

DIALOG

A publication of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries

Summer/Fall 2009

Raquel can't hear the crowd that cheers her on, but she can feel the excitement

■ "Today, it's all about the girls," signs Raquel Feliz.

She's right. Girls of all shapes and sizes are everywhere, stretching and cheering in a sea of pink. They're warming up for the annual Girls on the Run 5K walk/race, the concluding event for this session of GOTR in Lehigh County, Pa.

Girls on the Run® is a national, life-changing, prevention-focused program for girls in third through eighth grades designed to educate and prepare participants "for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living." Diakon Family Life Services offices sponsor two GOTR programs, one in Lehigh County, the other in Lycoming County.

When Feliz, who has been deaf since birth, heard about Girls on the Run at school, she was so excited she became the first person to return her form and fees.

Because the program relies so heavily on communication, Samantha Schneck, program coordinator for GOTR of Lehigh County, knew that participation would be a challenge for Feliz. She immediately began looking for someone with sign-language skills to interpret for and coach her.

"The response was overwhelming," says Schneck. "Volunteers wanted to do everything they could to help her." Ultimately, a decision was made to use Feliz's school interpreter, Brittney Johnson.

Schneck also was concerned that Feliz would not feel part of the group. Within only the first week, however, she was not only comfortable with other participants, but also thoroughly enjoying the full GOTR experience. Over the next 10 weeks, Feliz, along with the other participants, physically trained for the race and learned valuable lessons about life, friendships, and healthy choices.

"This has been a wonderful experience for her," says Luz Matos, Feliz's mother and "running buddy" for the 5K. "Her running has improved and her attitude toward eating healthier and exercising has changed. She's also been able to talk to girls her own age about a lot of different things."

As the girls begin the 5K, Feliz is relaxed and focused. A short time later, as the girls begin crossing the finish line, Feliz is one of the first to finish, exhausted, but beaming and exuding the kind of self-confidence Girls on the Run promotes.

Feliz was right. It definitely is all about the girls today. ■

♥ GOTR strives to instill self-respect and strong values in young women through life skills development, mentoring relationships, and physical training. Parents, schools, volunteers, staff members, and the community work together to help the girls achieve these goals. More information on the program is available on the Web at www.diakon.org/gotr. A number of regional sponsors help to support the local programs and additional support is always welcome.

Raquel Feliz



Raquel beams with excitement as she and her mother, Luz Matos, await the start of the race.

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 nearly 100,000 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 more-than-140-year tradition of hospitality and care for people of all faiths.

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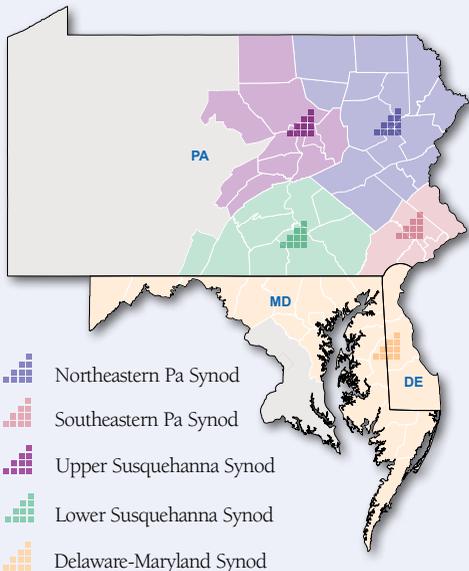
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DIAKON SERVICE TERRITORY



Senior finds health and friendship through Diakon Volunteer Home Care

Joyce Ann Rothenberger and Carl Arner have a special closeness, the kind that usually takes years to develop. Yet their friendship arose just over the last year.

Rothenberger had a doctor's appointment and didn't know how she would travel there—she's in a wheelchair and unable to drive. The manager of her apartment complex offered the names of several organizations that provide transportation. When Rothenberger called Diakon Volunteer Home Care, she was pleasantly surprised by what she heard.

"Someone actually answered the phone! I got an answering machine at all of the other places. I like the personal touch at Diakon," she says.

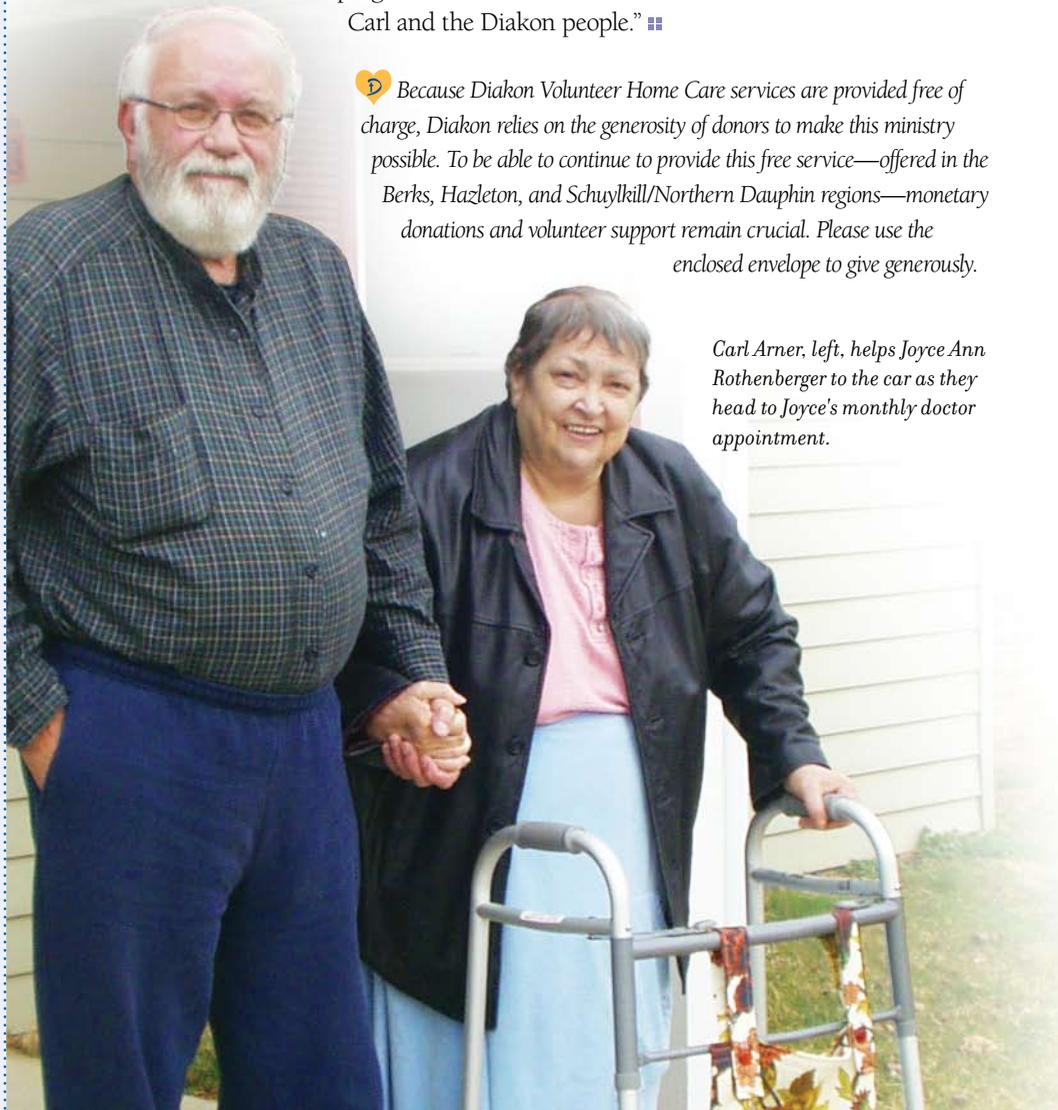
Diakon Volunteer Home Care provides non-medical assistance on a short-term or intermittent basis to help seniors during critical times in their lives. In addition to transportation to medical appointments, available services include companionship, meal preparation, household chores, minor repairs, and grocery shopping.

Diakon Volunteer Home Care assigned Arner to assist Rothenberger. Once a month, he picks her up at her home in Kutztown, Pa., and drives her to her appointment in Allentown. But, that is not all he does for her. "He helps in so many different ways. Carl goes above and beyond what's expected," she says.

Helping others is nothing new to Arner. "Growing up, I was always looking out for everyone else. When some people at my church needed to get to doctors' appointments, I volunteered to help them, and soon began transporting three members of the church to dialysis," he says. Soon, he began volunteering with the Diakon program.

"This service allows people to age in the same situation they've known for many years," says Bonnie Unangst, program manager. "It helps seniors maintain their independence."

Rothenberger is grateful for the services she's received. "I can't say enough about this program. It's invaluable. I don't know what I would do without Carl and the Diakon people." ■



Because Diakon Volunteer Home Care services are provided free of charge, Diakon relies on the generosity of donors to make this ministry possible. To be able to continue to provide this free service—offered in the Berks, Hazleton, and Schuylkill/Northern Dauphin regions—monetary donations and volunteer support remain crucial. Please use the enclosed envelope to give generously.

Carl Arner, left, helps Joyce Ann Rothenberger to the car as they head to Joyce's monthly doctor appointment.

Hospice program helps to make final dreams come true

Warren George had a dream.

Before he began receiving hospice care, he had faithfully attended a ham-radio show in the Philadelphia suburbs every year. This year was different. "I wanted to go, but I couldn't drive," said George, who had to use a wheelchair as the result of complications from ALS, sometimes referred to as "Lou Gehrig's Disease."

When staff at Diakon Hospice Saint John's Allentown office learned of George's wish, they were determined to find a way to get him to the show.

That's where Dare to Dream came into play.

A unique program of Diakon Hospice Saint John, Dare to Dream was established to make sure that terminally ill patients' dreams were fulfilled.

"It's something special we do that sets us apart from other hospices. Instead of focusing on death, we focus on celebrating life," says Barb Kern, Allentown-area director for the hospice program. "We try to grant as many wishes, large or small, as we can. We do whatever we can to make it happen."

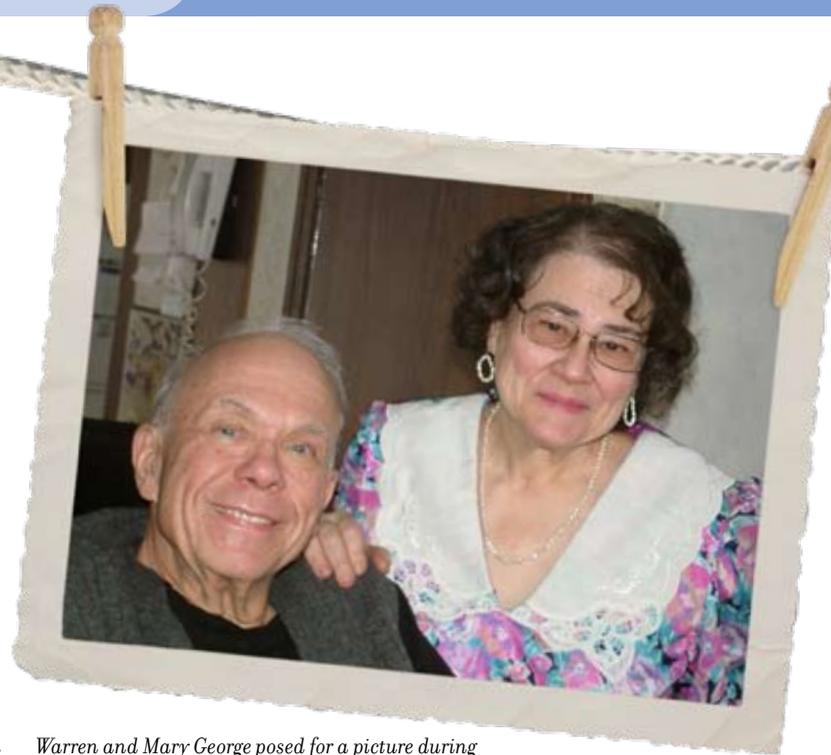
Social worker Mary Timko adds that "because we are based on a holistic approach of taking care of the physical, as well as the emotional and spiritual needs of patients, it was important to us to make sure that Mr. George got to the event."

Partnering with The Dream Foundation, a wish-granting organization for adults with life-limiting illnesses, Diakon Hospice Saint John staffers arranged the trip. "He was so excited to go," says Angela Sirak, a program intern who helped to coordinate the effort.

Earlier this year, George attended the ham-radio show and caught up on new technology with old friends.

His is not the only dream come true. Another patient's wish was to see the star of Bethlehem in Bethlehem, Pa., a last time.

The woman had made crosses out of clothespins to give to everyone who took care of her. When the hospice staff made arrangements for her to visit the star, she took her bag of crosses with her. When she arrived at the star, a Lehigh University chorale group began singing to her.



Warren and Mary George posed for a picture during their 40th wedding anniversary celebration.

Although she had made enough crosses for those who made her trip possible, she didn't think she would have enough for the entire chorus. But as she began pulling the crosses out of her bag, they kept coming.

"It was as if they were multiplying. It was like a miracle," says Kern.

Every spring, another hospice patient had planted flowers in her garden. When illness prevented her from doing so, the hospice staff made sure her dream of seeing flowers outside her window was fulfilled.

Dare to Dream allows hospice patients to celebrate life and provides a bright spot on which families can focus during their loved one's final days, says Kern. "It's important that our patients' families can have that memory."

For those served by Diakon Hospice Saint John, dreams indeed can come true.

Diakon expresses condolences to the family of Warren George on his recent death. ■■

💡 *The Dreams Come True program is made possible only through the kindness of donors. For more information on Diakon Hospice Saint John or how you can contribute to this program, please visit www.diakon.org/hospice or use the enclosed envelope to make a gift. Thank you!*



Endowment fund honors retiring CEO

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries has established a named endowment fund in recognition of the 14 years of organizational leadership of the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., who will retire the end of this year. The fund also honors his 40 years of ordained ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Daun and Mary Jo McKee Endowment Fund for Children is an endowment held by the Diakon Lutheran Fund and managed by its board. The annual release of funds will be directed by Daun and Mary Jo for a specified purpose within a Diakon program serving children.

Diakon has a nearly 150-year tradition of serving children through such services as adoption & foster care, adjudicated youth services, child care, and counseling. The McKees have served as advocates for the needs of children throughout their personal and professional lives.

Gifts to The McKee Endowment Fund for Children can be directed to The Office of Advancement, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, Suite 300, Allentown, PA 18104.

Diakon supports creation of seminary chair to train social ministry leaders



Dr. Bertha Paulssen

Wanting to ensure a tradition of creating leaders for Lutheran social ministry, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries has committed \$200,000 toward endowing the Paulssen-Hale Chair for Church in Society at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pa.

The chair, endowing a faculty position at the seminary, recognizes the work and ministry of Dr. Bertha Paulssen and the Rev. Dr. Russell Hale.

“Dr. Paulssen was the first woman tenured as a faculty member at a Lutheran seminary in this country,” says Emried D. Cole, Jr., vice president of seminary

advancement. “Her genius was combining sociology with theology to guide pastors working in social ministry to reach out and minister to their flock.”

Dr. Hale was her successor. Between the two of them, says Cole, “they raised up four generations of pastors to build what has become the largest, best faith-based social ministry system.”

Their work attracted and informed such seminary students as the Rev. Thomas Hurlocker, D.D., former president of Tressler Lutheran Services (one of the two organizations that created Diakon in 2000), and the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., current Diakon president/CEO.

“Dr. Paulssen taught a disciplined study of your community and your congregation, in order to understand the environment your congregation lives and works in,” says Hurlocker. “It is a tremendous approach to ministry when you want to minister to people in the context of where they live, work, and worship.”

When McKee learned that the campaign for the Paulssen-Hale Chair was nearing its private-phase goal, he approached Diakon’s board of directors for support.

“I thought it appropriate to go to Diakon’s board and ask if they would also participate in developing the Chair in recognition of all [Drs. Paulssen and Hale] had done for Diakon,” he says. “With overwhelming commitment, they made the pledge.”

Both McKee and Hurlocker have made individual contributions to the Chair, as it moves into the public phase of its fund-raising campaign. In fact, McKee and his wife, Mary Jo, made a \$500,000 contribution toward the cost of the endowed Chair because of their commitment to social-ministry leadership-development.

“The response has been incredible,” says Cole. “We have received an outpouring of support for the Chair from a lot of people whose lives were touched by these two leaders.”

Supporting the campaign was an easy decision, according to Hurlocker. “The Paulssen-Hale Chair assures that the part of theological training that connects with society, community, and parish, is an important emphasis,” he says. “It is vital that it continues.”

Kids get moving for weight management and healthy living

■ Brian Garcia needed encouragement.

“Sometimes he needs a little push,” explains his mother, Maribel Garcia.

On the other hand, Maureen Torres did it herself. “I told my mom I wanted to go,” she says.

What the two young people did was to enroll in KidShape®, a weight-management program for youths ages 6 to 14.

Diakon Family Life Services staff had searched for a program to address issues of pediatric weight, but was unable to identify one they believed would work locally. Then they learned of KidShape, a nationally recognized, family-based program that makes weight management fun.

“The focus of the program is to promote a healthy lifestyle; the focus is not on weight,” says Kate Kennedy, Diakon’s KidShape site coordinator. Diakon worked with Highmark to explore options for bringing KidShape to Berks County and the program launched the beginning of this year.

The program involves commitment not only from the youths, but also from parents, whose involvement ranges from participating in physical activity to learning how to prepare healthier meals.

“The families want to feel they are part of making the changes,” says Kennedy. “As a result, families are spending more time together doing active things and making better choices.”

Outcomes have been predictable—the kids lose weight, make healthier

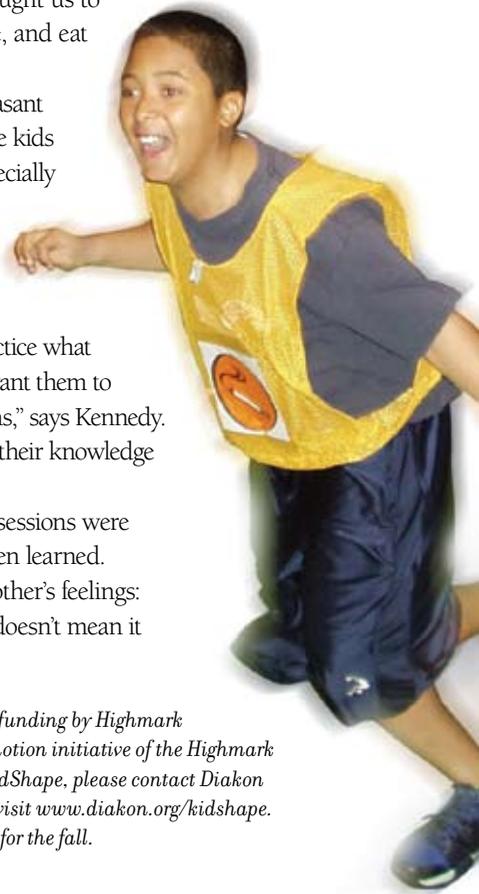
choices, and move more. “They taught us to make good choices, exercise more, and eat differently,” says Garcia.

But other results have been a pleasant surprise to the KidShape team. “The kids talked a lot about their feelings, especially the boys,” says Kennedy.

When the nine-week program ended in April, the KidShape team emphasized that participants and their families should retain and practice what they had learned. “Ultimately, we want them to carry on and make healthy decisions,” says Kennedy. “We also hope they will pass along their knowledge to their family and friends.”

Torres’ mother was sad that the sessions were ending, but glad over what had been learned. The younger Torres echoed her mother’s feelings: “Just because the program is over doesn’t mean it has to end.” ■■

♥ KidShape is made possible through funding by Highmark Healthy High 5, a children’s health-promotion initiative of the Highmark Foundation. For more information on KidShape, please contact Diakon Family Life Services at (610) 682-1337 or visit www.diakon.org/kidshape. Another KidShape program is scheduled for the fall.



An unexpected gift: Finding family again



Barbara Whitehurst, left, looks at old family photos with her grandmother, Mary Allen.

■ As Barbara Whitehurst toured Manatawny Manor, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Pottstown, Pa., before beginning her student internship there, she was eager to get started.

The internship was part of her social sciences curriculum at nearby

Montgomery County Community College, and she expected to learn a great deal. What she never expected was to discover a grandmother she had not seen in 20 years.

Whitehurst's journey of reconnecting with lost family members began during that tour when, she says, a staff member greeted her as if she already knew her.

"It was more than a casual hello," Whitehurst explains. "Then when I started the internship, she said, 'I see you're back.' I was a little confused by that. It turns out she was referring to a cousin of mine I hadn't seen in a while."

The resemblance to that cousin, who had worked at Manatawny Manor, wasn't all that caught staff members' attention. Whitehurst, some said, reminded them of a resident, Mary Allen.

"I have a grandmother named Mary Allen," Whitehurst says she told staff. "I went to her room and it was her."

Whitehurst's father was one of 11 children born to Mary Allen.

He died in a car accident when Whitehurst was a young girl, who grew up in Pottstown and married her high-school sweetheart.

His military service took them out of state and Whitehurst lost touch with some members of her large extended family. Her husband is now retired from the military and the couple are living in the Pottstown area again.

Reconnecting with her grandmother, whom she last saw when her son was born in 1989, has been a joy, Whitehurst says. Allen has had a series

"She likes her feet planted on the ground, not in the air or in the water ... same with me."

of strokes and though her communication is limited, she recognizes every family member in every picture. The family now includes many great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

Whitehurst has found that she and her grandmother have many things in common beyond the similarity in their appearance. "She doesn't like meat and neither do I. She likes sweets... me, too. She likes her feet planted on the ground, not in the air or in the water... same with me."

The two continue to become reacquainted with every visit. It's been a gift, they say, to find each other again.

"For my internship, I have to write a reflection on my experience," Whitehurst says. "This will definitely be part of what I write about." ■



Mary and Barbara

New Flight Program pilots



Approaching an 18th birthday can be an especially anxious time for youths who have been helped through the tough teenage years by various social programs.

In such cases, reaching “adulthood” may mean the loss of the support that has made such a difference in their lives. Thanks to a new Diakon

“Our goal is to help them develop into law-abiding, honorable, successful adults.”

Wilderness Center program, a number of young people will regain the help necessary to transition successfully to adulthood.

Sponsored in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Flight Program is a voluntary 52-week program based at the Boiling Springs, Pa., wilderness center. Its goal is to provide

young people with a mentor to help them obtain and maintain employment, meet academic goals, and discover and practice true independent living skills while staying drug-free.

“The most important aspect of the program is teaching the kids how to network with the resources that are out there in their communities,” says Robert Kivlan, program supervisor. “A lot of them don’t know how to get a birth certificate, a Social Security card, or how to use their county offices to fulfill their needs.”

Six young men are enrolled in the program’s inaugural class, which began June 1. All six participated in other center programs as a result of issues in their lives; they were accepted into the program based on motivation and their successes following their earlier center placement.

“The nice thing about having a small number of participants is that we can deliver very personalized, very individualized, very intense services. However, we do have the ability to add a few additional participants as the program progresses,” Kivlan adds.

Those services are provided in three phases. The first phase is called the “nesting phase” and consists of training and orientation to the program, getting to know peers and staff members, and developing a plan for success.

“During the week, we will mentor the youths, counsel them, help them achieve goals for education and workforce development,” Kivlan says. “On weekends we will do field trips and activities where they are in a positive environment with other kids who want to be successful.”



New hope for a young father and his son

Brandon, after having participated in the Diakon Wilderness Center’s Weekend Alternative Program and graduating from the Foundations Program, still seemed to be having some difficulties.

He chose to enroll in the Flight Program, which allowed him to seek extra help with his struggles of being a teenage father and living with his long history with the juvenile justice system.

Currently, Brandon is on track to finish high school this fall, and he has maintained employment for the past few months. His dream is to pursue culinary arts as a vocation, and to be able to reach his goal of eventually moving into his own apartment.

Brandon holds his young son as he prepares to “take off” on his journey toward a healthier, happier future for both of them.

teens into adulthood

The second phase, “Flight School,” has the students working as mentors themselves—to youths currently enrolled in the wilderness center’s programs. Most participants will be returning to school for their senior year or preparing for college at this point.

“The most important aspect of the program is teaching the kids how to network with the resources that are out there in their communities.”

“Take Off” is the final phase. “We will continue to meet with the youths during this phase, but we will transition the reins to selected community members who have an interest in becoming their long-term mentors,” says Kivlan.

“Our goal is to help them develop into law-abiding, honorable, successful adults.” ■

 The new Flight Program is funded in part under a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Health. However, additional funds will be needed to keep this program operational as grant funds are used. Please consider supporting this important effort to help make young people successful.



Your generosity is appreciated

In 2009, Diakon will provide approximately \$14 million in benevolent care to the people we serve. 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, or visit www.diaikon.org. Thank you.

Participants, families benefit from adult day services

One way to understand the impact Diakon Adult Day Services has on Eleanor Reed's life is to hear her talk about the days she doesn't attend the program.

"Oh, I miss it," she says. "I've made friends here. We're like a family."

Reed has been a participant of Diakon Adult Day Services at Ravenwood, located on the campus of Ravenwood Lutheran Village, a Diakon Senior Living Community in Hagerstown, Md., since the summer of 2007.

She smiles as she lists all the activities she enjoys, essentially everything on the calendar. "There's entertainment and singing, we dance, we do puzzles," she says. "We do crafts for all the different holidays, exercise, watch movies...things like that every day."

Bonnie Boggs, the daughter with whom Reed lives, says the activity has been good for her mother. In spite of a few health issues, Reed is involved in everything the program



Eleanor Reed celebrates Mardi Gras.

offers, a positive change from earlier days spent mostly eating and sleeping, Boggs notes.

"It's the best thing we've done for her," she says. "We want her to be as independent as she can be, for herself. It's a little break for me, too. It's a blessing to have Diakon."

A homemaker who has lived in the Hagerstown area most of her life, Reed reared seven children, and today has many great- and great-great-grandchildren. Much of her extended family lives in the area and Reed visits them as often as she can.

One recent day, she joined her friends at Diakon Adult Day Services celebrating Mardi Gras. Participants decorated masks and formed their own parade, sporting noise makers and singing "When the Saints Go Marching In."

"There's always something like this going on," says Reed. "I like to come here. The staff, the people, even the bus ride... I just enjoy it." ■■



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