

Family Connections



SPRING-SUMMER 2019

Finding support, feeling connected

*M*any parents who have adopted children continue to need support and encouragement after the process is finalized. Diakon Adoption & Foster Care staff members understand this and have been providing assistance through our post-permanency support group the last 13 years.

This support group is facilitated by staff but discussions are based on the concerns and joys of families in the group. Parents can share experiences, ask questions and discover how others handle situations they may be encountering. As they spend time with others who are going through or have gone through what they are feeling or dealing with, parents find they are not alone.

“Having a support group is so important. It helps to know that you are never alone in the foster and adoption journey,” notes one parent.

The post-permanency support group meets the second Tuesday of every month from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Atonement Lutheran Church, 5 Wyomissing Blvd., Wyomissing. An annual summer picnic is held off-site at a nearby park. Child care and refreshments are provided for attendees.

Christine Smith Hoh had facilitated the group the last 10 years but recently handed over the reins to co-workers Jennifer Roe (roej@diakon.org) and Sara Rarick (raricks@diakon.org). For more information on upcoming meetings, please contact Jennifer or Sara through the e-mails listed or by phone at (610) 682-1504.

They look forward to getting to know you and your family!



2018 – A Year of New Opportunities

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care offices had an exciting, busy year, with many new opportunities to serve more youths and families.

We have:

- Expanded into areas where we have not offered our services before,
- Have seen significant growth in several of our programs,
- Received several very helpful grants,
- And celebrated the dedication of the Helen N. Palmer

Center for Permanency on the second floor of Old Main at The Lutheran Home in March, as part of Diakon's 150th anniversary celebration.

That Old Main dedication, in fact, marked the first time in years that the majority of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care staff members in Northeastern Pennsylvania are located in one space. If you haven't yet visited us in Topton to see our new offices, please stop by!

Our Topton-based foster care program has grown substantially over the past year with the expansion of our kinship foster care services. We now provide care to more than 200 youths in foster care. I want to thank our foster care team for the support they provided to multiple families and youths over the past year.

Topton's Family Fun Nights have been a big success with Topton resource families and their children, who now have the opportunity to come together and participate in many activities such as networking with other families, attending training sessions, participating in games or craft activities and just having a fun evening as a family. Thanks to our family support specialist for organizing the events and offering excellent trainings this past year for families.

We were excited to welcome a new director, Kimberly James, to the capital-area offices in January 2018.

Under Kimberly's leadership we have combined our services and staff into one unit despite the fact that we maintain two office locations in Mechanicsburg and York. We saw increases in our foster care and SWAN services and have added the offer of emergency kinship caregiver services to local counties.

We received grant dollars to offer some great family training sessions throughout the year, including Conflict Resolution, Childhood Sexual Behavior and Trauma and Attachment.

Our medically fragile foster care program has continued to grow and we have already served 18 children since we were approved to provide this much-needed program. We continue to need families who are willing to help foster these children.

We also have had the opportunity to work with Spaulding of Michigan as part of a federal pilot grant to present trauma-based training for families parenting teens or families interested in learning more about parenting teens.

Called Core Teen, the training was offered in 2018 and again in 2019 in Mechanicsburg, Topton and Allentown, providing 20 training hours for resource-parent recertification. The grant ends the fall of 2019, so after that we will offer the curriculum to interested families.

As part of our expansion goals, we began recruiting families in Bucks County at the request of the local children and youth agency and began offering information and training sessions in Holland, Pennsylvania, site of Diakon's Twining Village. Several staff members are in place to support the families and youths in that region.

In addition, we received a grant to offer respite services to families whose youths are involved with Health Choices in Lycoming and Clinton counties and the program has grown significantly. We also began offering post-adoption services in the Upper Susquehanna Valley and will begin offering SWAN Child Profiles and Child Preparation services in that region this year.

With the Family First Prevention Services Act upon us, we have been reaching out to various counties about offering Family Preservation Services. In 2016, we acquired Lutheran Children & Family Services' Family Preservation program, which has a long history of working in Bucks County.

In the fall we began an Intensive Family Preservation Program in Delaware County and the program have continued to expand since then as we will be offering Family Reunification services as well. Further, we received grant dollars to begin a similar program in Lehigh County in 2019.

We look forward to working with more counties to provide this service in the upcoming years.

Without the entire team working together on behalf of the families and youths we serve, we would not have accomplished so many of our goals in 2018.

And as summer 2019 approaches, our strategic plan includes several new goals for expansion and growth of our programs, so stay tuned!

Kathy Roach
Executive Director
Diakon Adoption & Foster Care



Spreading kindness one rock at a time

Diakon Adoption and Foster Care staff really rock!

Staff took part in a Kindness Rocks Project™ activity by painting everyday rocks and then hiding them in the community for others to find.

The hand-painted rocks featured different creative designs (pictured here) with a special message on the back, explains Amy Silfies, permanency case manager at the Topton office.

“The rocks that Diakon staff painted included information about Diakon Adoption and Foster Care on the back of the rock in hopes that the finders will share a picture of the found rock on Facebook with #diakonrocks,” she says.



The Kindness Rocks Project began as a simple way for people within a community to connect with one another and to share uplifting messages. Project founder Megan Murphy says her hope is that the activity simply “sparks joy in people’s everyday lives.”

Share your story

We’re always looking for new people to share their stories on our Diakon blog, *Many Voices. One Heart.*

No one wants to feel as if they’re alone in this journey, so we’d like to hear your story and encourage others by publishing it on our blog!

If you are interested, please email Melissa Kindall at Kindallm@diakon.org for more information.



A generous helping of community support

Staff at the Deitsch Eck (Dutch Corner) restaurant in Lenhartsville, Pennsylvania, and their customers served a generous helping of support for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care when they chose the program to be the recipient of their fundraising campaign last September.

The Deitsch Eck chooses a different charity or organization each month for its Plate It Forward campaign. A percentage of restaurant sales, along with extra cash donations from customers, supports the mission of the chosen organization. We are very grateful for the donation of \$505 raised by the restaurant and its patrons.



Finalizations

Maria
Sept. 18, 2018
Jennifer
Berks County

Zeiden
Sept. 26, 2018
Frank and Dana
York County

Chase
Nov. 9, 2018
Mark and Michelle
Berks County

Evelyn, Katelyn and
Jeremiah
Nov. 13, 2018
Doug and Gigi
Dauphin County

Hunter
Nov. 14, 2018
Michael and Vanessa
Cumberland County

Kaleb
Nov. 27, 2018
Steve and Sue
Cumberland County

Jayden
Nov. 30, 2018
Rachel and Virginia
York County

Kayley
Nov. 30, 2018
Matt and Krista
York County

Raeanna
Dec. 4, 2018
Scott and Marisa
Lebanon County

Travis
Dec. 4, 2018
David and Sherry
Northampton County

Tyler
Dec. 12, 2018
Robert and Vanessa
York County

Zoey and Nova
Dec. 20, 2018
Barb and Maricel
Lehigh County

Asher
Dec. 21, 2018
Josh and Jocelyn
Berks County

Samantha and Evan
Dec. 27, 2018
Linda and Tim
York County

Haven
Jan. 11, 2019
Annetta
Berks County

Nya
Jan. 11, 2019
Peter and Kendal
Berks County

Jayliannie and Jazzlyn
Feb. 25, 2019
Jason and Lana
Berks County



Nya was adopted by Peter and Kendal on Jan. 11, 2019.



Annetta adopted *Haven*, whom she is holding, on Jan. 11, 2019.



Doug and Gigi adopted *Evelyn, Katelyn* and *Jeremiah* on Nov. 13, 2018. Also pictured is their brother Cayden.



Raenna was adopted on Dec. 4, 2018, by Scott, who is holding her, and Marisa, to Scott's right.



Jayden was adopted on Nov. 30, 2018, by Rachel, holding him, and Virginia. Also pictured is Virginia's grandson Lan'dyn, whom she adopted a few years ago.



Kayley was adopted by Matt, holding her, and Krista on Nov. 30, 2018.

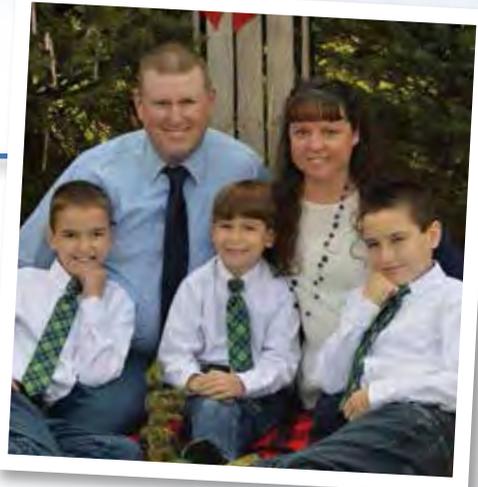


Chase was adopted by Mark and Michelle, his paternal grandparents, on Nov. 9, 2018. Also pictured are Chase's sibling/uncle Jeremy and paternal great grandmother, Patricia.

Finalizations Continued



Barb and Maricel adopted *Zoey* and *Nova* on Dec. 20, 2018.



Hunter, far right, was adopted by Michael and Vanessa on Nov. 14, 2018.



Jennifer adopted *Maria* on Sept. 18, 2018.



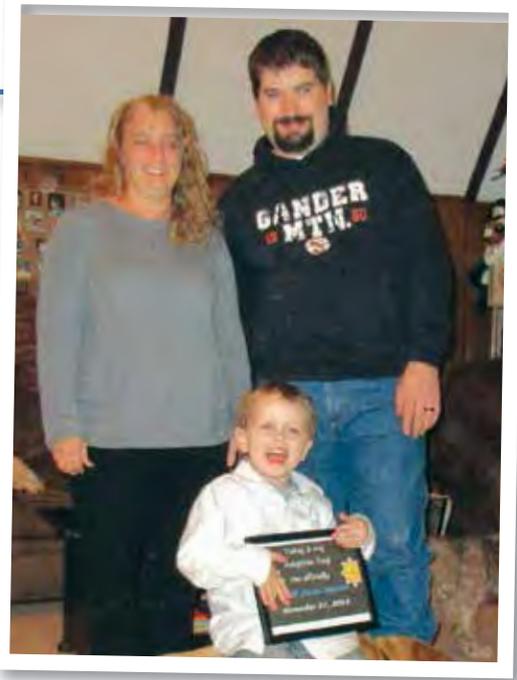
Josh and Jocelyn adopted *Asher* on Dec. 21, 2018.



Travis was adopted by paternal grandparents David and Sherry on Dec. 4, 2018.



Robert and Vanessa adopted *Tyler* on Dec. 12, 2018.



Kaleb was adopted by Steve and Sue on Nov. 27, 2018.



Linda and Tim adopted *Samantha* and *Evan* on Dec. 27, 2018.



Jayliannie, center in pink top, and *Jazzlyn*, in white dress, were adopted by Jason and Lana on Feb. 25, 2019. The whole family is pictured on that special day (left to right): Jason, Lana, Olivia (held by Lana), Angelina, Jayliannie, Jazzlyn, Isaac, and Emily.

Help us to find *forever* families

Lenny, age 14

One thing you should know about Lenny is that he loves to laugh! He tells everyone his nickname should be “Laffy Lenny,” since he not only loves to laugh but also make others laugh. Lenny is very personable and it does not take long to get to know him. He likes to relax in a comfy chair and chat about his favorite things, while also learning more about those he is chatting with. On the list of Lenny’s favorite things are mint Oreos, chocolate pretzels and bubblegum. He has a carefree spirit and will sing and dance at the drop of a hat! Lenny would love a family who gathers in the kitchen and prepares meals together, including one of his favorite foods, sweet potatoes. Lenny also is helpful and says that in the kitchen, he’d rather do the dishes than set the table. While he is very helpful, a family who will continue to teach Lenny life skills will help him achieve success as he grows older. A family with understanding of special needs would also be beneficial to Lenny’s long-term goals. Lenny is legally free for adoption. Please contact Helene Kosciolk at kosciolkh@diakon.org for more information.



David, age 13



“I always have a smile on my face! I like making other people smile!” With the positive outlook he projects, you can’t help but smile along with David! He radiates joy and his laughter is contagious. David is easygoing and has a variety of interests. He would love a family who will curl up on the couch to watch movies together or share his love of video games. He also would like a family who will take him outdoors to explore, whether it’s going camping or playing a basketball game. David also considers himself to be “very caring and have good manners.” He is very curious and enjoys learning about everything! David would like a family who is willing to commit to him and provide him with a

healthy and stable home life. He would do best as an only child or in a home in which there are older siblings he could look up to. This situation would give him lots of attention. He deserves a family who will ensure that he receives all the support he needs to thrive and achieve his greatest potential. David is legally free for adoption. Please contact Karly Vogt at kvogt@familypathways.net for more information.

Foster care awareness event planned

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care is applying for a grant that can help aid in the development of a Foster Care Awareness appreciation gathering planned for May. With this grant, we hope our efforts will contribute to the possibility of celebrating, raising awareness and recruiting new resource families through a festive carnival.

Diakon will be promoting the gathering as a “Family Fun Fest for Foster Care Awareness,” targeted to all current, former and prospective resource families. It will be held at The Lutheran Home at Topton in the parking lot behind Old Main, as well as in the auditorium.

We strive to gather members of the community and those currently involved in the journey of a child not only as an effort to promote awareness for the need of additional resource families, but also to enhance the development of connections with others.

The event will include complimentary hot dogs, bag of chips and drinks to those who attend. Games and activities will be available, and as a fun way to encourage participation, staff will offer guests a passport ticket upon arrival. For each table visited, their passport will be stamped and upon passport completion, the guest may receive a complimentary box of popcorn. Puppet show presentations will occur periodically throughout the day and a cake-walk, as well as other events, is planned.



Resources about child preparation services, post-permanency services, traditional foster care, teen-foster care, as well as Diakon’s medically fragile program, will be available. For more information, please contact Kristina Taylor, family support specialist, at taylork@diakon.org

Proudly Diakon

Cassandra Dry, manager of recruitment; Roxann Miller, recruitment & family development specialist; and Marianne Zellner, recruitment and family development specialist, proudly show their team spirit with new Diakon vests.



Scenes of holiday happiness



Employees of Air Products, based in Trexlertown, Pennsylvania, helped spread Christmas joy with their donation of gifts for children and youth served by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.



Diakon Adoption & Foster Care staff found a really fun way to celebrate the holidays at their December staff meeting – with a holiday sock exchange. Seen here is Child Preparation and Profile Specialist Ali Holloway showing off her new festive footwear!

A “dress-down day” for The Lutheran Home at Topton staff members led to the donation of a much-needed highchair for the adoption and foster care visitation room. Topton staff holds fundraisers through which employees make a donation to be able to wear jeans to work on a given day. They selected Diakon Adoption & Foster Care as a recent beneficiary and we identified the highchair as a top-of-the-list need. Delivery of the gift came courtesy of Karlene Dietrich, left, and Brenda Hensinger.





Generous members of Nativity Lutheran Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania, showed true Thanksgiving spirit with their donation of 30 Thanksgiving meals for Diakon's kinship families. Kim Ring, representing Nativity Lutheran Church, presented the bagged meals to Kathy Roach, executive director of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.

Celebrating the holidays

Diakon's Post-Permanency Support Group parents and children came together to celebrate Christmas at our annual holiday party last December.



The festivities took place at Atonement Lutheran Church in

Wyomissing. The children enjoyed arts and crafts and a surprise visit from Santa, while parents interacted with other group members and watched their children participate in the fun.

The Post-Permanency Support Group meets the second Tuesday of every month from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Atonement Lutheran Church in Wyomissing. Childcare is available. Please contact Jen Roe or Sara Rarick at (610) 682-1504 if you would like more information or wish to become a member of the support group.



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

Helen Palmer Permanency Center, Old Main, The Lutheran Home at Topton campus, One South Home Ave.

June 13, July 11, Aug. 8, Sept. 12, Oct. 10, Nov. 14, Dec. 12

Location: Bethlehem

St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 474 Vine Street, Social Room
June 26, Aug. 28, Oct. 30

Location: Holland

Twining Village, 280 Middle Holland Road
July 22, Sept. 23, Nov. 25

Location: Pottstown

Manatawny Manor, 30 Old Schuylkill Road
May 21, June 18, July 16, Aug. 20, Sept. 17, Oct. 15, Nov. 19, Dec. 17

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

Central Pennsylvania (Mechanicsburg)

Location: Mechanicsburg

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, 960 Century Drive
June 5, July 3, Aug. 7, Sept. 4, Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4

Sessions begin at 6 p.m. For more information and to register, please call (717) 795-0320 or email WhiteR@diakon.org or BrodeM@diakon.org

Location: York

836 S. George Street
May 21, June 18, July 16, Aug. 20, Sept. 16, Oct. 15, Nov. 19, Dec. 16

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

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

July 13*, 20 & 27

Sept. 7*, 14 & 21

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.

Delaware Valley Office

Location: Holland

Twining Village, 280 Middle Holland Road

Aug. 10 (Session 1), Sept. 28 (Session 2) and Oct. 19 (Session 3)

Time: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. each day

To register, please call (215) 872-6649.

Central Pennsylvania

Location: Mechanicsburg

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, 960 Century Drive

Aug. 3, 10 & 17*

Oct. 5, 19 & 26

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.

Location: York

836 S. George Street

June 8, 15 and 22

Sept. 7, 14 & 28

Time: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. each day

To register, please call (717) 845-9113.

Kinship Care Training

Location: Allentown

First Presbyterian Church, 3231 W. Tilghman St.

June 5, 12 and 19

Time: 6 – 9 p.m. each day