

Family Connections



SUMMER 2016

Swim, eat, cheer:

Families enjoy pool time, a picnic and a Fightin' Phils game

Each year, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's Topton office hosts a foster/adoptive family appreciation picnic, giving families with varying lengths of involvement in the program a chance to get together and have fun. This year, the event was held May 25 at FirstEnergy Stadium, home of the Reading Fightin' Phils, the A.A. affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies.

Nearly 200 Diakon families and staff members attended. The setting was the pool party section of the stadium, with a pool deck and picnic tables around the pool, so our families and kids could walk around and not have to stay in seats. The team characters came through the pool deck for the

kids to see and pose for photographs. A buffet ensured there was plenty for everyone to eat.

With the picnic taking place during May—National Foster Care Month—we also held a recruitment event to draw attention to the continuing need for foster parents.

Even though it had to be rescheduled because of the weather, the event turned out to be a day of many happy moments for everyone in attendance.

Smiles and splashes were sure signs that families were having a good time!



Program changes help to enhance service to children

*A*s our programs grow and change, so has the leadership of Diakon's Adoption and Foster Care Services.

In November, Kathy Roach was appointed executive director of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.

Kathy's responsibilities include oversight of the three program offices in Topton, Mechanicsburg, and York, Pennsylvania. Many of you may remember Kathy or maybe she was your case manager, as she has been involved in child welfare for many years and has been with Diakon close to 40 years. She began her work with the organization as a relief houseparent caring for children who lived on the Topton campus in the residential program.

As residential programs closed and children were better served in the community through foster care, Kathy became a case manager working with youths in foster care and group homes. Moreover, she was instrumental in assisting in the development of adoption services at the Topton office as Lutheran Children and Family Services combined services at Topton. Over time, she was promoted to supervisor of adoption services and, in 2000, when Lutheran Services Northeast affiliated with Tressler Lutheran Services, she was asked to direct adoption services at the offices in Topton and York. As times changed and foster care and adoption services were combined, Kathy was appointed director at the Topton location for both programs.

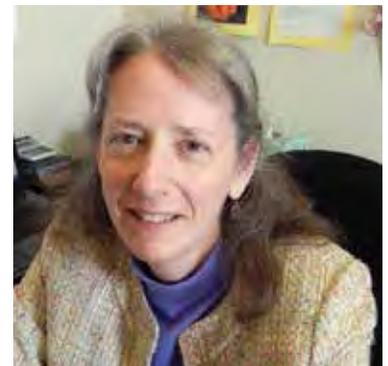
With Kathy's recent promotion, Joyce Riche was named director of the program's Topton office. Joyce's first experience with Diakon was in the 1980s when she came through the program as an adoptive parent; she and her husband adopted their son in 1988. Joyce joined the Diakon staff as a child prep/profile specialist in 2004 and worked with youths on completion of their child profile, preparation and child-specific recruitment services. In 2006, she was promoted to a permanency supervisor and remained in that position until her recent promotion to director. Joyce has a wealth of experience, having worked in child welfare for 28 years.

Along with changes in leadership at the Topton office, our York and Mechanicsburg offices have undergone some significant changes. In March 2015, Denise Roe, director of the York Office, was asked to assume leadership of the Mechanicsburg office as well. She is now responsible for operations at both offices, which are about a 45-minute drive apart. Denise came to Diakon in 2005 as a permanency supervisor and remained in that position until becoming director in 2011. Denise has an extensive background in child welfare, having worked a number of years in the county child welfare system, agency on aging and the orphan's court.

Because of the proximity of the offices in York and Mechanicsburg, a decision also was reached to merge staff and services. This decision will increase our capacity to provide more services to youths and families within the surrounding counties of both sites. The two offices remain open and will continue to serve youths and families in their respective regions.



Kathy Roach and Denise Roe



Joyce Riche

Supporting the Autism Speaks Walk

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care staff took part in the resource fair at the Autism Speaks Walk held at the ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks in Bethlehem. The annual event, held this year in April, helps to raise awareness of autism and the family services the organization offers.



Finalizations

Ashton
September 2, 2015
Bethanie
Berks County

Chloe
September 15, 2015
Natalie and Geoffrey
Berks County

Jaiden and Khylise
October 6, 2015
Patrick and Randy
Northampton County

Samantha
October 6, 2015
Jen and Lara
Montgomery County

Gabrianna
October 20, 2015
Bruce and Keryn
Northampton County

Rebecca
November 18, 2015
Jason and Shea
Berks County

Erin
November 18, 2015
Louis and Valerie
Berks County

Camden and Carson
November 18, 2015
David and Sue
Berks County

Jaycen
November 18, 2015
Joel and Marlene
Berks County

Alia
December 14, 2015
Brennan and Trish
Delaware County

Alyssa
December 16, 2015
Gary and Heather
Berks County

Michael, Lou and Jay
December 22, 2015
William and Juanita
Northampton County

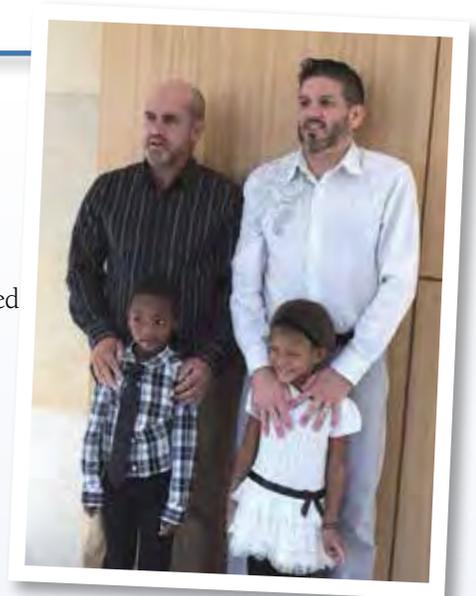
Sebastian
January 27, 2016
Richard and Amanda
Berks County

Davien and Kaitlyn
January 27, 2016
Wayne and Amanda
Berks County

Faith
March 16, 2016
David and Sue
Berks County

Patrick and Randy adopted

Jaiden
and *Khylise*
Oct. 6, 2015.



Bethanie adopted

Ashton
Sept. 2, 2015.



Rebecca was adopted by
Jason and Shea Nov. 18, 2015.

Finalizations continued



Samantha was adopted
by Jen and Lara Oct. 6, 2015.



Gabrianna, sporting a pink flower headpiece, was adopted Oct. 20, 2015, by Bruce and Keryn (back row, far right). Also pictured are Keryn's parents, Linda and Joe, and Gabrianna's siblings, Giana and Giovanni.



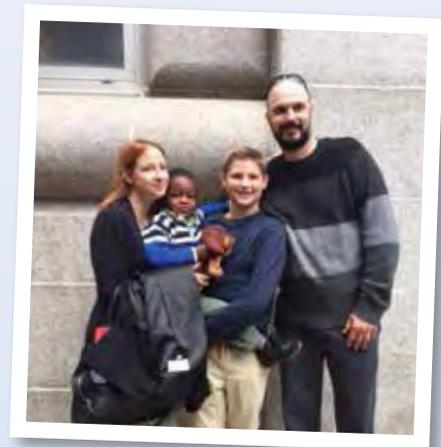
Louis and Valerie adopted
Erin Nov. 18, 2015.



Natalie and Geoffrey adopted
Chloe Sept. 15, 2015.



Camden and *Carson*
were adopted by David and Sue Nov. 18, 2015.



Joel and Marlene adopted *Jaycen*
Nov. 18, 2015. Holding Jaycen is his new big
brother, Owen.

Finalizations continued



Brennan and Trish adopted *Alia* Dec. 14, 2015.



David and Sue adopted *Faith* March 16, 2016.



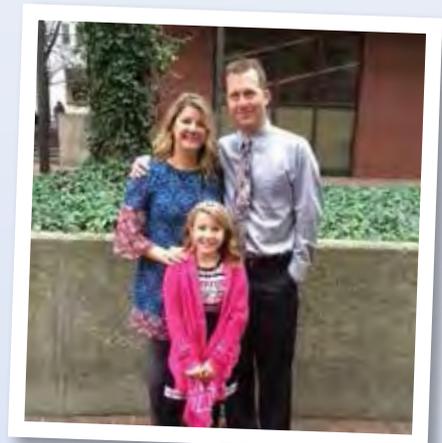
Sebastian was adopted by Richard and Amanda Jan. 27, 2016.



Kaitlyn and *Davien* were adopted by Wayne and Amanda Jan. 27, 2016.



William and Juanita (back row, left and center) adopted *Michael, Lou, and Jay* (front row, left to right) Dec. 22, 2015. Also pictured is the boys' new big sister, Shakeria.



Alyssa was adopted by Gary and Heather Dec. 16, 2015.

Help us to find *forever* families

Nate, age 14

A wonderful young man who is looking forward to finding his forever home, Nate describes himself as friendly and energetic. He can come across as quiet when you first meet him, but once he gets to know someone, he opens up. He has a silly side and enjoys making people laugh. Nate enjoys one-on-one attention, but also is good at entertaining himself. He loves to play video games and build with Legos. Nate also enjoys playing outside and would like to be placed in a home where he has plenty of space to play and run around. For more information, please contact Katie Juliana: (717) 795-0479; julianak@diakon.org



Will, age 16

Will is a quiet and reserved young man until he opens up to the people around him. Once he knows you, Will describes himself as talkative. He would love to talk to you about his favorite activities: video games and football! Though he is not currently on a team, Will hopes one day to play football for his school. He enjoys most sports; other than football, his favorites are basketball and baseball. He follows New York teams including the Giants, Yankees, Knicks and Rangers. Will also likes boxing, UFC, and fishing. He would like you to know that he loves music, and listens to all music genres. Will enjoys being busy and prefers being active to watching TV or watching
Juliana: (717) 795-0479; julianak@diakon.org



Joe, age 17

Joe is a sweet young man who loves to be active. He enjoys outdoor activities, sketching, drawing, Legos and sports. He is especially working on honing his artistic skills, and his hard work shows. Joe's favorite thing to do is to spend time outside with others. He would love to try out a new activity with you! Though he is adept at entertaining himself with his various interests, spending time with others is very important to Joe. He is a genuinely kind and caring young man who wants to feel as if he belongs. For more information, please contact Katie Juliana: (717) 795-0479; julianak@diakon.org



Bobby, age 17

Bobby is a very sweet and funny young man. He loves to be around and interact with people, especially caring adults. Bobby is very affectionate and likes to give and receive hugs. His favorite activities include walks, car rides, listening to music and just being outside. Bobby loves to play in snow and also likes to swing and enjoy the sunshine. He would spend all day outside if he could! Bobby does best with a consistent routine. He has severe mental handicaps and developmental delays. Bobby currently is enrolled in a multiple disabilities classroom and loves attending school. For more information, please contact Katie Juliana: (717) 795-0479; julianak@diakon.org



Baseball game provides setting for family fellowship and fun

Adults relaxing and chatting. Kids playing together. And a baseball game. All in all, a winning combination and a very good time. On May 5, a group of 18 parents and children from Diakon Adoption & Foster Care families enjoyed an evening at an Iron Pigs baseball game. A minor league team of the Philadelphia Phillies, the Iron Pigs play in Allentown at Coca-Cola Park. Our families viewed the game from a stadium suite, thanks to the kindness of King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul, LLC, Attorneys & Counselors at Law.



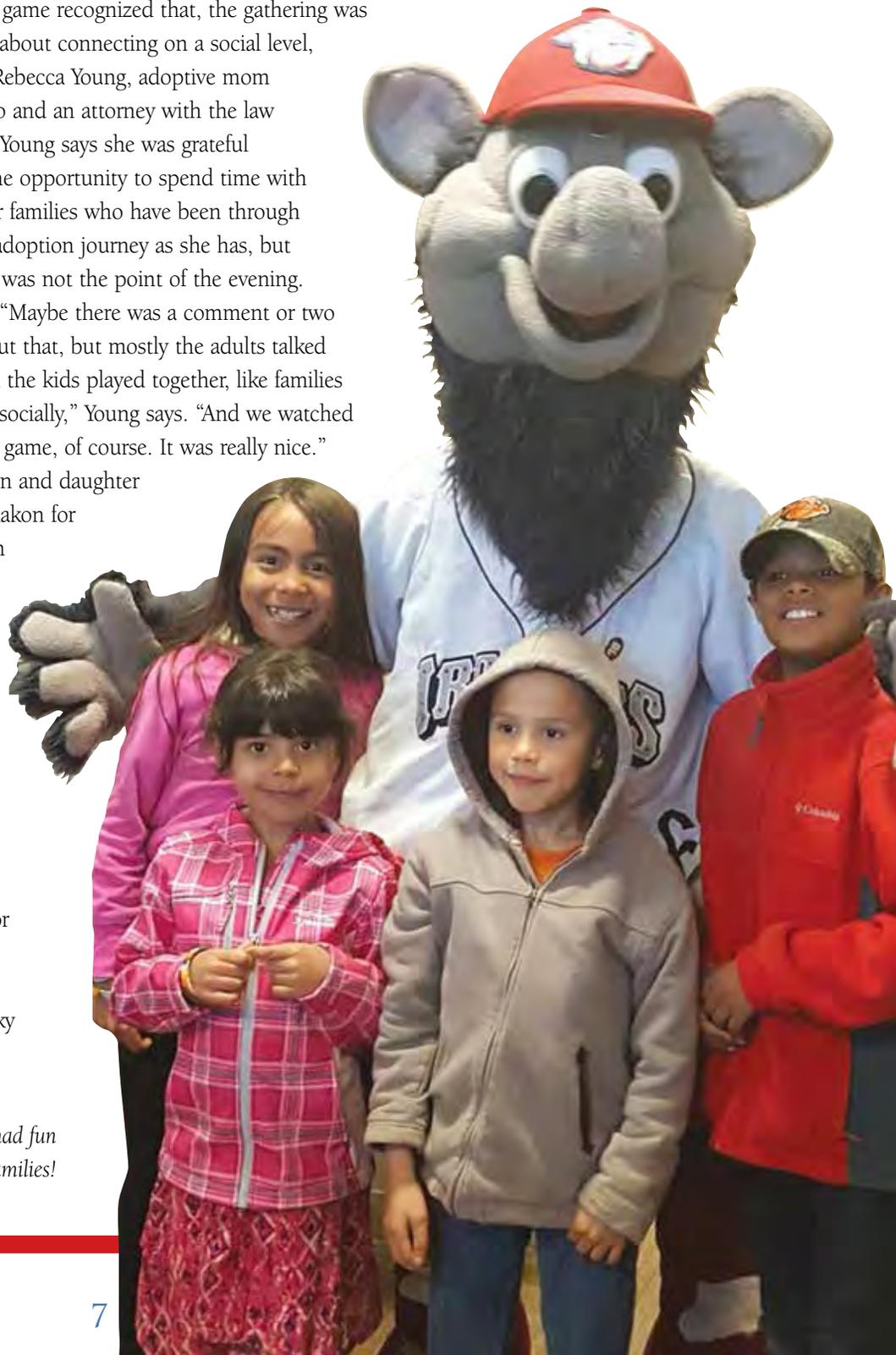
May is National Foster Care Month and though the group at the game recognized that, the gathering was more about connecting on a social level, says Rebecca Young, adoptive mom of two and an attorney with the law firm. Young says she was grateful for the opportunity to spend time with other families who have been through the adoption journey as she has, but that was not the point of the evening.

“Maybe there was a comment or two about that, but mostly the adults talked and the kids played together, like families do socially,” Young says. “And we watched the game, of course. It was really nice.”

Young and her husband adopted their son and daughter through Diakon in 2012. She commends Diakon for the family support during and after adoption but says it has been a bit hard to find other adoptive families to just be friends within her community. That made social time at the ball game extra special, and Young is proud that her law firm supports Diakon. Even through her own adoption, the firm was very accommodating, she explains.

“I worked full-time and my husband worked evenings,” she says. “There are a lot of meetings and visits during the adoption process and I knew I would need time off for those. They were very supportive and I was able to work a flexible schedule. They gave me the time I needed and still do. I feel lucky for that.”

The Iron Pigs mascot had fun hanging out with Diakon families!



Spreading the word about the needs of older youths

Four of Pennsylvania's Older Child Matching Initiative child-focused recruiters attended state Rep. Dan Miller's 3rd annual children and youth disability and mental health summit March 3 in Pittsburgh. The recruiters attended the event to educate individuals in the community about the need for adoptive families for older youths. The matching initiative is a state-funded grant that focuses on older-youth adoptions. It is administered by Diakon and involves three partner agencies across the state.



Pictured from left to right are Nic Landon from Family Pathways; Karly Vogt from Family Pathways; Russ McCurdy from Project STAR at The Children's Institute; and Katie Juliana from Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.

Beloved children's book character delights Diakon families

Clifford The Big Red Dog™ entertained 50 members of families from Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's Topton office at Santander Performing Arts Center in Reading in April. Clifford, the central character of a series of classic children's books, stars in his own interactive musical and, thanks to the kindness of Edwards Business Systems, our children and parents had great seats for the show. Thank you, Edwards Business Systems, for helping our families have a fun day!



Fashion meets fun as waiting youths meet waiting families

*I*t's not quite the same as a runway in Paris or Milan, but that didn't stop the young people walking in the fashion show from having a good time.

The 4th Annual Fashion Show and Matching Event, held by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care to help celebrate National Adoption Month, took place last November on the campus of The Lutheran Home at Topton. Waiting youths ages 10 and older modeled clothing and also had the opportunity to meet waiting families.

Pictured here are two of the participating youths, Franklin and Dominick. Photos are courtesy of Lauren Adele Little.

Youths participating in the event are served by Pennsylvania's Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network (or SWAN) child-specific recruitment program or the older child matching initiative. The initiative serves children older than 10 who have a primary goal of adoption and are legally free, unless the court that determines dependency will not terminate parental rights until an adoptive resource has been identified. Siblings groups are also eligible, as long as one child is 10 years old.

To learn more, please contact Melanie Rehrig, OCMI supervisor, at rehrigm@diakon.org or at (610) 682-1527.



Dominick flashes a smile for the audience as he walks the runway.



Franklin sports a classic casual look on the runway.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Information Sessions

Families interested in learning more about adoption and foster care are invited to attend our free information 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 Avenue
Dates: July 21, Aug. 18, Sept. 15, Oct. 20, Nov. 17, Dec. 15

Location: Bethlehem
St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 474 Vine Street, Social Room
Dates: July 27, Sept. 28, Nov. 30

Location: Pottstown
Manatawny Manor, 30 Old Schuylkill Road
Dates: July 19, Aug. 16, Sept. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 15, Dec. 20

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

Central Pennsylvania (Mechanicsburg)

Location: Mechanicsburg
Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, 960 Century Drive
Dates: July 6, Aug. 3, Sept. 7, Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Dec. 7

Sessions begin at 6 p.m. For more information and to register, please call (717) 219-2790.

South Central Pennsylvania (York)

Location: York
836 S. George Street
Dates: July 12, Aug. 11, Sept. 13, Oct. 13, Nov. 8, Dec. 8

Sessions begin at 6 p.m. For more information and to register, please call Jolene Keefer or Heather Crone at (717) 845-9113.

Training Classes

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

Eastern Pennsylvania – Topton office

Location: Topton
Children Services Building (Annie Lowry Building), The Lutheran Home at Topton campus, One South Home Avenue
Dates: July 9*, 16 and 23
Sept. 10*, 17 and 24
Nov. 5*, 12 and 19
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 (610) 682-1504 to register.

Central Pennsylvania – Mechanicsburg Office

Location: Mechanicsburg
Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, 960 Century Drive
Dates: Aug. 6, 13 and 20
Oct. 1, 8 and 15
Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. each day

To register, please call (717) 795-0320

South Central Pennsylvania – York Office

Location: York
836 S. George Street
Dates: Sept. 10, 17 and 24
Nov. 5, 12 and 19
Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. each day

To register, please call Jolene Keefer or Heather Crone at (717) 845-9113.

Check it out! Our new website has launched at www.diakon.org/adoption.
We'd love your feedback on our expanded online presence.