



DIALOG

Diakon Kathryn's Kloset's goes international, looks to future



WHAT DOES A MANUFACTURER DO WHEN A PRODUCT IT MAKES IS PERFECTLY OKAY, but the packaging for it is slightly off? Especially when several cases, or even whole pallets of the stuff, have misaligned labels or the wrong color bottle cap?

Until Wade Brown came along, the Unilever plant in Baltimore did what lots of manufacturers used to do—it incinerated the products or sent them to the dump.

“Retail stores won’t accept merchandise with incorrect packaging,” Brown explains. “They don’t want it on their shelves, so if they see a mistake, they’ll sometimes reject a whole shipment. And that can add up to a lot of waste.”

A former quality control inspector at Unilever (now Sun Products), Brown was on the company’s outreach committee in the early 1990s, collecting food and clothing from coworkers and donating it to charities in Baltimore. But then he discovered that many non-profits also had a pressing need for cleaning supplies and personal care items, the very same goods that Unilever sometimes had in excess.

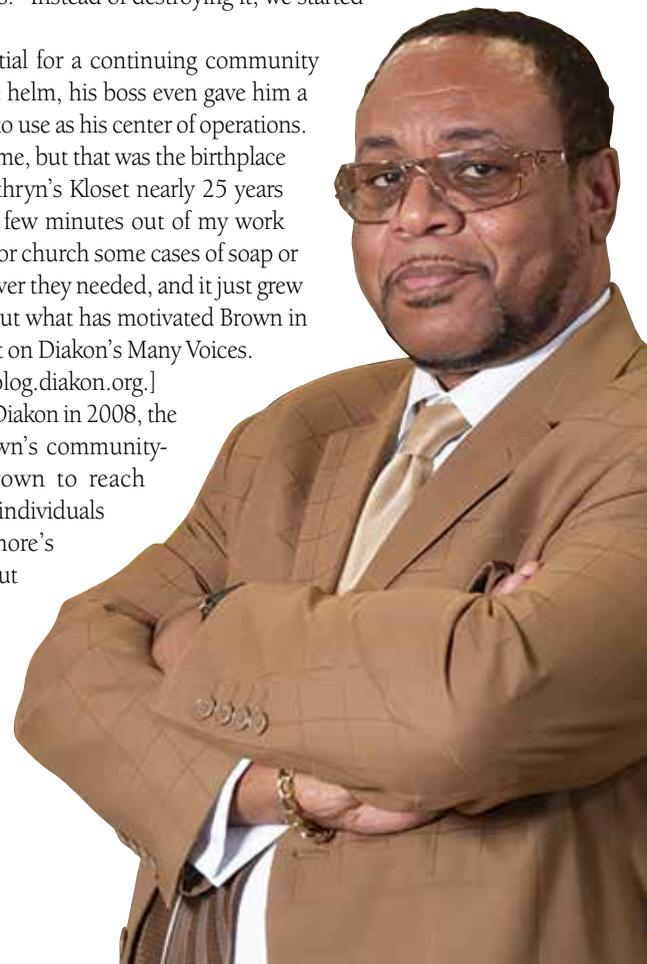
“My facility was a distribution center for all of the 300-plus products that Unilever manufactured so we had plenty of rejected items or overruns to offer these folks,” he says. “Instead of destroying it, we started giving it away.”

Recognizing the potential for a continuing community program with Brown at the helm, his boss even gave him a small section of the facility to use as his center of operations.

“I didn’t know it at the time, but that was the birthplace of what is now Diakon Kathryn’s Kloset nearly 25 years ago,” he notes. “I’d take a few minutes out of my work day to give an organization or church some cases of soap or laundry detergent or whatever they needed, and it just grew from there.” [See more about what has motivated Brown in a question-and-answer post on Diakon’s Many Voices. One Heart. blog found at blog.diakon.org.]

Since becoming part of Diakon in 2008, the program—named for Brown’s community-minded mother—has grown to reach hundreds of thousands of individuals each year, not just in Baltimore’s struggling neighborhoods but also around the U.S. and internationally as well.

“We’re sending products to Venezuela, to Serbia, to Africa,” Brown says. “I’ve even had the king of Cameroon



Right: Wade Brown. Above: Diakon Kathryn’s Kloset Volunteer Shannon Savage packs “Lessons in a Lunch Box” dental-hygiene supplies distributed to elementary school children across the country through the Children’s Oral Health Institute.

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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The President's **DIALOG**



Mark T. Pile

I AM ABOUT TO TAKE A "LEAP OF FAITH." Not that I'm worried about that leap—countless others have made the descent down the high zip-line at the Diakon Wilderness Center—and yet, well, it's a long way down and certainly a rapid descent.

But I have full faith in our staff in Diakon Youth Services that my leap of faith will be a secure (and fun) one.

My literal leap of faith is in response to a national campaign called #GivingTuesday (the hashtag underscores the social media aspect of the campaign).

For Diakon's participation in the national giving campaign, someone (I still have not determined who) suggested that—if we reach a campaign goal of \$5,000 to purchase needed outdoor equipment for the youths whose lives we touch through our wilderness-based challenges—I would take a leap off the platform on the high-elements ropes course at the wilderness center and go zooming down the zip-line.

My participation is taken not only in response to the campaign, but also to reflect the commitment I see each day exhibited by staff members not just in Diakon Youth Services but also throughout the Diakon organization.

How can I not take this leap?

And so I'm poised to jump on #GivingTuesday—Tuesday, Dec. 2—and if you wish to see me fly through the air—probably without the greatest of ease—I invite you to make a donation. A special giving page has been set up on our website, linked from our homepage at www.diakon.org.

If we reach our goal, a video of me zipping on the zip-line will be posted on #GivingTuesday.

See you on the ground Tuesday Dec. 2.

Mark T. Pile, MSHA, MSW
President/CEO



Ginny Ebersole: Steward of The Lutheran Home at Topton history

“IT WAS A GOOD TIME, A GOOD PLACE AND A GOOD PREPARATION FOR LIFE.”

Ginny Ebersole says the message on that framed plaque—adorning a wall in the alumni room of the former Orphan’s Home at Topton—epitomizes life for the children and youths served by the orphanage that was later renamed The Lutheran Home at Topton.

Ebersole has twice been a resident of The Lutheran Home at Topton, once as a child and now in the Diakon senior living accommodations that occupy most of the Topton campus.

In addition, she graciously and generously serves as guardian of the home’s history.

Ebersole moved to The Lutheran Home at Topton in 1933 when her mother passed away; her father’s work schedule made it difficult for him to take care of his family.

She has fond memories of the home, saying that the children spent most days learning and studying, taking part in various activities including plays, and doing chores. But “the most important things we learned were respect, responsibility and how to work.”

When she turned 18, Ebersole left the children’s home, as was typical for children coming of age. She married, raised a family and worked well into her 60s. When she and her late husband retired, they decided to return to Topton because Ebersole’s mother-in-law and friends were living there. The Ebersoles waited six years for a cottage-home to become available.

After they settled in, Ginny Ebersole was told there were boxes of photographs, newsletters, and other items from the orphanage stored in a building. She asked then-current CEO, the Rev. Daun E. McKee, what he wanted to do with all of the items. “What would you want to do with all of this?” he asked.

Ebersole replied immediately, “Give it to the kids. It belongs to them.” So that is what was done with many items.

However, historical items were put on display in the alumni room and or organized for easier access.

As unofficial archivist of The Lutheran Home at Topton, Ginny Ebersole continues to frequent the store of old newsletters, playbills and photographs—some dating to the late 1800s—for information requested by relatives of the children who lived in the orphanage.

Recently, two sisters contacted her for information about their mother, who grew up at Topton. “She was here when I was here but was six years older than I was. She was one of the ‘big’ girls,” says Ebersole. “I found a lot of pictures—from confirmation, graduation, and all the plays she had been in—and articles she wrote. We had a wonderful day.”

“Ginny continues to work diligently to preserve the artifacts and rich history of the services provided by the orphanage at The Lutheran Home at Topton,” says Mark Pile, Diakon president/CEO, who is quick to recognize the extent of Ebersole’s volunteer work and dedication to preservation of the orphanage’s heritage.



“She has done this out of her love for and her personal roots at the orphanage and for the many friendships she maintains with those who lived at Topton, as well as the family and friends who are part of that history,” says Pile.

Ginny Ebersole emphasizes that while the archival work does take time, the effort is well worth it. “People love to hear the old stories about the orphanage,” she says. “It was a good time, a good place, and good preparation for life.”

Diakon Kathryn's Kloset's *continued from Page 1*

and the first ladies of Ghana and Nigeria come here to see what we're doing. We've been blessed from the very beginning to have that kind of interest."

A walk through the program's 25,000-square-foot warehouse on the east side of Baltimore reveals the form those blessings have taken—pallets stacked high with cleaning sprays, laundry detergent, diapers, lotion, shampoo and toothpaste; racks of new clothing and cases full of sneakers and shoes; computers, file cabinets, desks and educational materials, all of it donated by manufacturers and other organizations to benefit Diakon Kathryn's Kloset's more than 700 partners and programs.

"We function as a middle-man and way station," says Brown. "The manufacturers donate what they can't use, then we turn around and let other non-profits know what we have. Most organizations don't have the ability to store all of these goods, but we do, so that's our primary role. They tell us what they want, they come pick it up, and then they give it away free of charge to those who need it in their own communities. It's actually a fantastic way for corporations and people to share resources."

The retail value of goods distributed each year averages between \$2 million and \$4 million, Brown explains, noting that the name-brand household and personal care items it supplies creates a huge savings for budget-sensitive non-profits that would otherwise have to spend a great deal of money on it.

"More important," Brown stresses, "it allows underserved individuals on the receiving end to take the extra \$10 or \$20 they would have spent on laundry detergent or cleaning supplies and use it toward something else like food, a pair of shoes or the electric bill. It helps to ease the burden of that family" [for more on who benefits from the program, see *Partners count on Diakon Kathryn's Kloset for assistance, quick response on Page **].

How has Diakon Kathryn's Kloset grown from a modest charitable effort to a warehouse ministry reaching across the globe?

"It's mostly been by word of mouth," says Brown. "Programs find out about us, tell other groups, and then we'll get a call. That's how our international efforts came about. There were organizations here in the U.S. that wanted to ship supplies to troubled areas overseas, especially places where women and children needed assistance, and that's how the



Wade Brown, left, with Harry Doughty in the Diakon Kathryn's Kloset warehouse in Baltimore.

first ladies of Ghana and Nigeria got involved. We were able to supply those groups with what they needed."

Not that Diakon Kathryn's Kloset doesn't face its own challenges. Two are soliciting merchandise from manufacturers—even those that have donated previously—and making certain goods are transported to the program warehouse.

"Some companies don't automatically send us what we need on a regular basis so I have to ask them to continue," Brown says. "I have to reiterate to them, 'If you have anything, we'd be grateful to accept it.' Otherwise the supply line might dry up. Also, lots of companies will say, 'We have it, here it is, but you're going to have to come and get it' because they won't ship more than 50 or 100 miles. Then I have to get the funds to pay for a tractor trailer to go pick it up."

One solution to this problem may be the creation of Diakon Kathryn's Kloset hubs, Brown says.

"For example, we currently have a hub in Allentown where there's a local church member who owns a trucking company. He collects products from manufacturers in the area and brings them down to us for free. Ideally, I'd like to do that in other parts of the country."

The program recently established an online inventory system so registered partners can simply choose what they want and schedule a pick-up date. "We've been doing all of that through phone calls, emails and letters, so this new system is making life easier for everyone," he says.

Continued on Page 5

Diakon Youth Services gains statewide award

THE CENTER POINT DAY PROGRAM, an educational and vocational training program that serves as an alternative to traditional high school, in November received the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission's Community-Based-Program-of-the-Year award.

The Diakon Wilderness Center-based program serves students who struggle in a traditional school environment. Emphases include vocational training in culinary skills, automotive mechanics, and horticulture; family relationships and skills development; on-site drug and alcohol/mental health counseling; and leadership development.

The program has been very successful in enhancing students' abilities to function successfully at home, in family life, in educational settings, and at work, says Corey Carothers, Diakon Youth Services executive director. For example, based on January 2013-to-April 2014 data, graduates had significant average increases in life-skills measurements including career planning, 24% increase; daily living skills, 12% increase; money management, 24% increase; social relationships, 14% increase; and work life, 11% increase.

"Society benefits greatly when young people who historically have 'taken' through interactions with legal or child-welfare systems are taught how to give back through achieving gainful employment, coupled with vocational training or higher education. Center Point students thrive when exposed to learning in which they are interested and that they perceive as affecting their future. As a result, we're making a real difference in young lives," Carothers adds.



Diakon Kathryn's Kloset's *continued from Page 4*

Brown credits Diakon for taking his mother's namesake-charity to levels of community service he'd never imagined in his early days at Unilever. In 2013, for example, Diakon subsidized program operations by more than \$378,000. That level of support over the years has enabled the program to make a difference in the lives of more than 2 million people, says Brown.

"I didn't know anything about fundraising or running a non-profit," he says. "I could handle the warehousing and transportation because that's my background. But there were pieces that were missing and Diakon gave me the infrastructure that I needed to pull it all together and make it work. I was blessed to have the program become part of Diakon. We're now reaching more and more people in need—and I am so grateful for that."

Your gift can help Diakon to sustain the life-changing ministry provided through Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. To make a donation, please use the envelope included with this issue of Dialog. You may also give online, selecting Diakon Kathryn's Kloset from the dropdown menu, here: <https://www.diakon.org/giving/Give-Now.aspx>.



Wade Brown conducts one of frequently held open houses at the Diakon Kathryn's Kloset warehouse.

Partners count on Diakon Kathryn's Kloset for assistance, quick response

With the invaluable help of its 700-plus corporate and non-profit partners, Diakon Kathryn's Kloset now serves hundreds of thousands of people each year.

Among the organizations its donated products reach are food banks, homeless shelters, churches of all denominations, housing agencies, Head Start programs, senior centers, youth programs, and drug and alcohol treatment programs. Most of these partners are located in the Mid-Atlantic region, but the list is gradually expanding to include the South, the Midwest, and even other countries.

One recipient organization is **Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church**, a certified distributor for Diakon Kathryn's Kloset in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Several times a year, the congregation sends a truck to Baltimore to pick up items for the 40 agencies it serves in the Franklin County area, including other congregations that sponsor their own ministries.

"The result is that we see a lot of people getting help," says Doug Price, Trinity's associate in ministry. "Every time we go to Diakon Kathryn's Kloset we end up serving several thousand people. I think it's a wonderful way to reach out to the community."

Cindy Ash, director of **Franklin County Head Start** in Chambersburg, notes that Trinity regularly donates Diakon Kathryn's Kloset-supplied items such as laundry detergent and fabric softener to low-income families served by her program.

"A lot of the families count on this because they have difficulty affording it," she explains. "It may sound trivial, but it's actually very important for a child to be clean and to have clean clothes because they're better able to learn. These donations help us to achieve that."

Another partner, **New Life Fellowship Church of Christ** in Baltimore, serves 400 to 800 individuals per month with its food pantry and clothing bank ministries.

"We get products from Diakon Kathryn's Kloset every few weeks," says Deacon Thomas Williams. "We get clothing, canned goods, hygiene products, toys, school supplies. We're in the heart of the city, so a lot of these folks don't have anything. Many of the kids in our neighborhood don't even have shoes, so Diakon Kathryn's Kloset helps us out. It's a very hands-on organization and we're so thankful for them."

Pastor Ernest Santiful of Kingdom Church and Ministries in Northwest Baltimore says the program has been "a great blessing." His congregation

regularly receives products from New Life and in turn provides food and clothing to 250 to 300 families per month.

Three of New Life's patrons and frequent volunteers also have high praise for Diakon Kathryn's Kloset:

"I'm unemployed so it's nice to know that someone has my back," says Laverne Flowers, who's received food and clothing in the past. Church member Tony Brown says, "When I'm in need, they take care of me, and I know that Kathryn's Kloset has a lot to do with that." Samuel Shellington, who has volunteered for both New Life and Diakon Kathryn's Kloset, adds that, "They've helped me out when I've needed some food, so I'm glad to help them, too. What they're doing is good for the community and I'm grateful for it."

Likewise, Porshia Everett, the CEO of **A Step Forward**, says her agency has benefited tremendously from the Diakon program. A faith-based non-profit that provides housing and support for the homeless, the disabled, and people recovering from substance abuse, A Step Forward sends a box truck to the Diakon warehouse once a month to pick up supplies.

"As a treatment service-provider with nine houses, we have a lot of needs and the cost can be a big hit to our budget," Everett says. "But thanks to Diakon Kathryn's Kloset, we're able to provide cleaning supplies and personal care items in a community where there are a lot of people below the poverty line."

Everett also praises the program's ability to respond quickly to an emergency, such as when a family in the neighborhood lost everything in a fire. "We were able to bring them to Diakon Kathryn's Kloset and get new clothes, new shoes, books and toys for the kids. And we really appreciated that. When you've lost everything, it's good to know that somebody cares. Kathryn's Kloset has been a major blessing."

Another recent example of the program's flexibility arose when the ceiling at a Baltimore recovery program for veterans and other individuals was literally falling down. **Tuerk House** needed 33,000 square feet of ceiling tile, so Diakon Kathryn's Kloset partnered with the Home Depot Foundation and had the tiles shipped in free of charge. In mid-summer, 45 associates from Team Depot, Home Depot's associate-led volunteer force, join clients, staff and other volunteers to install the new ceiling.

Luther Crest dedication

LUTHER CREST RECENTLY DEDICATED ITS NEW MEMORY CARE UNIT,

along with extensive renovations to its personal care and health care centers, thanks partly to the generosity of residents and other donors.

“We are grateful to many people, in particular the Luther Crest campaign committee and all of our resident donors and their family members, for making the \$1 million capital campaign a success,” says Jim Mackin of Diakon’s Development office.

The planned \$7.5 million construction project represented the last phase of a multi-year repositioning effort at the Allentown, Pennsylvania, senior living community, transforming health-care rooms and common areas from a traditional medical model to a residential concept. The project updated 45 skilled care and 30 personal care suites as well as common and service areas and included the addition of a 3,100-square-foot country kitchen and building changes to accommodate memory-supportive care.

Luther Crest residents, as both leaders and donors, were pivotal to the success of the \$1 million campaign, exceeding their goal.



Enjoying a tour of the new secure memory-support garden at Luther Crest are, front left to right, Lois Eisenhard, a major Luther Crest donor; the Rev. Dianne Kareha, chaplain; back left to right, James Mackin of Diakon’s Development office; the Rev. Mark Wimmer, Diakon vice president for church relations and ministry partnerships; and Mark Pile, Diakon president/CEO.

Volunteer efforts enhance worship at Luther Crest

THE REQUEST CAME FROM A RETIRED PASTOR

living at Luther Crest: Could a large cross be placed in the senior living community’s worship space during Lent to remind worshippers “more clearly of God’s great love made know to us through Jesus?”

The Rev. Dianne Kareha, Luther Crest chaplain, responded immediately.

“I knew that Pastor Dennis Moore of Union Lutheran Church in Schnecksville did woodworking, so I asked about assistance on this project. Based on the dimensions of Crest Hall, the multipurpose room where the cross is used, a cross 9 feet by 4½ feet was suggested.

The Rev. Moore made arrangements for Ron Bealer, a fellow woodworker and a member of his congregation, to make the cross. Bealer fashioned the cross to the provided size but when it arrived at Luther Crest, staff found it was difficult to negotiate it through the doorways to Crest Hall.



The Rev. Dianne Kareha, Diakon chaplain at Luther Crest, with Ron Bealer, who made the cross.

Luther Crest facilities staff suggested adjustments to the size of the cross and, two weeks later, Bealer delivered the height- and width-adjusted cross the Luther Crest.

“It’s just beautiful and a wonderful addition to our worship at Luther Crest,” Kareha says. “We very much appreciate Ron’s sharing of his time and talents with us.”

In addition, she says, the worship space at Luther Crest now includes a “beautiful tapestry made by a relative of a former Luther Crest

resident; the tapestry hangs in Crest Hall on a frame made by Luther Crest resident Dr. Robert Graeme, a retired dentist.”

THE WOODEN CROSS is not the only recent worship addition at the Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Allentown, Pa.

Crest Hall now also houses a stained-glass window, complete with shadow-box frame.

“The window was designed by my son, Stephen, who created it as part of his 1999 Eagle Scout project, ‘The Room of Peace,’ for Luther Crest,” Kareha explains.

When the window had to be removed as a result of the recent \$7.5 million project to renovate Luther Crest’s personal care and health care centers and add memory-supportive care (see the article above), staff from Benchmark Construction—contractor for the renovation—created a lighted shadow-box frame for the stained-glass art.



The Rev. Dianne Kareha with the stained-glass window made by her son.

Local volunteers aid continuing disaster response

MOST PEOPLE DON'T SPEND THEIR VACATIONS WITH TWO DOZEN OTHERS BUILDING HOMES, in drenching humidity and 90-plus degree temperatures. But that's how 26 volunteers from half a dozen Lutheran congregations in Pennsylvania and Maryland spent at least part of their summer vacations this year.

Ranging in age from 13 to 76, the volunteers made up just one of several groups donating time and skills building and re-building homes in Crisfield, Maryland, a waterside community in the southern part of the state devastated by Superstorm Sandy in October 2012.

Diakon, representing the national Lutheran Disaster Response, continues to work in Crisfield as part of the local Lutheran Partners in Disaster Response, a cooperative ministry of the Southeastern District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA; Diakon; and Lutheran Mission Society, an LCMS-affiliated organization.

As a result of the storm, four feet of water inundated the southern Maryland town, destroying almost half its homes. The process of rebuilding began shortly after the devastation and continues today through the help of volunteers such

as Shirley and Ted Menges, their granddaughter, and their group from Zion Lutheran Church in Turbotville, Pa.

This is the second year the Menges spent working with their congregational group in Crisfield. This summer, members from additional congregations worked alongside the Turbotville group including Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Watsonstown, Pa.; Trinity Lutheran Church, Arendtsville, Pa.; Paradise United Church of Christ, Milton, Pa.; and St. Luke United Methodist Church from Denton, Md.

In addition, congregational members unable to make the trip helped in other ways. "We held apple dumpling fundraisers in the fall and had homemade soup sales," says Shirley Menges. "Others provided monetary donations, prayers and encouragement."

This summer, she says, some of the volunteers worked on new construction, building a home from the cement-block foundation up. Volunteers framed the

inside and outside of the house and added a new roof in just five days. Others worked on a partially completed house, adding siding and finishing the crawl space and attic. "We were blessed with people with a lot of talent," she adds.

Many of the first-year volunteers didn't foresee the difficulty of the work, the living conditions of the area, or the emotions they would experience during their week in Crisfield, says Menges. "It takes a while for them to understand the scope of the work, but once they do, they work hard. Really hard," she says, adding that one of the best parts of the trip occurred when homeowners came to talk to the group. "When you get to meet the people, you see who you are

helping," she says. "It meant a lot to our young people."

Members of the Menges family, who have been part of a disaster relief group since 1998, will continue their work as long as they are physically and mentally able to do so.

If you would like to participate...

as a work-group in the revitalization project in Crisfield, please visit www.lpdr.org.

"We think we will have many more years to do this," she says. "There are still lots of houses to build!"





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