

DIALOG

A publication of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries

Winter 2008

BUILDING BRIDGES TO NEW LIVES

"Tim's" story ...

 I'm 17 years old. My mother pretty much abandoned me, and I live with my grandma. She works in the kitchen of a nursing home. I've been there about 15 years now. I pretty much don't have a father either. He's still in prison on drug charges, so he's not around.

Some people would tell you I get in trouble a lot. When I was 14, I was arrested for having a gun on me. When I was 15, I was arrested for having pot. But I was lucky. Neither one of those incidents gave me a police record. But then when I was 16, I was arrested again, but this was a worse offense. I was caught selling cocaine. They kept me at a community center overnight and I was sentenced to juvenile probation and had to do community service.

Grandma thought if I had a job it would keep me out of trouble, so she got me a job at her nursing home, in the kitchen. I guess I did kind of like it, and I was really proud to work with my grandma for a year and a half. There I did everything from preparing vegetables and cleaning up the kitchen to working on the serving line and washing dishes.

Yet Grandma didn't know I was selling and using pot before and after school. But I always took my education seriously.

Anyway, one day at school I forgot about the marijuana in my sock. They found it, of course, and I got mad and reacted pretty strongly. This time they put me in a juvenile center for 12 days and charged me with a bunch of stuff: possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to deliver, making terroristic threats, and even assault on a police officer.

When they finally let me go, I was under house arrest with an ankle bracelet. I had to do two months of community service, too.

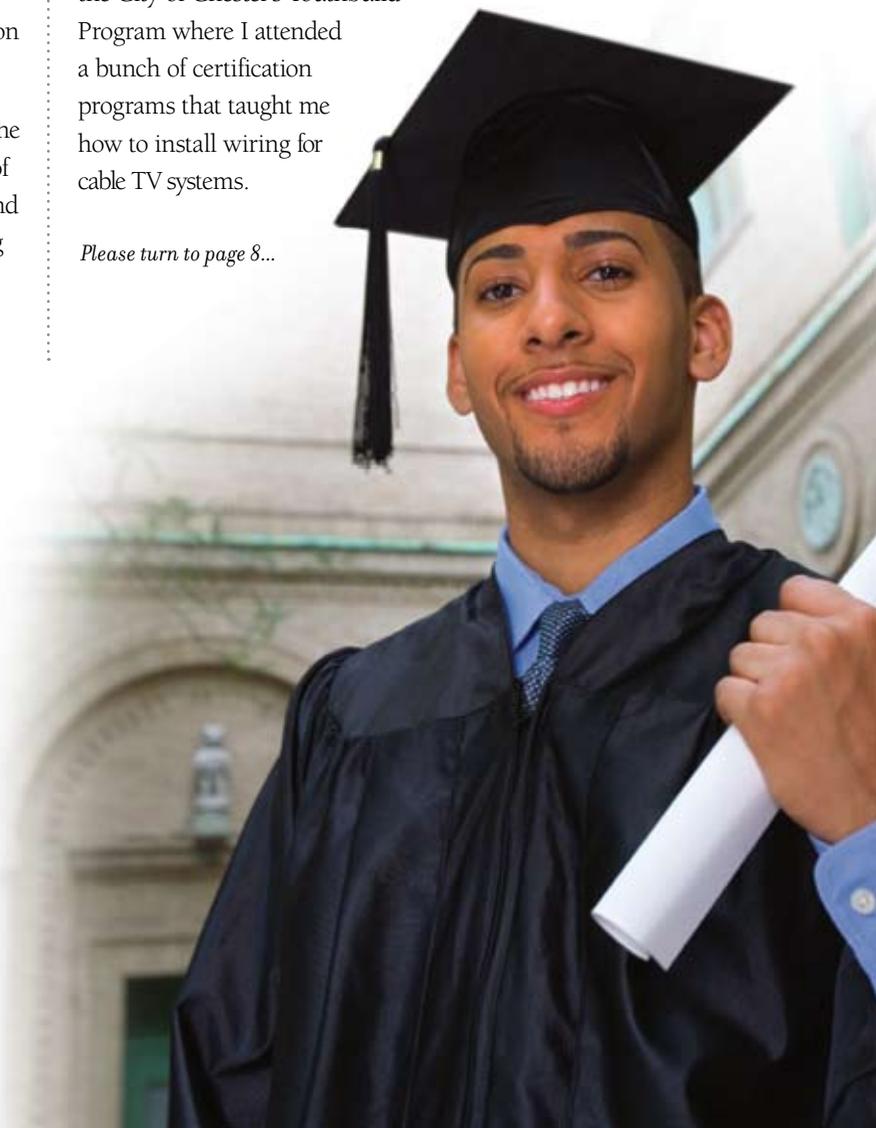
One day I decided not to go back to school after lunch. Of course the school called the police, and a warrant was put out for my arrest. I think it was about then that my probation officer recommended me for the Diakon Bridge Program.

I guess I have to admit that this was the start of a new life for me. Mike Canton, my case manager, even became my friend. We had mutual respect and admiration, you see. We got together to talk every weekday. And he helped me realize it was time to do things different.

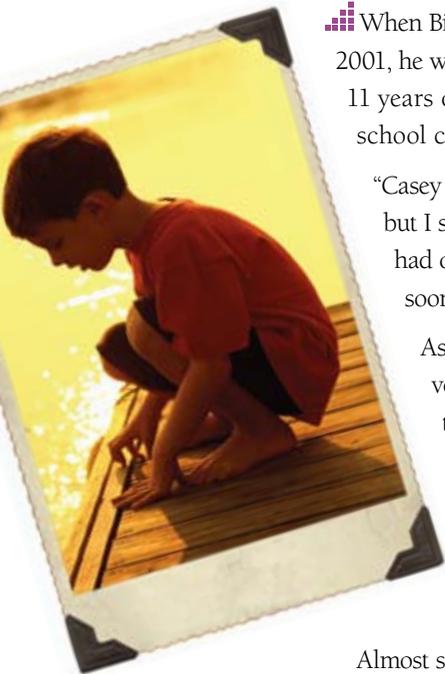
I actually liked the Weekend Alternative Program. I liked it so much that they made me part of the leadership team! And then I even graduated from high school. You should have seen the smile on my face when I showed Mike my diploma. I never thought I would have one of those.

And then Mike helped me enroll in the City of Chester's Youthbuild Program where I attended a bunch of certification programs that taught me how to install wiring for cable TV systems.

Please turn to page 8...



Personal grief blossoms into dedicated volunteerism



■ When Bill Klaips' wife died from cancer in 2001, he wanted his youngest son, Casey, then 11 years old, to talk about his grief with a school counselor.

"Casey didn't want to talk to the counselor, but I saw the effects that losing his mother had on him," the father says. But Klaips soon found an alternative.

As a Diakon Hospice Saint John volunteer, he had heard about and then volunteered with the program's bereavement-focused day camp for children. "Camp was set up in a way that was fun for the kids, yet it helped them cope with loss. It helped Casey," he says.

Almost seven years later, Casey still attends the bereavement camp. These days, however, he is not a participant, but a camp volunteer. In fact, for them, volunteering is a family affair. Mr. Klaips and his older son, Cory, volunteer with Camp Evergreen, Diakon Children's Bereavement Program's overnight bereavement camp, held annually in the rural setting of Camp Kresge, White Haven, Pa.

As a spin-off of the day camps, weekend-long Camp Evergreen provides children with opportunities to explore grief through therapeutic activities such as boating, hiking, fishing, swimming, archery, art, story telling, pet therapy, and the symbolic planting of an evergreen tree. In June, dozens of children from 8 through 14 attended the camp, offered free of charge.

Art therapists from Marywood University helped campers depict their feelings through art projects. Graduate students from the School of

Social Work and Counseling at the University of Scranton and volunteers from Diakon programs and the community helped campers cope with grief.

This year, Susan McDonald, Ph.D., director of Diakon Children's Bereavement Program, launched Evergreen Elders. Trained residents from Diakon senior living communities forged new friendships by providing written support to the young campers.

Together, all these volunteers made the camp possible. "The importance of having a community vested in the health and welfare of its youngest members is essential," says McDonald. "The campers know that the community cares about them and will feel that connection. In grief work, this is significant."

But the campers aren't the only ones who benefit. "We take away more than we give," says the eldest Klaips, who wouldn't miss the opportunity to help children who have experienced the loss of a parent, grandparent, relative, or friend.

"No matter whom they lost, you can see that many are emotionally hurt when they arrive. You can see it in their actions. But after they meet kids in similar situations, they know they are not alone. By the end of the weekend, they make new friends and learn tools to cope with their grief in a healthy manner," he says.

"The only drawback is that the weekend is gone before you know it." ■



Pocono Lutheran Village featured in television tour program



■ Residents and staff members of Pocono Lutheran Village, a Diakon Senior Living Community in East Stroudsburg, Pa., got a taste of "Hollywood" as they were the central focus of a local television program.

be the topic of an episode of his monthly "Legislative Report with Mario Scavello" program, which sometimes features local organizations and businesses.

During the filming of the half-hour episode, Scavello toured the personal care community, including one floor's country kitchen, a resident's room, and the campus' gazebo and garden. He spent time speaking with residents and their families, visited a music performance in progress, and watched a resident excel on Pocono's Dakim [m]Power "brain-fitness" system. In addition, he spent time with Diakon staff members as they spoke with him about life at the village.

Mario Scavello, a Monroe County member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, invited Pocono Lutheran Village to

According to Scavello, the program will run several times on various local television stations in early 2009. ■

Troubled teen finds way back home



As Jerry Christy celebrated a milestone—his 18th birthday—his mother cried.

Unlike many of the tears she had shed in the past, these were tears of joy because for the first time in years Jerry was his old self again.

“I’m so thankful to have my son back,” says Kathy Christy.

The boy’s life began a downward spiral when he was a young teenager. His mother and father had divorced and the depression and other emotional challenges with which he had dealt most of his life worsened.

At 17, Jerry began losing interest in school; he was soon in trouble with the law. His probation officer recommended the Foundations Residential Program at the Diakon Wilderness Center in Boiling Springs, Pa. The program encourages youths to be accountable, develop new skills, and learn to invest in positive community life.

At the end of the four-month program, Jerry came home with a brighter outlook on life, but not without daily struggles. “It was hard coming home, but I’m adjusting and it is easier to live life now,” he says. “The Foundations Program taught me to deal with life as it comes.”

“Jerry has a lot more self-esteem and is more self-sufficient now. He deals with others respectfully and handles conflict calmly. And he gets excited about the future,” says his mother.

This summer, the young man celebrated another milestone—graduation from high school. After graduation, he had the opportunity to spend “senior week” at the beach but, instead, decided to spend it at the Diakon Wilderness Center renewing himself and helping others.

Later in the summer, Christy was among four former Diakon Wilderness Center students to receive a college scholarship from the center (see story on page 5). Then in the fall, continuing his successful journey to healing, he was the proud recipient of an Outstanding Achievement award from the Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission (see story on page 9).

“I try to get everything I can out of the program,” he says. “It saved my life.”

 The programs of the Diakon Wilderness Center are able to enhance services to at-risk youths because of generous donations from companies and individuals that believe that teens sometimes need extra guidance to be better prepared for tomorrow. To learn more, call 1-877-DIAKON-7.



OUR MISSION

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

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries is a leading provider of senior living accommodations and social services, including adoption, counseling, home care, and youth programs in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. With many hands and one heart, Diakon staff members each year touch the lives of more than 80,000 children, families, and older adults. Diakon’s mission is to respond to God’s call to serve the neighbor, and we are proud to continue a 140-year tradition of hospitality and care for people of all faiths.

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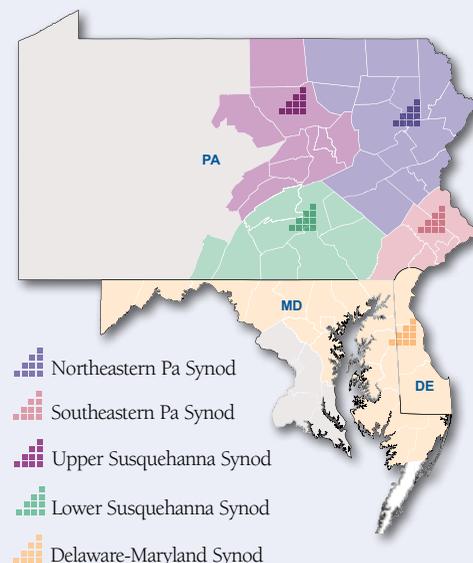
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DIAKON SERVICE TERRITORY



THE PRESIDENT'S DIALOG



I've attended a number of recent Diakon events and while each focused on the future, it also, in its own way, brought me back to the past.

In each instance, what lies ahead would not have been possible without the wisdom and vision of someone who had gone before. We need always to pause, especially on the brink of the new, to reflect on those who have made this next step possible.

For example, I was delighted to spend a wonderful morning recently at Twining Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Holland, Bucks County, Pa. The event was the 30th anniversary of the continuing care retirement community and among those recognized were Mr. & Mrs. Donald Konover, the couple who has resided the longest at the village, Joan Baker, a 30-year staff member of the village, and John Wicks, known to everyone as Jack.



Thirty-year resident John "Jack" Wicks, left, with Denise Miller, Twining Village executive director.

An international traveler during a remarkable business career, Mr. Wicks tells wonderful stories about the early years of Twining Village and how—despite the lure of being asked to conduct business negotiations in India—he opted to stay in retirement because he found life at Twining Village so appealing.

Many of Mr. Wicks' reflections tell of the care and compassion another gentleman had for the residents of Twining Village: Frank J. Kelly. This summer, Twining Village and Diakon recognized Frank Kelly and renamed the community's auditorium in honor of the local developer.

Kelly began creation of the senior living community in 1978 for a local Lutheran congregation; soon thereafter, the congregation was unable to continue with development of the project. With both vision and dedication, Kelly completed and then operated Twining Village, which Diakon purchased from him in 2006.

Without his insight, care, and concern, this significant part of our ministry would not exist.

Around the same time as Twining Village's 30th anniversary celebration, we broke ground for new senior living homes at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village in Lewisburg, Pa.

Taking part in the ceremony were both present Bishop Robert Driesen, and Bishop Emeritus A. Donald Main, a long-time Diakon board member who helped to guide our current direction in expanding our senior living communities. Other participants included Mr. and Mrs. Earl Michael, the first signed residents of the new development, and Priscilla S. Merritt, one of Buffalo Valley's very first senior living residents.



Ready to "dig in" are, left to right, Mrs. Betty Bomboy, chair of the village resident advisory committee, and Elizabeth and David Clough, Buffalo Valley donors. Other guests included Priscilla S. Merritt, one of the village's first residents of senior living, having moved to Buffalo Valley in 1990.

There is considerable excitement at the village as we embark on this expansion, which is only the latest in a series of steps over the years to add personal care services and then senior living accommodations and the amenities of The Village Common.

The leaders of Tressler Lutheran Services—one of the two agencies that created Diakon in 2000—had a vision for such growth when they purchased the Buffalo Valley nursing home in 1975.

The future is possible only because of such vision in the past and those who have come before.

Often, the concern and care that guide such vision touch the lives of those we may not even know.

This summer, four former students of the Diakon Wilderness Center received a jump-start on their higher education, thanks to the vision of a Cumberland County woman and others who share her desire to help youth, our county's future.

Each of the young people received a check for \$1,750, paid to the university or college

VISIT TO FLIGHT MUSEUM BRINGS NAVY PILOT FULL CIRCLE

■ Talk with Harold Butcher about his 32 years as a naval pilot and you're in for a treat—and a history lesson the likes of which textbooks can't provide.

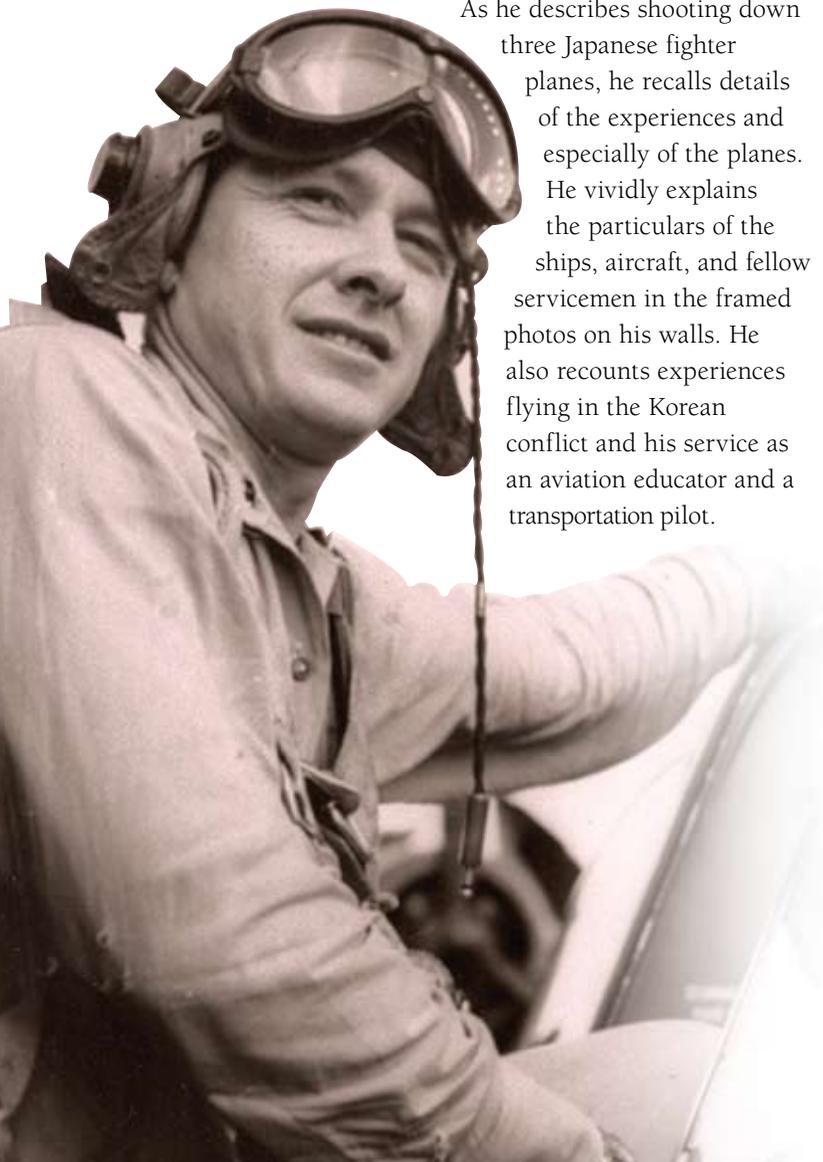
As the 92-year-old resident of The Village at Robinwood, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Hagerstown, Md., shares personal stories, it's as though they happened just days ago instead of decades in the past.

From the moment Butcher—who says everyone calls him “Butch”—enlisted in the Navy in 1935, he wanted to be an aviator. In fact, he actually began dreaming about taking his place in the cockpit long before that. A chance airplane ride over his California hometown captured his young imagination.

“When I was 9 years old,” he says, “barnstormers came to Riverside and for \$5 they would take you up for a ride. My brother, who was 12, held me in his lap. That did it for me.”

Butcher never lost his enthusiasm for aircraft and airspace. After only a few years of enlisted duty, he entered flight school, earning his wings in October 1941. Just months later, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and he was drawn into World War II.

As he describes shooting down three Japanese fighter planes, he recalls details of the experiences and especially of the planes. He vividly explains the particulars of the ships, aircraft, and fellow servicemen in the framed photos on his walls. He also recounts experiences flying in the Korean conflict and his service as an aviation educator and a transportation pilot.



Reliving his story



Harold Butcher, resident of The Village at Robinwood, stands before a plane, similar to those he flew in World War II, at the Smithsonian Institution's Air and Space Museum.

As the result of his varied career in the pilot's seat and an appreciation for historic aircraft, Butcher particularly welcomed the chance to travel to the Smithsonian Institution's Air and Space Museum Udvar-Hazy Center this summer.

With other residents of The Village at Robinwood and Ravenwood Lutheran Village, Diakon's other senior living community in Hagerstown, he studied exhibits and viewed presentations.

Throughout the day, he came face-to-face with planes just like the ones he had piloted—a bright yellow bi-plane like the one in which he first soloed, a fighter plane known as the Hellcat, and a Corsair, which he had flown in Korea.

Sharing his personal insights and experiences gave Butcher the chance to feel as if he was in the pilot's seat once again. Although he had visited the Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., many times, this was his first visit to the Udvar-Hazy center, a museum annex located near Dulles International Airport.

“I really enjoyed spending time there,” he says. “It was quite a day.” His appreciative audience—fellow residents and staff members—would agree. ■

KAYAKING AND CYCLING PROGRAMS KEEP SENIORS ACTIVE THROUGHOUT SUMMER MONTHS



There are not many people who can say they cycle thousands of miles per year.

An even smaller number of people in their 60s, 70s, and 80s can make that same claim. But that is exactly what some members of the Seasoned Spokes bicycle club do.

The Lutheran Home at Topton, a Diakon Senior Living Community in Topton, Pa., formed Seasoned Spokes, a

cycling club for seniors, in 1997. As a result of the program's success, many members were inspired to kayak or canoe on a regular basis as well.

Each of these clubs—biking or canoeing/kayaking—provides different physical and mental benefits for members. Both provide the same social benefits, however.

“The clubs promote camaraderie and the chance for older adults to be together,” says Karen Gottschall, director of community life at The Lutheran Home at Topton.

The clubs also have provided the public with a different view of The Lutheran Home and the role older adults play in society.

“We’re not only about health care, but also mental and spiritual well-being,” Gottschall says. “These clubs help to dispel stereotypical images of older people by promoting activities that involve wellness.”

Nancy Unger is a 64-year-old member of both clubs. “Before I joined the groups, I thought older people just sat around,” she says. “To see older people exercising like this is phenomenal. These people are so amazing, so inspiring.”

As the biking and canoeing seasons drew to a close, the group of energetic seniors wasn't worried about keeping in shape. Many of them will hit the ski slopes or travel to a warm locale and continue riding throughout the year. Either way, the group is determined to stay fit—mentally and physically—all year round. ■■



Members of the Seasoned Spokes club enjoy a summer ride.



The kayaking club starts out for a day on the water.



Continued from front cover



So it seems I've been slowly turning my life around. And so have some other people I know. My father got out of prison and set up a legitimate business of his own. We're getting to be friends. And then, don't you know, my mother decided to come back into my life. We're also getting to know each other.

Since all that, I was accepted into a local trade school. With that, I hope I can make a good living for the rest of my life.

And Tim is certainly not alone.

"Sue's" story ...

When I was 17, I figured my life was doomed.

My father, an alcoholic who also uses drugs, had verbally abused me and physically attacked my mother. My mother works pretty hard, but she just can't seem to handle the money. She feeds us, but there's never enough money for other things, like a nice place to live.

I guess I've gotten used to being homeless. We've lived in cars, trucks, and even tents; we've been to shelters and run-down motels.

I bounced from school to school, with hardly any friends, no roots, and few possessions. Education wasn't important to me at all. The classes I didn't flunk, I got Ds in. I regularly cut my classes, and got into trouble a lot, and often had detention. But I didn't always go to that either. I guess you could say that I was pretty angry, at life, at everything. I even had pretty bad arguments with my teachers, counselors, and other students, too.

Then one time I got into a fight with a girl at school, and it got physical. The other girl took a swing at me. I was able to get out of her way, but I wasn't going to let her intimidate me! I swung back, and connected hard.

Before I knew it, my sister was there helping me beat on this girl. She went down, and we continued to punch and kick her. I don't remember seeing any blood, but I know her glasses were broken and so were the braces on her teeth. Someone saw us and called the police. When the cops got there my sister and I ran to a friend's house.

Later we were picked up by the police and charged with simple and aggravated assault. We had to do six months' probation and community service. But I didn't take probation very seriously. I missed a bunch of appointments with my caseworker.

Then I was caught drinking at a party, and arrested because I was underage. They told me I had to go to a remedial class on drinking, but I didn't go. I remember it was the day before Thanksgiving. The police came to my school, got me out of class, handcuffed me, and took me away like some hardened criminal. They took me to a juvenile detention center for six days. And that's where I ate my Thanksgiving dinner. At that moment, I think I realized exactly where I had come to in my life.

The judge wanted me to go to a long-term residential program, which would have kept me away from my family for a long time. Instead, I was assigned to the Diakon Bridge Program, under the care of Dina Neiman-Abdelsalam, a case manager.

Now, every weekday I see Dina. She knows just about everything that is going on in my life. Dina is my advisor, my counselor, and I think even my friend.

Thanks to the Bridge Program, I actually turned my life, and probably my future, around. Now, instead of cutting classes, I go to school every day. I try hard to participate in every class, and now I'm actually a B student! And I don't get detention any more, either.

An early part of the Bridge Program is the 10-week Weekend Alternative Program at the Diakon Wilderness Center in Boiling Springs, Pa. There I got to participate in outdoor and adventure-based activities, more counseling, and community service projects. I recently graduated from that program, with honors!

For once, I'm actually looking forward to the rest of my life. Now I feel better when I am doing good things, instead of causing trouble.



Photographs are for illustration only

I do want to have a good life. I want to go to school. I even had the highest grade in my biology class! I'd like to be a nurse or a pediatrician, but I don't think I could stand the sight of blood!

Operating in Chester, Delaware, and Lancaster counties of Pennsylvania, Diakon Youth Services' Bridge Program works with youths ages 12 to 18 referred by county juvenile probation officers. Through the program, teens receive much-needed support for the various conflicts in their lives. With the assistance of their case managers and while still living at home, they learn to accept responsibility for their actions. They focus on regaining self-respect and discipline as well as respect for their families, teachers, and the law.

One of the key elements of the program is the support given by the teen's parents or a responsible family member. Also included are regular home visits, counseling sessions, random drug and alcohol screenings, community service, and 24-hour crisis intervention as needed.

Bridge Program manager Megan O'Neill says "Sue" has proven just what positive changes the program can bring about. She "has gone from being truant and having frequent detentions to having perfect attendance and no detentions. Her behavior has improved dramatically after we worked on attitudes and accountability, and helped with family needs," says O'Neill.

"Dina is working with the girl's mother, trying to get stable housing and establishing workable budgets and house rules. They've worked on developing and enhancing responsibilities. Both Sue and her sister have gone to drug and alcohol groups and have worked on gender-responsive programming as well as independent living, anger management, and conflict resolution."

Likewise, Tim is well on his way to becoming a responsible, productive citizen in his community. His grandmother, father, and mother are all very proud of his outstanding accomplishments, thanks in part to the Diakon Bridge Program. ■■

Former Bridge Program student wins achievement award



Diakon Wilderness Center staff congratulate Christy on his great accomplishments. From left, Rob Kivlan, residential care specialist; Corey Carothers, Diakon Wilderness Center administrator; Jerry Christy, honoree; Jim Kuntz, case manager.

■ On Nov. 6, the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission awarded Gerard Christy of Boothwyn, Pa., its Outstanding Achievement award.

Christy, a former student at the Diakon Wilderness Center and participant in the Bridge Program, was nominated by staff at the center. Resident Care Specialist Rob Kivlan submitted an essay detailing Christy's outstanding achievements while at the Diakon Wilderness Center, as well as back home in his community.

In his acceptance speech Christy told the audience, "I want to thank the Diakon Wilderness Center program for helping me change my life in ways I cannot describe." The award was presented by David H. Mueller, chief juvenile probation officer at Lancaster County Juvenile Probation Department. ■

Grant helps families at risk



■ When Tami's son got in trouble at school she didn't know how to help him through his anger and other issues that were beginning to surface. Then his probation officer

told Tami about Diakon Family Life Services. She and her son now receive intensive family counseling, free of charge, due to a grant from the Carlisle Area Health and Wellness Foundation that supports the Perry Families Initiative.

"It turned out to be the best thing for us," says Tami. "It's so nice to have an improved relationship with my son. Before counseling

he wouldn't talk. He's opened up so much. I'm learning so much about him."

The Perry Families Initiative is the program that serves families and youths ineligible for state Medical Assistance directly in their home and school. Services are provided to families at high risk of having children placed outside the home, or families being reunited after a placement. The foundation has partnered with Diakon Family Life Services to serve western Perry County families for six years.

Those referred to the Perry Families Initiative have fallen between the cracks of the social and human service system and desperately need support and professional services to help them address their issues, meet the emotional and physical needs of their children, and maintain family unity. The initiative gives Perry County families access to the services and resources they need to raise healthy children. ■

BEAUTY AND MEMORIES COME TOGETHER FOR LUTHER CREST RESIDENTS



Donald Moore, Luther Crest resident and past president of the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, returns with his neighbors for a visit.

Tours are always so much better when you've got a great guide.

■ And Luther Crest residents had just that when they toured the 52-acre Brooklyn Botanical Garden earlier this year.

Among magnolia trees, bonsai plants, and 10,000 other kinds of foliage, the 44 residents of the Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community enjoyed walking while sharing memories and history.

Their guide was a fellow resident of the Allentown, Pa., senior living community, but also a past president of the New York garden. Donald Moore had served in that role for the Brooklyn Botanical Garden from 1980 to 1990. Known to be one of the most beautiful gardens in the country, the site is home to a Bonsai museum, specialty gardens, and a garden resource center.

"I was very pleased to have been able to take our residents to this most beautiful garden right in the heart of Brooklyn," says Moore. "Everyone really enjoyed seeing the various gardens and having lunch in the Palm House. It was truly a wonderful day for the attendees."

As president, Moore focused on establishing new buildings through fund-raising efforts. During his tenure, he completed a new conservatory, an educational facility, and the Palm House catering facility.

Since his retirement, Moore and his wife have frequently visited the site. "We have relatives who live nearby, so whenever possible, we take a trip to the gardens. It has been more than 20 years since I worked there, and my successors have done a great job in the expansion of the gardens and raising funds."

For Luther Crest resident Marion Kayhart, a former biology teacher at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, the trip was an educational experience. "Beyond the magnificent collection of flora, two things that stand out as highlights of our visit were the Resource Center and seeing the art project they are sponsoring," says Kayhart, who is grateful to Moore for making the trip possible. "It was such a privilege to see that lovely resource room. The architecture is so stylish and the collection of books, manuscripts, and herbarium specimens is incomparable."

Eileen Barr, Luther Crest activities director, notes that "the trip was well organized by Mr. Moore, and the residents didn't have to worry about any of the details, except learning something new and enjoying a day out in the beautiful weather. It was great fellowship to ride the bus with fellow residents, enjoying New York trivia questions posed by Mr. Moore. The residents are definitely looking forward to another trip to the garden next year." ■

OUTDOOR EXERCISES IN TEAMWORK EASE TRANSITION FOR STUDENTS



The teenage years are hard

The transition to high school can be particularly challenging

■ Two Pennsylvania high schools—Northeastern in Manchester and Carlisle—don't leave this transition to chance. The schools help students to prepare for the change by partnering with Diakon's Team Impact program.

The adventure-based, experiential learning program, offered by the Diakon Wilderness Center in Boiling Springs, Pa., provides a fun way to build teamwork and communication and problem-solving skills that help students ease into their new environment.

At Northeastern, students entering ninth grade have the option of participating in a two-day program offered before the start of the school year. The first day they discuss common freshman issues with their teachers and participate in adventure-based activities; the second day, they climb the center's 50-foot Alpine Tower or ropes course.

Whatever they do, they need to work together to be successful.

"It is challenge by choice," says Donna Burns, a biology teacher who, along with a former assistant principal and Team Impact staff, developed the Northeastern program. "They are not pushed into anything. We give them the autonomy to choose what works."

The impact on student participants is obvious as the school year begins, Burns believes. "They have less anxiety coming in the first day, they are more prepared. A lot of that internal anxiety that normally overwhelms them is gone," she says. "It helps them to be more successful." ■

Your generosity is appreciated

♥ This year, Diakon is providing approximately \$12 million in benevolent care. Because of funding changes at both state and federal levels, as well as current issues within the general economy, that amount is budgeted to rise to \$14 million in 2009. We need your continued support to provide that level of care to people in your community with limited financial resources.

Most of the Diakon services depicted in *Dialog* provide benevolent care in a variety of ways. Diakon depends now more than ever on generous donations from corporations, synods, congregations, and individuals to enable it to serve so many people.

You can join us in making a difference in the lives of people in need. Simply use the blue envelope in this issue of *Dialog* or log onto our Web site's convenient and secure donation form to make your gift.

For further information on how you can support one or more of Diakon's ministries, please call the Office of Advancement at 1-877-DIAKON-7, option 2, extension 21219. Thank you!



they will be attending. The scholarships were provided through the Ruth Evinger Diakon Wilderness Center Scholarship Fund. The fund is named for Ruth Evinger because she has made generous donations to assist young people get their lives back on the right track.



Holding symbolic checks for their scholarships are, left to right, Natasha LernerDiaz, Gerard Christy, James Martin, and Matthew Moyer.

True to Ms. Evinger's vision, Rob Kivlan, a center staff member who helped to organize the 2008 reunion of former students, during which the scholarships were presented, said, "I see the future here. You can be very proud of yourselves for using the opportunities here at the Diakon Wilderness Center to be better men and women. We just presented you with the opportunity. You took it."

In fact, several of the students indicated they wanted to major in social work or psychology, so that they could help other youths as Diakon Wilderness Center staff had helped them.

While we take exciting steps to be among the first to explore a range of technology to enhance our senior living services, I must acknowledge, again, that such vision is certainly nothing new for Diakon.

As I have read and reread the histories of Tressler and The Lutheran Home at Topton, part of Lutheran Services Northeast, the other organization responsible for creating Diakon, I am always struck by the vision of the founders of these organizations—by how simple yet very powerful that vision was: That the needs of humanity require Christian response.

The image of digging, by hand, the first shovelfuls of dirt in the shape of a cross, to lay the foundation for The Lutheran Home at Topton, as the Rev. Uriah P. Heilman did in 1897, is a compelling one. As is the mission of the Rev. Phillip Willard, who arranged for the purchase of a Perry County, Pa., youth academy, in 1868 and then spent the next year on the road, raising funds to operate the Tressler Orphans Home.

What these founders and the generations that followed have given us is a mosaic of service entrusted to our care and nurture. Each generation added a new color and a new hue to that mosaic.

Adoption, senior services, programs for at-risk youths, foster care, counseling, home care, and so on—what we now view as a continuum of services grew out of a vision to respond to God's love by helping our neighbors.

We struggle always to be faithful to that call, but also to be faithful to the vision and the gifts passed down to us by those who nurtured this ministry before us. They did their utmost to care for and grow this ministry. We can do no less today.

All those who over the years have worked for this ministry, supported it financially or with their time, and who prayed for and encouraged it deserve our deepest respect and appreciation. What they have given us we now care for in Christ's name.

As always, thank you for the role you have played in helping us to sustain such a magnificent vision of service to our neighbors.

The Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D.

President/CEO

D *The level of benevolent care we provide to people in your community will rise dramatically in 2009. We need your help now more than ever (please see page 11).*

Diakon Place partners with Ray Lewis, Unilever, Baltimore mayor for backpack and school supplies distribution



Baltimore City Mayor Sheila Dixon hands out a backpack filled with school supplies.

Diakon Place, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries' program center in East Baltimore, was the site for the recent distribution of school supplies to city children and youths.

The Ray Lewis Foundation, begun by Baltimore Ravens football player Ray Lewis, partnered with city Mayor Sheila Dixon, Unilever Brands, and Diakon to distribute backpacks filled with school supplies to more than 500 city children and youths. Diakon Place has served for several years as the site for the foundation's distribution of food items at Thanksgiving.

According to program organizers, the start of school can be a stressful time for students who cannot afford all the supplies they need. Both Unilever and the Ray Lewis Foundation, however, are committed to providing personal and economic assistance to disadvantaged children.

"We are very pleased that once again we could serve as the site for programs aiding people within the city," says the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., Diakon president/CEO.

Diakon invested millions of dollars in turning the former vacant supermarket into Diakon Place. The building currently serves as the site of the Diakon KidzStuff child-care center and Kool Smiles, a dental clinic for children. ■



Ray Lewis and Mayor Sheila Dixon take time to pose for a photograph with one of the children at the school-supply distribution.

Sixty-five years later, high-school memories still shine



Jean and John Hall, residents of Frey Village, are still sweethearts

Although Jean and John Hall graduated from Hummelstown High School more than 65 years ago, the residents of Frey Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Middletown, Pa., remember a time when friends, sports, and after-school activities took center stage. As members of the school band and high-school sweethearts, they traveled to many football games, sitting side-by-side on bench seats that occupied the middle of the bus.

“John was a popular football player with a head of curly hair,” Mrs. Hall remembers. “He also played the tuba.”

Mr. Hall wanted to play other sports in addition to football, but growing up during the Depression meant making sacrifices.

“The fellow I worked for didn’t let me do anything else but [play] football,” Hall says of his part-time work in a jewelry store.

“I needed the money. I didn’t have much choice.”

Despite their lack of money, the young couple still found ways to enjoy themselves—taking walks, treating themselves to five-cent candy bars, even attending the prom in the high-school gymnasium.

“She wore a yellow prom gown,” Mr. Hall recalls.

While very different from today’s proms, for which some students spend hundreds of dollars on clothing, flowers, and rental cars, their prom was just as exciting, says Mrs. Hall.

“We didn’t believe we were missing anything,” she chuckles. “To us it was a big deal.”



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