

Family Connections



FALL 2017

Teens need families, too



Would additional training and support for families willing to parent older youths help those young people achieve permanency?

In 2018, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, along with Berks County Children and Youth Services, will participate in an initiative designed to help answer that question.

The objective of the project is to provide foster, adoptive and kinship parents with the skills, knowledge and abilities they need to meet the needs of older youths, resulting in an increased likelihood families will welcome older youths into their home, be more successful parents, maintain youths' stability, and commit to permanency, all for the enhanced well-being of the youths.

The project is called Critical Ongoing Resource Family Education (CORE), a state-of-the-art training program that will equip resource families with skills necessary to meet the needs of older youths who have moderate to serious emotional and behavioral health challenges.

Common among this population are behaviors often caused by or exacerbated by trauma. As a result, these young people frequently are placed in more restrictive settings and age out of the child welfare system without the benefit of achieving permanency with a family.

The CORE training will include three elements: (1) a self-assessment process for resource parents; (2) 12 hours of classroom instruction to build resource parents' knowledge and skills; and (3) right-time videos that support skills development when families most need them.

This initiative is made possible by a national grant overseen by Spaulding for Children, Michigan, and provided in partnership with the Child Trauma Academy, the Center for Adoption Support and Education, the North American Council on Adoptable Children and Wayne State University.

The three-year Foster/Adoptive Parent Preparation, Training and Development grant comes from the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Diakon's participation as a pilot site means that Pennsylvania will be recognized as a national

November: National Adoption Month

Focus on permanency for teens

According to Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data, in 2015 more than 12,000 youths between the ages of 15 and 18 were in foster care waiting to find permanent homes.

Too often, teens age out of foster care with little to no stable support system or family. This year's National Adoption Month was focused on identifying and preparing families for teenagers. Building capacity at the local level is essential to providing teens with the best chance of identifying a permanent family.



Unique fashion show/matching event spotlights older youth

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care recently held its sixth annual fashion show-style “matching event,” bringing together older youths in need of permanent families and prospective adoptive and foster families.

One of several matching events held annually by the program—others take place in such venues as professional baseball stadiums during games—the one-of-a-kind fashion show is held at The

Lutheran Home at Topton, where Diakon Adoption & Foster Care’s northeastern Pennsylvania office is located.

The event employs a fashion show atmosphere that makes the youths “stars” for the day, with each youth receiving makeovers from Metro Beauty School, as well as a new outfit they model. The event is designed so that youths and families have time for socialization following the fashion show.

This year, 15 youths and 15 prospective and current resource families participated, along with 14 adoption agencies.



Max and Mari struck a pose as they chatted at the event.



Julianna Angelo, Diakon Older Child Matching Initiative recruiter, and Kyra Allen, Diakon Prep/Profile specialist, were on hand to provide information and answer questions.



Melody is photographed for the fashion show



Special hair styling services were provided by Metro Beauty School.

“It was a great response,” says Joyce Riche, director of the Diakon Adoption & Foster Care office at Topton. “We had four families ‘walk the runway’ to show support to the youth and generally to show their own unique personalities, just like the youth did. There was great interaction among the youths and families. We are very hopeful that at least one permanency match was made.”

Beyond resulting in successful matches of waiting youths with adoptive families, the event has attracted international interest. For the third year in a row, a European television program expressed interest in the Fashion Show/matching event. This year, three journalists attended the Fashion show while making a documentary for the French news magazine *Sept à huit* (similar to 60 Minutes in the United States. The journalists also attended part of a resource family training program that morning, to see how families are prepared for successful adoption.)



Joyce Riche, director of Permanency Services, was interviewed by French journalists for their documentary.

Finalizations

Jacob
Jan. 19, 2017
Andrew and Tammy
York County

Zada
Feb. 9, 2017
Mikka
York County

Christian
Feb. 9, 2017
Erin
York County

Chase
Feb. 17, 2017
Jeffrey and Christine
York County

Danielle
March 17, 2017
Dean and Jessica
Northampton County

Travis
March 17, 2017
Jeffrey and Dorey
Northampton County

Monica and Nevaeh
March 28, 2017
Richard and Lynda
Northampton County

Andrew
March 29, 2017
Bryan and April
Adams County

Destiny and Zion
April 4, 2017
Milton and Rosette
York County

Dustin and Thomas
April 11, 2017
Phillip and Sharon
York County

Stefon
April 13, 2017
Troy and Emily
Berks County

Angelina, Dariel, Jasmine
and Raiden
April 18, 2017
Craig and Pamela
Northampton County

Deven and Grace
April 19, 2017
Bradley and Jessie
Berks County

Cazden
April 19, 2017
Lisa
Berks County

Rayanne
April 25, 2017
Kwaku and Eva
Northampton County

Brielle
April 26, 2017
Kenneth and Nicole
Berks County

Charles
April 26, 2017
Will and Alicia
Berks County

Joselyn and Javier
May 9, 2017
George and Shirley
Northampton County

Kellen and Kirsten
May 17, 2017
Patricia
Berks County

Analise and Jasmary
May 17, 2017
Wanda
Berks County

Jaxon
May 17, 2017
Tracy
Northampton County

Kylar and Mackenzie
May 30, 2017
Russell and Joan
York County

Chris
June 9, 2017
Brad and Julie
Franklin County

Evan
June 13, 2017
Joseph and Candie
Northampton County

Adelyz
June 19, 2017
Kevin and Jill
Schuylkill County

Bruce
June 19, 2017
Denise
York County

Jayden, Christopher and
Zaniya
June 20, 2017
Larry and Providencia
Northampton County

Adalyn and Bryson
June 22, 2017
Travis and Jennifer
Adams County

Madison
June 28, 2017
Robert and Stephanie
Berks County

Tucker
June 29, 2017
Patrick and Amanda
Lebanon County

Peyton
June 30, 2017
Jason and Rosemarie
Northampton County

Jeriah
July 19, 2017
Galen and Rosalie
Berks County

Reagan
July 19, 2017
Nicholas and Bonnie
Berks County

Kaylee
July 25, 2017
Troy and Judith
Lebanon County

Aedan and Isabella
Aug. 8, 2017
Mark and Alex
York County

Tradonis
Aug. 8, 2017
Troy and Jessica
York County

Trevor
Aug. 8, 2017
Matthew and Lydia
Northampton County

Grace
Aug. 9, 2017
Marie
Berks County

Damayia
Aug. 9, 2017
Gregory and Christina
Montgomery County

Hazelyannie and Jayliannie
Aug. 16, 2017
Elias and Glorimar
Berks County

Finalizations

Maverick
Aug. 22, 2017
Joshua and Keena
Berks County

Alyssia
Aug. 23, 2017
Ryan and Heidi
Dauphin County

Alexander and Jesse
Aug. 24, 2017
John
Lancaster County

Cody
Aug. 30, 2017
Stephen and Buffie
Berks County

Jayla and Zaiden
Aug. 30, 2017
Amilyn and Valerie
Lehigh County
Angel and Jayda

Sept. 12, 2017
Jamil and Zoraida
Northampton County

Mekaeh
Sept. 13, 2017
Jason and Rebecca
Montgomery County

Harmony
Sept. 20, 2017
Roger and Annie
Berks County

Ava
Sept. 13, 2017
Billie
Berks County

Sadeeq and Jonathan
Sept. 22, 2017
Wanda
Lancaster County

Alex
Sept. 26, 2017
Jonathan and Yalilis
Northampton County

Gavin
Oct. 4, 2017
Thomas
Berks County

Dennis
Oct. 10, 2017
Brenda
Adams County



Aedan and *Isabella*

were adopted by Mark and Alex on Aug. 8, 2017.



John adopted *Alexander* and *Jesse* on Dec. 7, 2016.

Finalizations continued



Alyssia was adopted on Aug. 23, 2017, by Ryan and Heidi.



Brad and Julie adopted *Chris* on June 9, 2017.



Annie and Roger adopted *Harmony* on Sept. 20, 2017.



Cody was adopted on Aug. 30, 2017 by Stephen and Buffie.



Evan was adopted on June 13, 2017, by Joseph and Candie.

Finalizations continued



Maverick was adopted on Aug. 22, 2017, by Joshua and Keena.



Peyton was adopted by Jason and Rosemarie on June 30, 2017.

Zaiden and *Jayla* were adopted on Aug. 30, 2017, by Ami and Val. Also pictured, in the middle, is their daughter Lilly.



Matthew and Lydia adopted *Trevor* on Aug. 8, 2017.

Bradley and Jessie adopted *Deven* and *Grace* on

April 19, 2017.



Help us to find *forever* families

Tim, age 14

Tim likes being active and participating in sports and activities such as karate and football, and wants to learn to do back flips! Although he can be quiet at first, Tim opens up after he gets to know you. More than anything, Tim is a country boy through and through and would like to live on a farm, taking advantage of the open space with endless opportunities.

He hopes to do many things with a family including paintball, fishing, hunting, riding an ATV and camping. When indoors, he is your standard teenager with a love for video games and a dislike for hand-washing dishes! "I want a nice family who will never give up on me, like other people do," Tim says. He has some special connections that he would like to maintain, so it's important that a family is willing to be open to this. Tim would do best in a two-parent household or with a single parent who has support. It would be ideal for him to be an only child or have older siblings to look up to. Tim is not legally free for adoption; however, when a permanent resource is identified, final steps to terminate parental rights will be undertaken. For more information, please contact Helene Kosciolk, (610) 682-1564, KosciolkH@diakon.org.



Melody, age 14



A friendly and likeable young lady, Melody wants to be accepted for who she is. She enjoys being the center of attention and absolutely loves the color pink. A true girly girl, Melody enjoys shopping, painting her fingernails, and styling her hair. She also likes playing games and going swimming. She loves animals, going for walks and watching her favorite television show, "Pretty Little Liars." Melody wants to be a part of a forever family who helps her feel loved. She would do very well in a home where she is the youngest or only child so the focus can be on her. Melody is not yet legally free for adoption; however, when a permanent resource is identified, final steps to terminate parental rights will be undertaken. For more information, please contact Helene Kosciolk, (610) 682-1564, KosciolkH@diakon.org.

Zackary, age 16

Zack is a caring young man with a very creative mind. He is fun and enthusiastic, and often can be found participating in hands-on activities such as arts and crafts. He also loves to build things and would love to create his own robot one day. Zack enjoys swimming and baking, too. Zack is looking for a family who will accept him for who he is and be committed to him through adulthood. He is great with younger kids and would love siblings. Pets are calming for Zack. He is legally free for adoption. For more information, please contact Julianna Angelo, (717) 795-0312, AngeloJ@diakon.org.



Help us to find *forever* families

Forever families Continued from Page 6

Dakota, age 15

Dakota describes himself as funny, creative and athletic. Some of his favorite things to do are gardening, going for walks and swimming. He also enjoys watching Eagles games and his favorite television show, "Henry Danger." Dakota describes his ideal forever family as "having fun and being happy together."

He was born female but he identifies as male, and would like a family who is going to provide him support through this journey. Dakota would prefer to be an only child, but older siblings would be fine as well. His forever family should be willing to participate in therapeutic services and provide intense support for Dakota. He is legally free for adoption. For more information, please contact Julianna Angelo, (717)795-0312, AngeloJ@diakon.org.



Zahmir, age 13



Endearing and sporting an incredible smile, Zahmir is fond of sounds and enjoys playing songs on his keyboard. He has a natural talent for music and makes composing and playing songs look easy. He also enjoys playing and running outdoors, and especially likes digging in a sandbox. He'll wear you out at a playground! Zahmir is diagnosed with autism and has significant medical needs. He receives nutrition through a G-tube. A nurse accompanies him to school and stays with him throughout the evening.

At school, Zahmir attends a multiple disabilities behavioral support classroom, and receives occupational and speech therapies. Working closely with his teacher, he has progressed academically and has begun socializing within the classroom. (Although Zahmir is 13, developmentally he is closer to the age of 5.) His teacher is very proud of him! Zahmir does well in a structured environment and responds positively to redirection. He needs an active, nurturing and patient forever family who will fully commit to giving him attention, supervision and support. His family must be able to meet his medical and behavioral needs and be willing to engage in an extended period of visitation prior to placement, to help his transition to a new home be successful. For more information, please contact Marian Kolcun, (570) 351-9290, KolcunM@diakon.org.

Help us to find *forever* families

Forever families Continued from Page 7

Alex, age 5

Alex is an adorable, happy boy who will melt your heart with his smile and laughter. Everyone who meets him loves him immediately! Alex likes to be held, soothed, and touched. He loves animals, especially petting them. His favorites seem to be cats, goats, and chickens. He also likes to bounce on yoga balls and enjoys being outside watching the beauty in nature, such as watching the movement of leaves on the trees. Alex has a lot of medical needs, sees several specialists and has a lot of appointments. He is generally calm, loves being around people, and communicates through general vocalization and facial expressions. Alex is extremely resilient and has been continually making progress. For more information, please contact Katie Juliana, (717) 795-0479, JulianaK@diakon.org.



Ivy, age 14

Engaging and talkative, Ivy loves to meet new people. She has a ton of interests and is always willing to try something new. Two of her favorite things are to sing and watch TV, but especially to do both at the same time! Ivy likes to watch Disney, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, and her favorite shows include music. She also loves musicals, especially Hairspray, High School Musical, Grease and, of course, anything Disney. Ivy also likes swimming and would do this every day in the summer if she could. She would love to make you dinner with her secret recipe for sweet and spicy spaghetti,

complete with double fudge brownies for dessert! For more information, please contact Katie Juliana, (717) 795-0479, JulianaK@diakon.org.

Haley, age 14

Haley is very athletic, active, creative and caring and has a great sense of humor. She enjoys art projects, swimming, gymnastics and even doing chores! She also loves to go shopping, eat pizza and go roller-skating. She loves animals and would love to have a pet dog. Eating healthy is very important to Haley. She would like to go on vacations, on hikes, to the movies and to amusement parks with her forever family. She also is hopeful that she and her mother can cook, shop, and get their nails done together. Haley is looking for a forever family who will attend church together, go to sporting events, do arts and crafts and enjoy game nights. Haley would do best in a two-parent family in which she is the only or youngest child; however, all families will be considered. For more information, please contact Julianna Angelo, (717) 795-0312, AngeloJ@diakon.org, or Adrienne Gardina, (717) 795-0303, GardinaA@diakon.org.



Farm setting brings out a crowd for matching event

A real working farm in the tiny borough of Hollsopple, Pa., was the setting for a big day of fun that provided opportunity for waiting youths and prospective families to meet. The Pumpkin Patch Match, held Sept. 16, was sponsored by Professional Family Care Services of Johnstown.

There was a great turnout of families, agencies and

waiting children to enjoy it all. Along with traditional matching activities, the day was filled with a craft activity, hayride and a friendly corn hole competition. Diakon's Older Child Matching Initiative, or OCMI, recruiter Marian Kolcun attended along with other OCMI recruiters Nic Landon of Fifth Pathways and Russ McCurdy of Project Star.



Waiting children joined families and agency staff for a fun day "down on the farm."

Teens need families, too *Continued from Page 1*

leader and help shape national standards for resource families working with older youths. We will have the opportunity to help evaluate the effectiveness of the new curriculum design.

In the near future, we will begin reaching out to both current and prospective resource parents caring for older youths with moderate to serious behavioral health challenges who may be at risk for more restrictive placement. This approach will include foster parents, guardians, adoptive families and relative caregivers.

Thirty-five families will participate in the new curriculum.

We also will be reaching out to identify parents who have parented older youths in the Lehigh Valley and Capital regions, to help us by learning the training and assisting in conducting trainings with our staff members.

We are very excited about this opportunity to help have a positive impact for future adoptive families in an area of critical need and to give older youths the opportunity to grow up in a permanent family setting.

Kathy Roach, Executive Director
Diakon Adoption & Foster Care

Number of children in foster care continues to rise



Overall in the United States, the number of children in foster care is on the rise.

A report based on federal data projected that the number of children in foster care in 2017 is roughly 443,000, a 3 percent jump from the 427,910 count in 2015, the last year such data was made available.

The rise is consistent with a trend of increased foster care numbers that began five years ago. After 14 years of decline, federal data show, the national number of youths in foster care has increased every year since 2012. The figures are taken from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System.

“The increased numbers reflect what we see happening in our service areas and across Pennsylvania,” says Kathy Roach, executive director of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. “The need for resources to help youths in foster care continues to grow as well.”

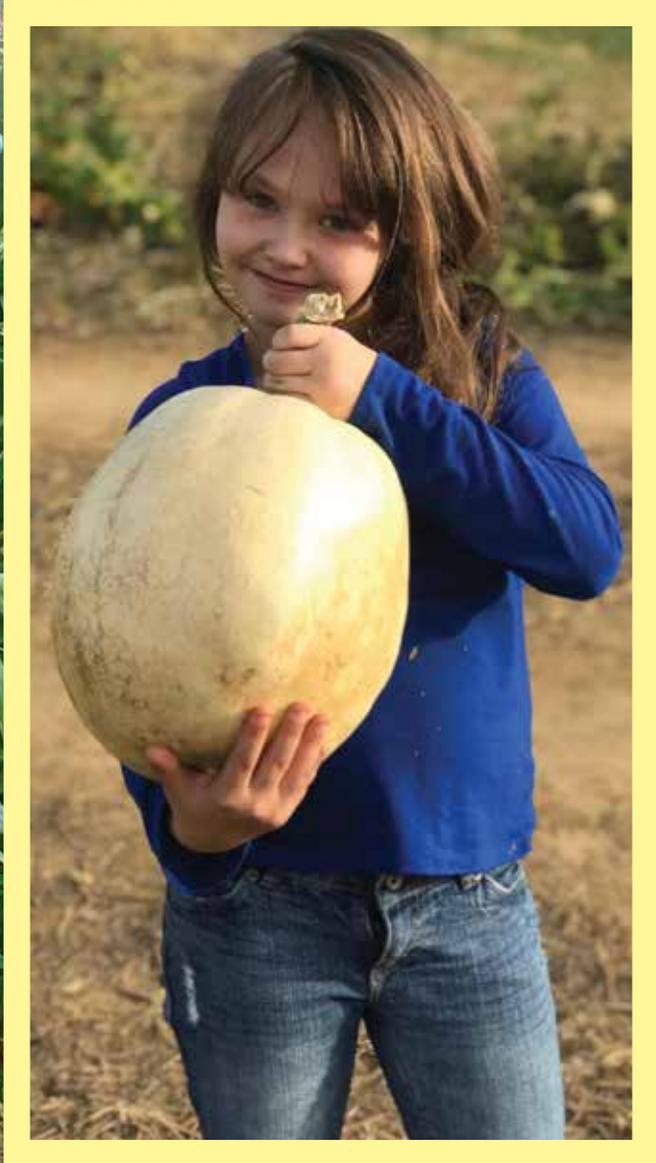
The report on the national numbers of children in foster care was researched and prepared by The

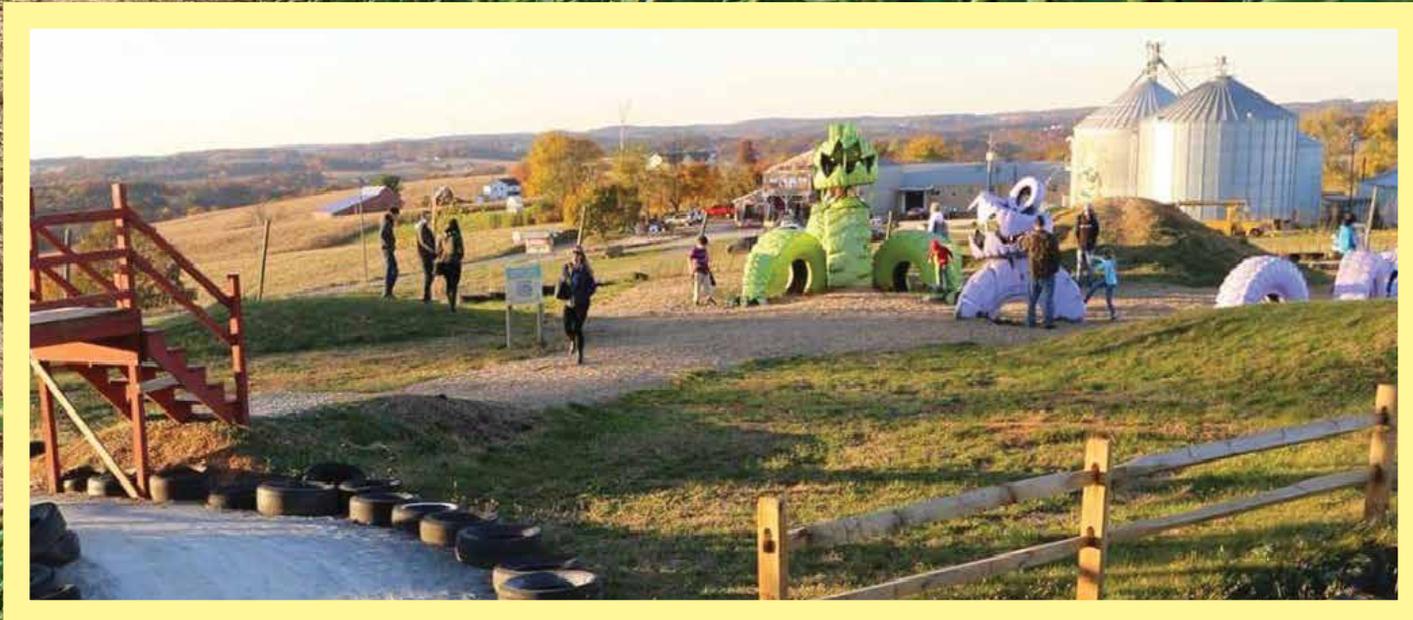
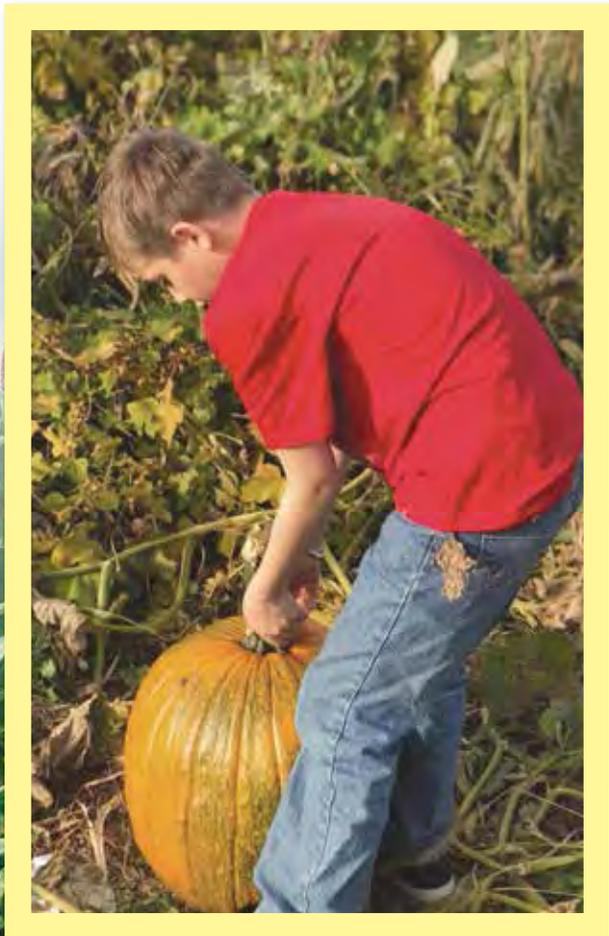
Chronicle of Social Change and released in early November. The chronicle is an online news publication covering child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health and educational issues faced by vulnerable children.



Maize Quest Fun Park welcomes foster families and children

October 21 was a fun-filled Saturday for the more than 60 Diakon foster parents and children who tackled mazes, rode tractors and hay wagons, picked pumpkins and enjoyed numerous other activities at Maize Quest Fun Park in New Park, Pa. Thanks to the park's generosity, our foster families were able to spend the day there at no cost.





Incentives for Family Referral

One of the toughest parts of our job occurs when we cannot respond to the immediate need to place a child—because no family is available for that situation.

We need **more great families like yours** to meet the pressing needs of children and youths.

In fact, you can help us to do just that. And help yourself in the process.

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care is now providing a stipend to Diakon resource families for each family you help to recruit who completes various stages of the approval and placement processes.

Here is the incentive-payment schedule:

- * **Identified family completes training:** \$ 50
- * **Family approved/licensed:** \$100
- * **Family accepts placement:** \$100
- or
- * **Family accepts placement of a teen (age 13 or older) or sibling group:** \$150

For you to be eligible for the full amount of \$250 - \$300, the licensed home must accept a placement through one of our programs and the child must remain in the home for at least 30 days.

So that you receive credit, please ask the family calling or emailing us to identify you as their referral source.

As a Diakon family, you are one of our most-critical resources. You have made a huge difference in the lives of waiting children and youths.

Now, you can make an even greater difference by helping us to find even more families like yours!

DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE



Central Pennsylvania Office
960 Century Drive, Suite 101
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
Phone: (717) 795-0320

Northeastern Pennsylvania Office
One South Home Avenue
Topton, PA 19562
Phone: (610) 682-1504

South Central Pennsylvania Office
836 South George Street
York, PA 17403
Phone: (717) 845-9113

Foster families enjoy Halloween fun and the chance to meet one another

The first annual SPOOKTACULAR, hosted by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care staff, welcomed about 30 foster family members, both children and adults, for a fun-filled holiday event.

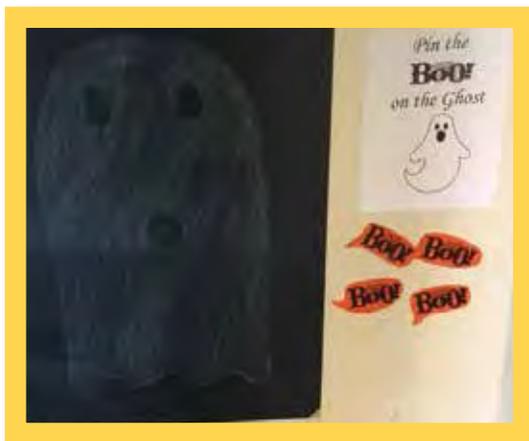
Held in unseasonably warm late October, the event did more than mark Halloween; it was also a chance to connect families with Diakon's Topton campus and, more importantly, with one another.

"We wanted the youths to see other children who are in the 'same boat' as they are," explains Joyce Riche, director of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's Northeastern Pennsylvania office in Topton.

"But mostly, this was a fun event. Our foster care youths so often see their caseworkers, and go to the office for business, and this was an opportunity to have fun, get to know their workers and share experiences with other kids."

The children participated in games such as Painting Pumpkins, Pin the Boo on the Ghost, Prize Punch and Pumpkin Bowling, among others, and enjoyed Halloween snacks. The mild weather made it possible to host most of the activities outside, with the prize room and snacks inside. All active foster families and children were invited.

Based on the success of the day, Riche said other fun family activities are being planned on the Topton campus.



Halloween fun brought foster families together to share time with one another.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Information Sessions

Families interested in learning more about adoption and foster care are invited to attend Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's free informational sessions, held throughout the year at various locations. If none of the scheduled sessions is convenient for interested families, individual sessions may be scheduled.

Eastern Pennsylvania – Topton office

Location: Topton

Children Services Building (Annie Lowry Building), The Lutheran Home at Topton campus, One South Home Ave.
(2017) Dec. 21

(2018) Jan. 11, Feb. 8, March 8, April 12, May 10, June 14, July 12, Aug. 9, Sept. 13, Oct. 11, Nov. 8, Dec. 13

Location: Bethlehem

St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 474 Vine Street, Social Room
(2017) Nov. 29
(2018) March 28

Location: Holland

Twining Village, 280 Middle Holland Road
(2018) Feb. 26, June 25, Oct. 22

Location: Pottstown

Manatawny Manor, 30 Old Schuylkill Road
(2017) Dec. 19
(2018) Jan. 16, Feb. 20, March 20, April 17, May 15, June 19, July 17, Aug. 21, Sept. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18

Sessions run from 6 to 8 p.m. For more information, please call (610) 682-1504 or check our website at www.diakon.org/adoption.

Central Pennsylvania (Mechanicsburg)

Location: Mechanicsburg

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, 960 Century Drive
(2017) Dec. 6

(2018) Jan. 4, Feb. 1, March 1, April 5, May 3, June 7, July 12, Aug. 2, Sept. 6, Oct. 4, Nov. 1, Dec. 6

Sessions begin at 6 p.m. For more information and to register, please call (717) 219-2790 or email WhiteR@diakon.org or BrodeM@diakon.org.

South Central Pennsylvania (York)

Location: York

836 S. George Street
(2017) Dec. 5

(2018) Jan. 16, Feb. 20, March 20, April 17, May 15, June 19, July 17, Aug. 21, Sept. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18

Sessions begin at 6 p.m. For more information and to register, please call (717) 845-9113 or email KeeferJ@diakon.org or CroneH@diakon.org.

Additional York-area Information Sessions:

- Paul Smith Library of Southern York County, 80 Constitution Ave., Shrewsbury (Heritage Room) - May 8
- Guthrie Memorial Library, 2 Library Place, Hanover - Nov. 6

Training Classes

Families preparing for the addition of a child to their home are required to attend family group training, which takes place on three consecutive Saturdays. Here are upcoming training class dates.

Eastern Pennsylvania – Topton office

Location: Topton

Children Services Building (Annie Lowry Building), The Lutheran Home at Topton campus, One South Home Avenue

Jan. 6*, 13 and 27
March 3*, 10 and 17
May 5*, 12 and 19
July 14*, 21 and 28
Sept. 8*, 15 and 22
Nov. 3*, 10 and 17
Time: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. each day

*This session includes our Sibling Preparation Class for children ages 6 to 18, whose parents are attending training classes. To register, please call Sandra Schreffler at (610) 682-1504.

Central Pennsylvania – Mechanicsburg Office

Joint Mechanicsburg-York Training Sessions

Location: TBA (Check our website at www.diakon.org/adoption for updates.)

Feb. 3*, 10 and 17
April 7*, 14 and 21
June 2*, 9 and 16
Aug. 4*, 11 and 18
Oct. 6*, 13 and 20
Time: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. each day

*This session includes our Sibling Preparation Class for children ages 6 to 18, whose parents are attending training classes. To register, please call (717) 795-0320 or (717) 845-9113.