job of helping our students see and reach their potential. She encourages them to want more."

Adding to Whisman's challenge is the fact many of the youths are past high-school age and have too few credits,

making the likelihood slim they will stay in school.

"We are dealing with 16-, 17- and 18-year-olds in ninth grade, who don't like the idea of staying in school until they are 20 or 21," says Negron-Bailey. "Because of that, Kristyn has taught us all baby steps. We have to be willing and able to celebrate small accomplishments with the understanding that those small accomplishments will lead to the bigger prize."

Whisman individualizes instruction as much as possible within the structure of her classes. "Some courses I teach via direct instruction, a lecture and lesson with follow-up assignments," she explains. "I try to make sure there is relatability between what we are doing in high school-specific courses and what is going to be on the GED."

That individualization worked for Angelina's son, who will accept his high school diploma in a ceremony Turning Point staff members planned.

"From the time he started the program, he has been doing really well," she says. "Everyone has stayed on top of the situation and told him how much better it will be if he finishes school. He has changed his whole attitude."



Our Mission

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

Diakon: Many Hands, guided by One Heart, transforming the lives of children, families and older adults. With programs ranging from adoption, foster care and at-risk youth services to counseling and comprehensive senior living services, Diakon annually helps thousands of people of all faiths through compassionate service, gracious hospitality and charitable care.

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William Swanger, M.A., APR, Senior Vice President, Editor
swangerb@diakon.org

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Old Main
One South Home Avenue
Topton, PA 19562-1317
www.diakon.org

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Mark T. Pile

The President's **DIALOG**

Confirming 20:20 vision

THERE IS SOMETHING BOTH COMFORTING AND disconcerting about envisioning the road ahead and finding that, well, it still looks much the same as it did earlier.

Disconcerting because it appears, at least at first glance, that little has changed.

Comforting because it confirms you're on the right path.

That was the sense I had in January when we held our annual Diakon Leadership Team strategic planning session. When all was said and done, our path remained as we had plotted it earlier.

I don't mean to imply that nothing changed or we did not refine our goals. But the truth is our "Vision 2020" has reflected 20:20 vision. Crystal clear and in focus.

When we developed the original plan, the goals we set were ambitious, but also achievable. We've met significant aspects of many of those goals in the years since and the ones not yet reached remain in our sights.

The key points of our 2020 vision were:

- Sustainable financial, operational and clinical performance
- Employee recruitment, engagement and retention
- Technology optimization
- Board development
- Sustainable strategic growth
- Regulatory, environmental, and payer engagement and positioning

Last year, in service to these goals, we:

- Achieved and surpassed our target cash flow
- Continued successful capital projects designed to enhance and expand our senior living community offers
- Celebrated Diakon's 150th anniversary
- Exceeded annual giving and related development goals
- Completed the first year of Leadership Diakon
- Implemented the "WeCare Connect" program for employee engagement
- Experienced our first year of truly self-sustaining operations—that is, not dependent on Diakon Lutheran Fund subsidy—for our child-and-family programs
- Achieved the majority of those programs' quality measures
- Continued quality and customer-service improvements that led to successful bids for new programs and services
- And much more, a list far beyond what we can publish here.

When we completed the Leadership Team retreat, we had the following overarching areas on which to focus from 2020 to 2025; the boards in a later retreat added to and enhanced these targets:

- Sustainable financial, operational and clinical performance
- Employee recruitment, engagement and retention
- Technology optimization
- Board development
- Sustainable strategic growth
- Regulatory, environmental, and payer engagement and positioning!

The list looks familiar, doesn't it?

Certainly, however, the details vary as we extend our 2020 vision toward 2025.

As just one example, within "sustainable strategic growth," we envision an emphasis being innovative programmatic intersections that address community needs through service in such areas as personal care, behavioral health and tele-psychiatry, telemedicine, low-income housing and community-based efforts around educational sessions and meals programs. Deploying appropriate technology along with these efforts remains paramount. A board focus is on services that are creative, flexible and adaptive.

As with any journey, though, it's good to know you've been on the right path all along. And that your vision has been, well, 20-20.

Mark T. Pile, MSHA, MSW
President/CEO

Couple's second wedding avoids disruption of their first ceremony

FORTY-NINE YEARS AFTER A MAJOR SNOWSTORM

disrupted their wedding, keeping most of their family and friends away, Harold and Becky Feltman renewed their vows surrounded by loved ones during a candlelight ceremony in the Frey Village chapel.

"We had about 40 guests," says Mrs. Feltman of the wedding held earlier this spring at the Diakon continuing care retirement community in Middletown, Pennsylvania, where her husband lives.

"I wore a wedding gown and my two sons walked me down the aisle."

Her bridesmaids wore burgundy gowns and dresses they selected, while the groom and groomsmen wore jeans and t-shirts printed to look like tuxedos.

"I wanted everybody to be comfortable," says Mrs. Feltman, who recalls a similar event from her childhood. "My grandmother did this for her 50th anniversary. I thought it was so beautiful seeing her walk down the aisle. I was a small child, and it made an impression on me."

After the ceremony, the family gathered in the village dining room for a reception that included a music playlist prepared by the Feltmans' granddaughter.

Although their recent wedding was held one year before their golden anniversary, the couple decided the timing was right to pay tribute to their long life together.

"Harold is a Vietnam veteran suffering from the effects of Agent Orange. He is getting worse each day and I have my own health struggles, so we decided to do it this year," Mrs. Feltman explains. "He was so excited and had been talking about it for months."

Their marriage was preceded by a short courtship that started 50 years ago during a blind date when Becky was 18 and Harold was home on leave.

"We dated four months when we decided to get married," Becky says, remembering their first date. "He kissed me goodnight, and I knew he was the one. He knew I was the one, too!"





Service is ‘all in the family’ at Manatawny Manor

STACEY WARREN AND JONELLE BEEKLEY GO ABOUT

their workdays at Manatawny Manor, Pottstown, Pennsylvania, focused on the residents and clients in their care.

While their duties are different, both mother and daughter-in-law exhibit the same commitment to serve others—a commitment Diakon recognized recently with a SERVICE award ... for both of them.

Warren, a program assistant for Diakon Adult Day Services at Manatawny, and Beekley, LPN, a charge nurse for Manatawny Manor’s health care and rehabilitation center, were humbled by the awards but not surprised by the other’s recognition.

“We both have compassion for taking care of people,” Beekley says. “You have to have the heart for this job, or you won’t last.”

Warren, who has worked at the Diakon location for nearly 27 years, agrees.

“You need a serving heart for the people in our care,” she says. “We get to know them, their stories, their children and grandchildren. It is nice to help them and see them be happy and stay in their community.”

Described by Gina Cooke, Diakon Adult Day Services director, as her “go-to” person, Warren earned the award for the many things she does above and beyond her job description.

“Stacey is the person I can always turn to and know she will follow through,” says Cooke. “She is such an asset to this program and Diakon is lucky to have her.”

According to her nomination, Beekley has been a passionate advocate for residents throughout the 11 years she has served at Manatawny Manor.

“Jonelle is an inspiration to all. Service should be her middle name,” the nomination indicates, adding that Beekley’s drive to ensure residents receive the best care shows her commitment to Diakon’s mission.

“We truly are blessed to have such an outstanding hidden hero.”

Diakon’s SERVICE awards are given annually to staff members who exemplify the organization’s 150-year-old mission of care and concern for our neighbors. The attributes they exhibit create the acronym for the award: Stewardship, Excellence, Respect, Vocation, Innovation, Competence & Commitment and Enthusiasm.

Program provides companionship at life's end

MARION PHILLIPS WAS EAGER TO VOLUNTEER FOR A NEW program. While she already assisted with delivering mail and reading to fellow Luther Crest residents, the idea of providing companionship at the end of life touched her heart.

The “No One Dies Alone” program trains volunteers to be with those who are actively dying, a term that indicates death is imminent. Volunteers step in if or when family or friends can't be with their loved one.

“Essentially it is the ministry of presence,” explains the Rev. Ginny Heimer, former chaplain at the Allentown, Pennsylvania, senior living community. “They know you are there.”

The program began after a resident's daughter, who volunteers with a similar effort at a local hospital, gave a presentation for residents. Phillips was in the audience and knew immediately it was for her.

“I really wanted to do it,” Phillips says. “At the presentation, I went up to her and said I was ‘in.’ She was then our trainer and was very good.”

The training helps volunteers to understand what happens in the body when someone is actively dying, as well as to recognize related signs. They also learn they are not there to influence religious beliefs.

“We respect the beliefs they have; there is no agenda,” says Phillips. “It is more about being there than doing anything, about listening and sharing. If the person speaks about someone—their mother or father, for instance—we pick up on that and ask them about it.”

One lesson that really stood out for Phillips was how to hold hands. The significance of the simple gesture moved her.

“If you hold someone's hand, put your hand underneath theirs,” she explains. “If you put yours on top, they can feel trapped. You want them to feel free.”

Phillips had the chance to help almost immediately after her training. Because family members could not be with a resident during the evening, Phillips spent several hours with the person, sitting at her side and reading hymns.



Marion Phillips

“I learned that she passed that night,” Phillips says. “I wrote a letter to the family, letting them know she was not alone. They sent a letter of thanks, which was so meaningful to me.”

Local community resident Charlotte Magee also volunteers with the program. Like Phillips, she was drawn to the No One Dies Alone program, finding the experience of being there for the dying very moving.

“People may tell you what they are experiencing or gesture as they are transitioning and you have to be so in tune with them,” she says.

She appreciates the special kinship program volunteers have with one another. “We encourage one another,” she says. “It's a team effort. You have to have a heart for it.”

“The Luther Crest community is very giving,” says Heimer. “There is a great team between the volunteers and staff. This program brings real comfort to the dying and their loved ones. It shows how we have our humanness in common.”





(left to right) Shirley Jackson, Linda Cook, Rod Cook, Barbara Malewski and Jennifer Wagner

Workshops empower participants to live healthier lives

FOR MANY PEOPLE LIVING WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION, not knowing how to cope with symptoms such as pain, stress and physical issues can be isolating.

But for participants in recent Diakon Community Services-provided “Living a Healthy Life” and “Living with Diabetes” workshops, having the support of peers dealing with similar challenges has had a positive effect.

“We are empowering ourselves as a group with our knowledge and interaction,” says Richard Sauerwine of a workshop he attended at Frey Village, Middletown, Pennsylvania. “What happened here is proof that knowledge and experience—whether your own or someone else’s—is power.”

That power comes from knowing you are not alone in your struggle and that you have some control over the symptoms caused by your chronic condition, says Jennifer Wagner, community wellness coordinator for Diakon Community Services.

“A big part of this program has been to bring people together who have chronic conditions, even though they may or may not be living with the same one,” she says.

Value is realized when participants recognize that someone else has a similar struggle and their comfort level increases as a result. “The conversations that happen prior to the start of class, during break and after it ends, are where a lot of the learning is shared.”



Richard and Phyllis Sauerwine

Funded by a 2018 grant from the Highmark Foundation, the six-week courses were presented at various Diakon senior living communities by certified instructors who work with people with chronic conditions, their families and caregivers. Participants included both senior living residents and people from local communities.



Shirley Jackson, Linda Cook, Rod Cook

The overall goal, says Wagner, was to reduce days of hospitalization and increase periods of “feeling good,” all through small lifestyle changes and positive self-management techniques.

Topics covered included ...

- Meditation
- Healthy eating
- Understanding emotions
- Breathing techniques
- Medications
- Working with health professionals
- Decision-making skills
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Communication and ...
- Weight management.

“They taught us how to use your mind to control your pain, to get your mind off it, instead of dwelling on it. That was a big help,” says Rod Cook of the Frey Village workshop, adding that the small group size was an added benefit.

“We got to joke around and have fun with the other participants. It makes you feel more comfortable, not afraid to speak out. You have a good time at the same time that you are learning something to help yourself.”

Workshops will continue to be offered in select locations. Information on Diakon workshops or similar programs is available by contacting Wagner at 1-800-621-6325.

Meeting a special fitness goal

EXPERTS SAY IT TIME AND AGAIN: HAVING A PERSONAL GOAL IS ONE OF the best motivators for better health and fitness.

Vilma Guimes had a very specific goal: to be able to travel with her son and without the use of a wheelchair.

The 89-year-old moved to Twining Village in August of last year, but her first experience at the Diakon senior living community in Holland, Pennsylvania, was for short-term rehabilitation following a fall the year before.

When she made the decision to move to the village, selling her family home in Bensalem, she and her son looked at five different places. But something about her rehab experience at Twining Village influenced her final decision.

“My nursing care aide, Sandy Mooney, was wonderful and she was instrumental in me coming here,” Guimes says. “At first I thought of independent living but decided I would need more help.

“I never thought I’d be here,” she adds, “never thought I’d see my house sold. But I figured what is more important is my health. I knew the only way I could do this was to get the help I needed and that was in personal care.”

Some of the help Guimes received came from Twining Village’s wellness coordinator, Don Prifti. When Prifti first met Guimes, she was using a wheelchair. But she made it clear to him that she had no intention of continuing to do so.

“I did with Vilma what I do with every resident,” he says. “I sat down with her, got to know her. She told me how she pushed herself to move up with every job she had. She was very driven.”

Prifti saw that same drive in Guimes’s desire to leave behind her days of needing a wheelchair.

She was planning a trip to Florida with her son and wanted to use only a walker for support. It was to be her first winter vacation in three years, something she didn’t think she was physically strong enough for prior to her rehab at Twining Village.

“What made Vilma a little different from some residents is that she demanded more,” says Prifti. “She came to the fitness room three times a week and soon she improved in the way she stood, walked and moved.”

Guimes and her son made the trip and while she took the wheelchair “just in case,” she used only the walker when needed. She continues to do fitness work with “Mr. Don,” as she calls Prifti.

“I enjoy it so I will keep going,” she says. “Why not? I’m proud of what I’ve been able to do and I feel good too. I don’t think I could ever stop now!”



Don Prifti and Vilma Guimes



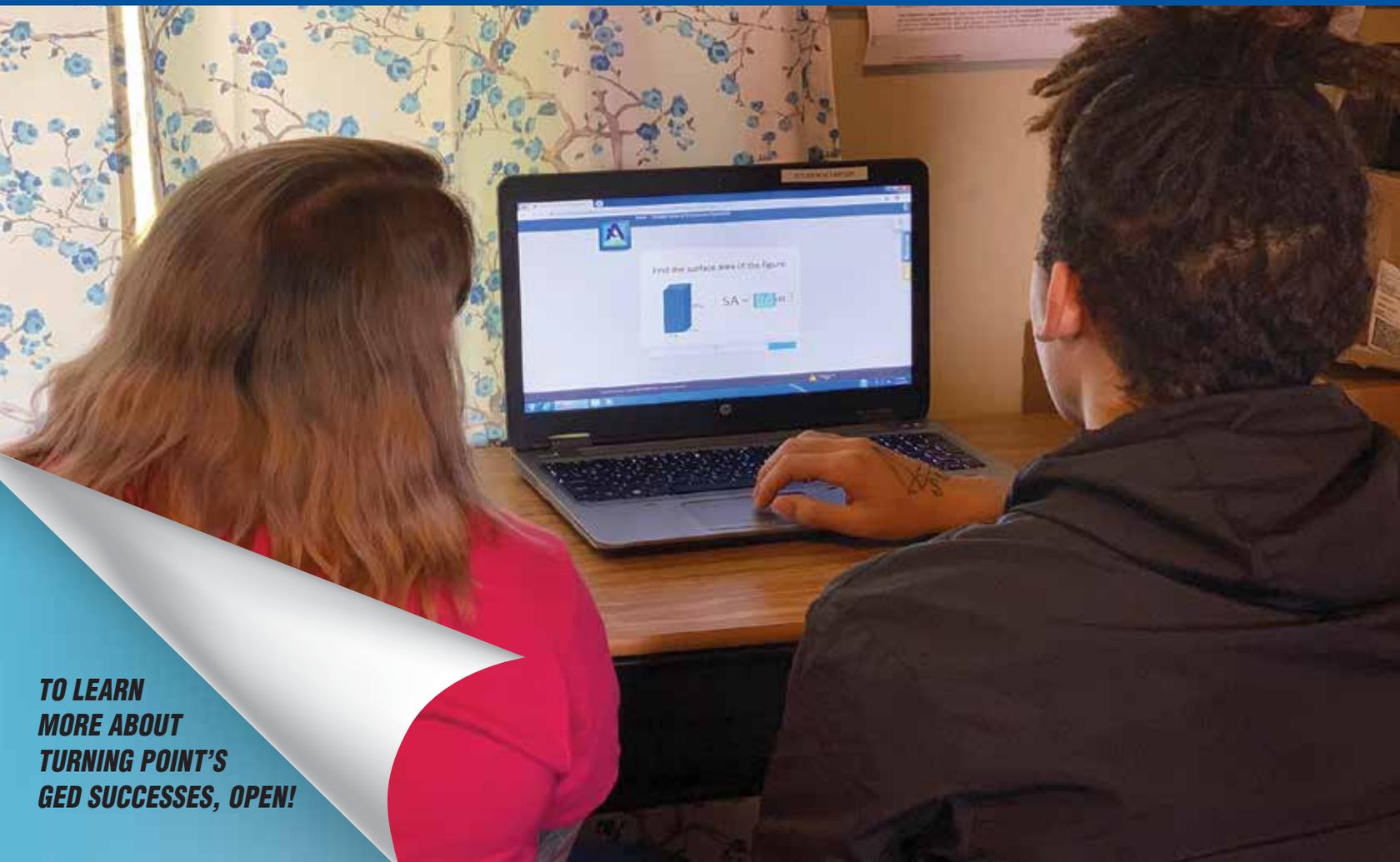


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