

# DIALOG

A publication of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries

Spring 2010

## 'Miracles all around us'

### Mission group sees 'unbelievable faith' as earthquake hits Haiti

■ Sitting at her desk in the social services department of The Lutheran Home at Topton, Toni Markey is worlds away from the island of Haiti.

But just a short time ago, she was caught up in the chaos following the earthquake there that killed hundreds of thousands and devastated the capital city and surrounding countryside.

Markey had been on a mission trip with other members of her congregation, Christ (Mertz) Lutheran Church in Fleetwood, Pa., having arrived three days before the earthquake hit. The 14-member group, ages 16 to 83, had planned to perform needed repairs and housekeeping chores at a church and orphanage called the Hope House, as well as help with the children. Hope House is located in Croix des Bouquets, about eight miles outside Port-au-Prince.

The eldest group member was Ruth Herzog, a resident of the Diakon senior living community at Topton.

"I'm in good health and as long as I

can do a day's work, I figure why not go," she says.

The group set about their work, but the earthquake quickly changed their plans. The 12-foot concrete walls around the Hope House had been toppled by the quake.

The group stacked concrete blocks and topped them with barbed wire, protecting themselves and the compound's resources from the likelihood of looting, Markey explains.

"We helped to clean up the compound and put things back in order," she says. "People came for medications and supplies and we shared as best we could."

Meanwhile, back in the states, the group's travel insurance company was concerned for their safety and was working to bring them home. That effort took several days and culminated in an armed specialty team from a company called Global Rescue

eventually securing their air transport out of the Dominican Republic.

"The quake lasted seconds, but the destruction was so vast," Markey says. "We tried to help and they looked out for us. The Haitian people are so gracious, with such strong fortitude and faith. Their faith is unbelievable and right on the surface."

Somebody was watching over them, Herzog believes.

"I was never afraid," she says. "The Haitian people were so appreciative of everything we did. They were always singing, even the children. They believe that God is their constant guide."

Both Markey and Herzog say they would return to Haiti. For them, the call to serve creates a strong bond.

"Our group was like a family, with a common purpose," Markey says. "We all drew from each other. Looking back, we were so fortunate. There were miracles all around us." ■



Toni Markey, left, and Ruth Herzog.

Photos from Haiti by Josh Christman

# 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 half-a-million 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 nearly-150-year tradition of hospitality and care for people of all faiths.

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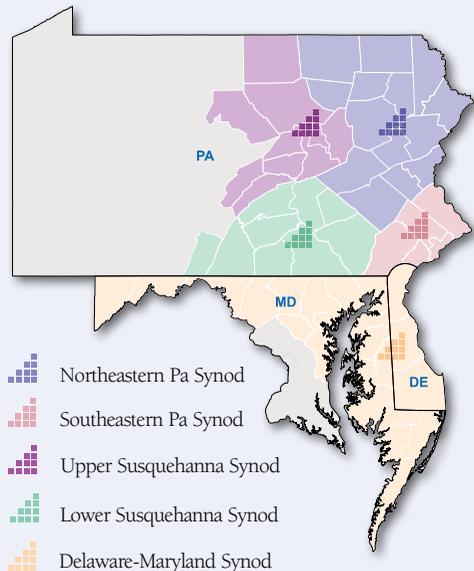
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## DIAKON SERVICE TERRITORY



# THE PRESIDENT'S DIALOG

To all of you I met during my first two months as Diakon's new president/CEO, I want to say thank you.

I began my tenure by, as they say, "hitting the road."

My goal in beginning this series of road trips is to connect personally with our senior living community residents and staff members, staff at our program sites, board members, and donors.

My tours are designed not only to gain information to help us craft our organizational vision for 2010 and beyond, but also to build and strengthen relationships with the many wonderful people who look to us for care and service, who help to provide that care, and who support our efforts in one of many ways.

Those trips have been overwhelmingly positive and will be the first of many such visits. The people with whom I met had various suggestions about ways to serve, how to expand their senior living community, or how we might be a better organization. All of these suggestions were welcomed and appreciated.

I was especially impressed by the comments of those we serve over how proud they are of the work our staff members do on a daily basis. Of course, I always was aware of the gracious service our staff provides, but it was heart-warming and inspiring to hear such comments so frequently and firsthand from those whose lives we touch.

Diakon's planning process continues in a variety of settings as we work to refine our vision. Ideas have flowed freely and I have been impressed by the commitment of so many staff members to work together, in creative ways, to serve more of our neighbors.

These ideas represent service models focused on the future.

As more information about our vision for the next few years becomes clear, I will share it with you.

In his final column for Dialog, the Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D., our recently retired president/CEO, made wonderful comments about the organization and his well wishes for all of Diakon.

We extend deepest appreciation to Daun for his leadership in leaving all of us at Diakon a wonderful legacy of mission and ministry, a legacy I hope to expand and build on in my new role.

For your part in sustaining that ministry, I want to extend heartfelt thanks. I deeply value your commitment to this organization, whether you are someone who receives service from us, provides that care, or makes our ministry possible through your gifts.

I hope that you will continue to walk with us as we move forward, as always, with Many Hands. One Heart.

With deepest appreciation for your prayers and support,



Diakon President/CEO Mark Pile

Mark T. Pile, MSHA, MSW  
 President/CEO

## Family-based program keeps woman, granddaughter together

■ Darlene Chen has joined the growing number of grandparents choosing to raise their grandchildren, but she is not your typical caregiver.

“Darlene has definitely gone down the road less traveled,” says Wanda Stump, Diakon Family Life Services counselor in Williamsport, Pa. “It is not easy doing what she is doing, but she is committed to her granddaughter.”

About two years ago, 50-year-old Chen gained custody of her granddaughter, Kayla, who was suffering from the effects of abuse. Coping with mood disorders, Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder, and other psychological stressors, the girl was described as aggressive, angry, and out of control.

“In the two years before I got her, she bounced among 17 different homes. When I was called in to see if I was a viable option for Kayla to live with, I didn’t have to think twice,” says Chen.

Although Chen was recovering from rotator cuff surgery, she accepted the then-7-year-old girl into her life just days after being discharged from the hospital.

“I wasn’t worried about me at all. You make sacrifices for the ones you love. That little girl is my heart,” says Chen, who proudly wears a sweatshirt embroidered with the statement “my grandkids, small hands, big impressions.”

Chen forfeited a well-paying job and moved from Maryland to Williamsport, where the child’s half-brothers live. “I wanted Kayla to be close to her half-brothers, who were in foster care,” says Chen. “Family is important.”

The transition left her living in public housing on \$205 a month. She emptied her savings account, struggled to pay bills, and could barely afford to keep food on the table. She found it increasingly difficult to find appropriate counseling and support services for her granddaughter.

Before moving, Chen had placed her

granddaughter in a YWCA counseling program, which she continued in Williamsport. Eventually, the child was referred to Diakon Family Life Services for outpatient counseling and, later, to the program’s family-based mental health services.

“I am so grateful. [Diakon’s] family-based program gave me my granddaughter back,” says Chen tearfully. “That says everything. They helped us with behavioral issues, nutrition, medication management, school issues, parenting skills, community support, and so many other things.”

Designed as an intense, 32-week state-approved, in-home therapy program, the family-based service provides individual and family therapy, case-management services, advocacy, 24-hour crisis management, and other family-support services. Children and adolescents are eligible for the program based on certain criteria.

Program mental health professionals assess parenting skills and family dynamics and provide support to ensure that children are not at risk for out-of-home placement. Educating and connecting clients with community resources, Diakon counselors also offer transitional planning before discharge.

“We look at many different factors within a home and develop a treatment plan,” says Stump. “Treatment plans are based on a family’s strength, abilities, and needs. In Kayla’s case, she already had structure and a good foundation in her home, but we had to help them along the way. There were difficulties and it hasn’t been easy for them.”

Chen’s vehicle, which she needed to take the child to appointments, broke down. Diakon Family Life Services provided financial assistance to help Chen make minor vehicle repairs through the program-allotted Family Support Services fund.

Diakon also referred Chen to Shepherd of the Streets, a United Churches of Lycoming County program that offers assistance to those affected by poverty. The organization, which received a financial donation last fall from Diakon’s Lycoming County Girls on the Run program, was able to help purchase new glasses for Chen.

Ironically, while there Chen overheard a man saying he needed a ride to visit his hospitalized infant; without hesitation, she drove him. When others lost all their belongings in a move, Chen, despite the fact she had very little, gathered items to give to the family.

“I guess I am like my mom. She always said, ‘If you give, God will return it tenfold,’” says Chen, who is involved in various caregiver and child-abuse awareness organizations.

Kayla is delighted to have such a kind-hearted grandmother in her life.

“I am happy now. I can see my brothers and I just love my Nana,” says the now-polite, soft-spoken girl whose smile can light up a room. “I can’t imagine my life any other way.”

Chen appears to have a natural knack for making a difference in the lives of others. “She thinks we’ve helped her, but really she has helped us and others,” says Stump. “She has helped me look inward and grow personally and professionally.” ■

You make  
sacrifices for the  
ones you love...  
that little girl  
is my heart.



*Darlene Chen with her granddaughter, Kayla.*

# DIAKON WILDERNESS CENTER

*Helping kids overcome challenges*

■ The Diakon Wilderness Center—located high on a mountain above Boiling Springs in central Pennsylvania, offers a range of residential and community-based services to help at-risk youths from across Pennsylvania get their lives back on the right track. Center programs help to build responsible citizens and strong families.

Program staff members and volunteers understand and respond to issues facing youths and their families, proving it is possible to help adjudicated youths overcome the challenges they face and lead stable, healthy, and productive lives.

*A special four-part series on  
the Diakon Wilderness Center*

## Flight Program participant realizes dreams, inducted into honor society

As an adolescent, Thomas Kemper had been expelled from nearly every school he attended. Often drunk or high, he had spent time in a number of youth placements and detention centers before being referred to the Diakon Wilderness Center.

Forced into sobriety, Kemper spent four months in the Foundations Residential Program and also completed the 31-day Wilderness Challenge.

“When I went to Diakon, I had time to focus on my life as a whole and what I really wanted in life,” he says. “It gave me direction.”

In fact, not quite ready to return home and face negative influences, Kemper asked to stay an additional month.

“I wasn’t ready to go back,” he says. “I needed more time to get my head straight.”

Only 16 years old, Kemper made the unorthodox decision to drop out of high school, take the GED and enroll in a local community college. At the same time, he enrolled in the Flight Program, a mentoring and training opportunity for former Diakon Wilderness Center students designed to help them become successful, contributing members of society.

Thanks to diligent study habits and a strong work ethic, Kemper succeeded. After earning a 3.8 grade point average in his first semester, he was offered membership in Phi Theta Kappa, a college honor society.

**There is no greater feeling than seeing one of our young men achieve this STATUS and HONOR**



*Tom stands before the sign at Messiah College, Grantham, Pa., where he recently became a member of Phi Theta Kappa, a college honor society.*

“I felt really accomplished. It was cool to get a letter saying you are going to be a part of this group,” he remembers. Wilderness center “staff knew I could do it the whole time. They were always telling me to push myself harder.”

Rob Kivlan, Flight Program supervisor and one of Kemper’s mentors, attended the honor society induction ceremony.

“There is no greater feeling than seeing one of our young men achieve this status and honor,” he says. “It gives us great hope that the cycle of delinquent behavior can be broken.”

Although he has had his share of struggles, Kemper continues to work hard every day to break that cycle, Kivlan says. “He still struggles occasionally, but he reaches out for support and we gladly give it.”

Kemper reached out to his case manager during an early visit to Messiah College near Mechanicsburg, Pa.

“I told him, ‘That’s where I want to go. That’s my future,’” says Kemper, who now attends the college because of an \$11,000 scholarship awarded for his high GPA. In addition, he is receiving nearly \$1,400 for books from a Diakon youth scholarship fund, established through gifts given to the organization over the years.

“Thanks to Rob, the Flight Program, and my determination in school,” says Kemper, “I’ve finally accomplished my dream.”

**Continue reading about the Diakon Wilderness Center on Page 8**

From left are Kerry Cesen, John Aquila, and Shana Hoehn.

## Wall mural brings fun to learning

■ The circus has come to east Baltimore. But it's not under the big top; it's on the parking-lot wall at the corner of East North Avenue and Broadway—the home of Diakon Place and the Diakon KidzStuff child care center.

Over the last few months, bright, colorful paintings of animals and nature have transformed an everyday concrete wall into a work of art, thanks to a partnership with the Maryland Institute College of Art.

“I thought it would be so nice for the kids to have something that would lift them up and let them daydream, think about the world beyond their city,” says James Harrington, senior marketing director for Diakon Family & Community Ministries, of the idea to approach the college last summer about painting a mural.

It wasn't long before John Aquila, a junior at the college and a member of its Community Arts Partnership Program, took the lead and organized a group of students to help out. After Aquila approved their drawings, the students met in the parking lot at Diakon Place, where they would project the drawings on the wall, complete the line work, and then fill in the color.

“Over the summer we were there from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m.,” he remembers. “The darker it is, the better.”

As the school year progressed, Aquila and his fellow students continued their work when time and studies allowed. The evolving mural is fascinating to the children at the day-care center, says Gwendolyn Chadwick, Diakon KidzStuff director.

“It keeps the children active and helps with learning,” she says. “What's been so much fun is, as images start to come alive, everybody's trying to guess what it is going to be.” ■

### AN ARTFUL PROCESS

**1.** An image is projected onto the wall at night by the college students.  
**2.** Paint is applied according to the projection. **3.** A variety of details are added. **4.** The result is a fun, colorful work of art to be enjoyed by the children at Diakon Kidzstuff.



# Senior Corps volunteers craft wooden toys for children in need

■ If you had been in the Fellowship Community Workshop in Whitehall, Pa., the end of last year, it probably would have reminded you of Santa's workshop.

Much as Santa's elves are thought to work, the men there moved with great expertise and precision. Not a motion was wasted as they repeatedly attached wheels and axles to the vehicles they had crafted with their own hands, then packed the items carefully into boxes.

"I was stunned when I saw the number of boxes and realized how many toy blocks and vehicles they had created," says Diane Schrameyer, director of the Diakon-administered Senior Corps RSVP of Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon counties. "In just a few short months they had turned donated wood into toys for children in need, and we had more toys to give away than I could have imagined!"

The project had been on Schrameyer's "wish list" for more than 15 years, since she first obtained a pattern to convert sections of 2x4s into wooden blocks.

"These four talented men—George Wagner, Willis Moser, Ted Houseknecht, and Dave Golden—all members of Senior Corps RSVP, brought it to fruition. Each is so skilled and takes such pride in what he creates that the finished products resemble something you would purchase from a children's toy catalog," she says.

The first wood for the toys was donated as a result of renovation work under way at Luther Crest, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Allentown. The Wood Shop volunteers promptly turned it into several hundred wooden blocks.

Additionally, several generous readers of the Allentown-based *Morning Call* newspaper, responded to an appeal and donated lumber they no longer needed.



*RSVP volunteers, from left, George Wagner, Ted Houseknecht, and Willis Moser, in the workshop where the toys were made.*

"At our annual volunteer recognition event in October, we displayed some of the first completed pieces and told our volunteers about this new project. Our generous RSVP volunteers responded with \$475 in donations to be used to cover the cost of the wooden wheels and axles that had to be purchased to complete hundreds of toy vehicles."

The week before Christmas, Senior Corps RSVP staff used a branding iron to burnish "Handcrafted by RSVP Volunteers" on the bottom of each vehicle before packaging the first donations.

Three kindergarten classes at Donegan Elementary School in Bethlehem, Pa., received a set of blocks and vehicles to be enjoyed by all the students. Individual trucks and cars, along with other items, were placed into "Jared boxes" and donated to Lehigh Valley Hospital (a Jared Box is given to a child seen in the emergency room or admitted to the hospital).

In addition, more than two dozen vehicles were distributed to young children at the Feast of Three Kings celebration in South Bethlehem. The remainder of the sets of blocks and vehicles are being distributed to children served by social service agencies in Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon counties. ■

♥ Senior Corps RSVP is a one-stop resource for persons 55 & older who want to find challenging, rewarding volunteer opportunities in their communities. Diakon sponsors the Senior Corps RSVP program covering Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon counties with some 800 members engaged in a variety of volunteer opportunities. The Wood Shop Project is just one way volunteers are making a positive impact in their communities. To explore volunteer opportunities in this area, make a donation to the Wood Shop Project, or learn more about RSVP, please contact Diane Schrameyer at (610) 391-8257 or e-mail [RSVP@diakon.org](mailto:RSVP@diakon.org).

## DIAKON WILDERNESS CENTER *(continued from Page 5)*

### Trip to Haiti has lasting impact

Just a short time after they returned from a mission trip to Haiti, Rob Kivlan and Tom Kemper watched the news in shock. The worst earthquake in 200 years had devastated an island and people they had come to love.

“We stayed just outside Port-Au-Prince only 10 days ago and many of the locations we visited were the worst hit,” Kivlan reported in an e-mail that asked friends and family to pray for the people they had met. “We are also deeply concerned about our young and talented translator, Davidson, who resides in Carrefour.”

While they waited for more news and to learn how best they could help those in need, they reflected on the trip that had such an impact on their lives.

“All I can say is that it was eye-opening and life-changing,” says Kemper of his first mission experience. “To see people who have almost no material possessions, barely a roof over their heads, but

amazing faith, was truly life-changing. It helped me reflect on my life as a whole and made me realize all of the everyday luxuries that I have taken for granted.”

Traveling with Carlisle Brethren in Christ Church, the pair were in Haiti to bring food, clothing, and medical supplies to those most in need. The trip was a chance to help others while still on their own journey to success and happiness, says Kivlan, supervisor of the Diakon Wilderness Center’s Flight Program, in which Kemper is enrolled.

“What we consider struggling or having hard times is nothing in comparison [to what the people of Haiti] experience,” he says. “My appreciation level for everything that I have has grown by leaps and bounds.”

During their stay, they visited multiple orphanages where children slept three to a bed and sometimes went two days before their next meal.

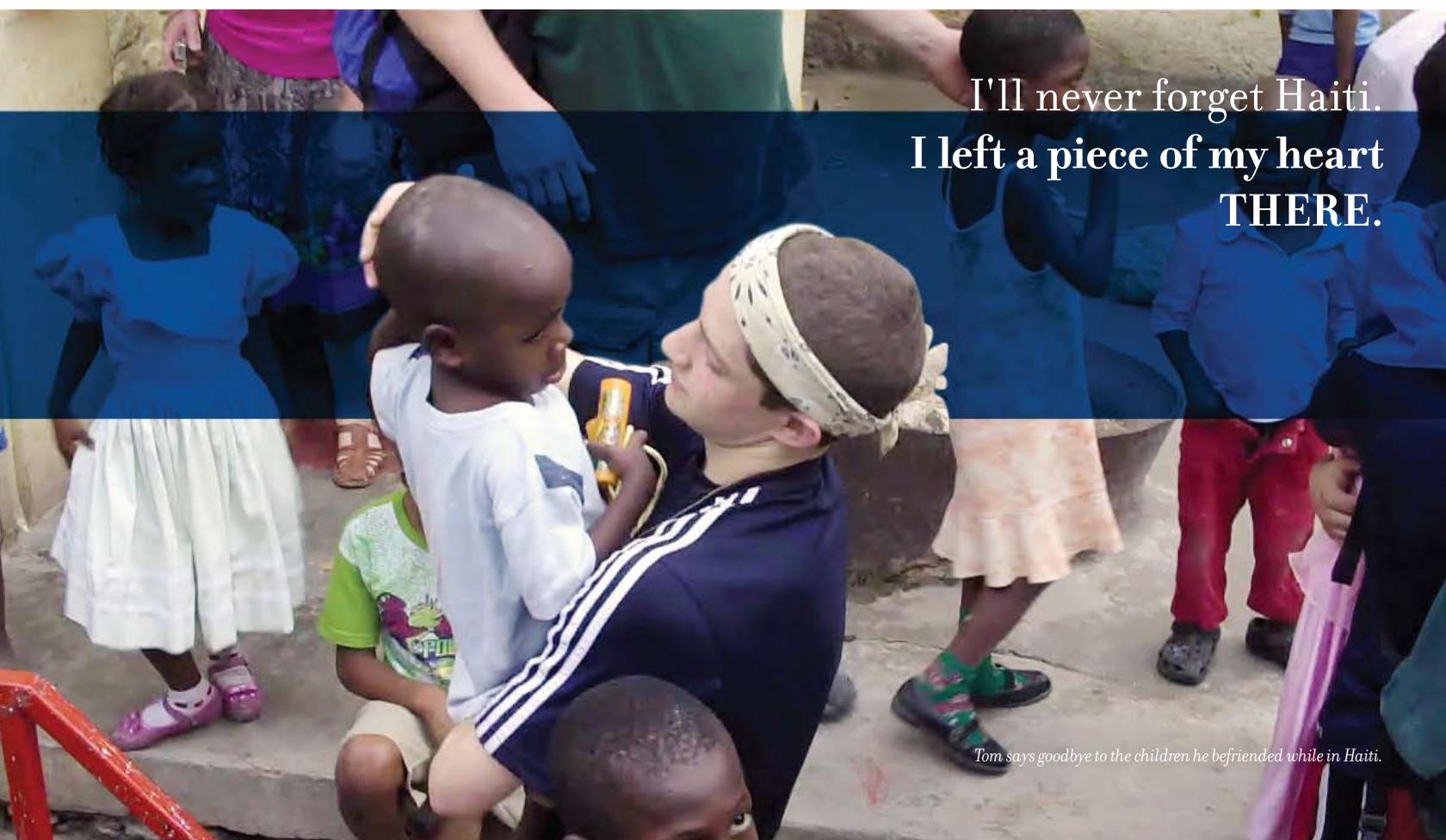
“Basically we played with the kids, tried to show them a good time and bring a smile to their faces in any way we could,” Kemper remembers.

The fact that they spoke different languages had little effect on their ability to communicate.

“It reaffirmed for me that love is a universal language,” Kivlan adds. “The kids didn’t speak English, but we were able to connect just by being sincere, honest, and engaged.”

The trip’s impact continued for both men long after they returned to the states. Kivlan’s mind continually drifts to the children that touched his life.

“I find myself vividly remembering the smiling faces of the children we played with,” he says. “Providing love to a beautiful child who may not survive to be hugged again on a return trip is difficult, but knowing that no one can ever take



I'll never forget Haiti.  
I left a piece of my heart  
**THERE.**

*Tom says goodbye to the children he befriended while in Haiti.*

## Helping kids overcome challenges



*Tom spends time with Amos, left, while in Haiti.*

away those brief moments of happiness brought into their lives is what I will hold onto.”

Remembering how he seldom gave it a thought when his parents would tell him to eat all his food because people are starving in the world, Kemper now makes an effort to clear his plate.

“When you go to Haiti, you know there are starving children—you’ve met them,” he says. “You’ve laughed with them, held them and seen their heart beating through their chest. I will never forget Haiti. I left a piece of my heart there when I left.”

*Rob Kivlan on a trip taken with Flight Program participants.*



## Flight supervisor commits to helping other young men

As an adolescent, Rob Kivlan made poor choices, hanging out with the wrong crowd and acting defiantly toward both family and authority.

“By the time I had reached my early 20s, I finally looked in the mirror and realized what my future was going to look like,” says the Diakon Wilderness Center’s Flight Program supervisor.

“I had to make drastic changes.” Thanks to a good friend who invited him to church, Kivlan found a place where he felt accepted.

“I was welcomed and not looked down upon,” he remembers. “Those sermons gave me the strength to follow through with making a positive change in my life.” Making a change meant moving away from bad influences.

“I completely reinvented myself,” he says, enrolling in college at 23. “Then I started volunteering. That is what really opened my eyes.”

Kivlan threw himself into volunteering, often with a diversionary program for first-time offenders and programs such as Habitat for Humanity. Without a network of friends who supported his positive change, it seemed right to him to fill his nights and weekends with service.

“It is hard to rediscover what life is all about and what normal people do on a Friday or Saturday night,” says the high-energy 30-year-old.

“I tried to make a difference and met a lot of great people along the way that started to open doors for me.” One of those doors led to a practicum experience at the wilderness center.

“As soon as I stepped on campus, I knew immediately that this is where I wanted to be,” he remembers. “Part of it was that I could relate to the kids. The other part was that the woods have always been in my blood.”

He also had made a promise to God.

“When I was trying to make the change, I talked to God and made a promise,” he says. “If I survived the change, I vowed to commit my life to helping kids not make the same mistakes I had made.”

That commitment took on greater significance for Kivlan during a recent mission trip to Haiti where he says witnessing the selfless acts of others kicked him into high gear.

“[The trip] reaffirmed for me that putting all your effort, time, and passion into sharing and helping others in need is rejuvenating,” he says. “Being selfless is where it is at.”

💡 *The Flight Program is funded in part under a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Health. However, additional funds are needed to keep this program operational as grant funds diminish. Please consider supporting this life-changing experience for young people seeking success in life.*

*Special thanks to Sen. Patrick M. Browne for his assistance in the creation of the Diakon Wilderness Center's Flight Program*

# DIAKON WILDERNESS CENTER *Helping kids overcome challenges*

## Volunteer embodies hard work and perseverance

“Norm Lacasse is awesome.”

When Lacasse read those four simple words scrawled on his dust-covered truck, a big smile crossed his face. This innocent act of kindness gave meaning to the countless mornings he has wanted to sleep in but couldn't, the hours and hours spent clearing weeds and brush from overgrown trails, and the lessons in patience he has learned while working with youths at the Diakon Wilderness Center.

For more than 15 years, Lacasse has spent his Wednesdays and Saturdays working with the youths to improve the Capital Area Greenbelt, a 20-mile greenway surrounding Harrisburg.

At the same time, he has taught the youths about the value of hard work and perseverance.

“At first we were just cutting brush, but that's not too much fun,” he says, adding that he soon figured out that the youths enjoyed doing projects in which they could meet a goal by day's end. “We don't just pick up trash. We do meaningful things.”

Whether building a trail bridge under the I-83 bridge in Paxtang or erecting a memorial to Martin Luther King, Lacasse always demonstrates a love of the outdoors.

“Norm is patient, informative, and very knowledgeable,” says Anthony Stukes, director of the center's Weekend Alternative Program. “He takes the time to tell the kids what they're doing, why they're doing it, and the historical condition of the landscape.”

A retired forester, Lacasse stumbled upon the greenbelt years ago when his boss asked him to begin an urban forestry program. Years later, he continues to ensure the greenway will be around for future generations to enjoy. This type of volunteer commitment is a positive example for the center's youths, says Stukes.

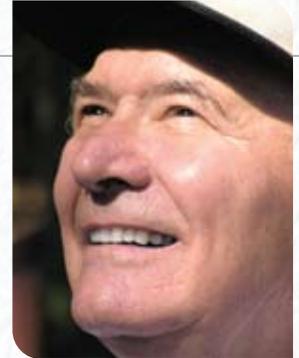
“It's important for the kids to look up to somebody like Norm, who is dedicated to making the community as beautiful as he can,” Stukes says. “He is there rain or shine, week after week. He just embodies consistency and hard work.” ❧

### Diakon Dictionary

**Norm Lacasse** *noun.*

1. a person characteristically patient, informative, very knowledgeable, and demonstrating a love of the outdoors
2. a one-time forester dedicated to making the community as beautiful as possible.

Also see AWESOME



Norm Lacasse

## DIALOG DIGEST

Although our next issue of *Dialog* will contain our 2009 annual report, Diakon has announced it served more than half-a-million people in 2009, a significant increase over the 100,000 served the prior year. The increase stems from the integration and expansion in 2009 of Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. Based in Baltimore, the program gathers, stores, and distributes new and unused personal care and other products to non-profits to disseminate to their clients free of charge. Last year, the unique program served 507,000 persons.

(see related story on page 11)

Diakon Living & Learning After 50 was established in Schuylkill County to reach active older adults who do not attend traditional community-based senior centers. Since its inception, the program has been quite successful in expanding the number and types of workshops and events it

offers. Courses have ranged from storytelling and family traditions to painting, from self-defense, dancing, and stress-reduction to computer technology.

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care will hold its first annual adoption and foster care night with the Reading Phillies May 23 in Reading, Pa. Gates open at noon, with the game starting at 1:05 p.m. To be held in partnership with other adoption organizations, the event will feature approximately 20 youths in need of adoption. Phillies' players will, in fact, play on behalf of particular youths that day. The event is similar to ones held in the Harrisburg, Pa., region with the Harrisburg Senators.

### DIAKON SOCIAL MEDIA

Get updates about recent events and other Diakon information by visiting one of our social media pages.

FOLLOW US ON



## Diakon Kathryn's Kloset Program and congregations connect to aid those in need

More than 100 miles separates Shamokin Dam, Pa., from Diakon Kathryn's Kloset in Baltimore, but distance is no match for determination.

Diakon Kathryn's Kloset collects, stores, and distributes corporate donations of new and unused products to non-profit organizations, which in turn distribute the goods, free of charge, to people in need. Accepting dry goods, non-perishable and some perishable food items, toiletries, cleaning and school supplies, office equipment, and more from corporate donors, the program serves as a sort of way station for goods destined to help people in need.

Staff and members of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Shamokin Dam knew of families in the area who could use laundry products available at Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. They just had to get to Baltimore and back. One rented truck and one round-trip later, the goods were on shelves at a church site and available for local families.

"A variety of churches, a homeless shelter, a center for teenaged girls, the county Children & Youth office—all have been able to use some" of the donated goods, says the Rev. Wayne Muthler, pastor of St. Matthew and a former Diakon board member.

Often, those groups "wouldn't have had resources or time to get to Baltimore themselves, but our efforts show how Diakon Kathryn's Kloset can work on the local level."

The connection between the Diakon program and St. Matthew illustrates a perfect model of cooperative efforts across state lines and two church synods,

says the Rev. John Richter, Diakon's vice president for church relations.

"The mission of Diakon Kathryn's Kloset is to get the goods from the warehouse into the hands of the people who need them," he says. "It behooves congregations to work together in this ministry."

A similar connection was made between the program and Trinity Lutheran Church in Chambersburg, which is serving as a distribution site for goods from Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. J. Douglas Price, a Diakon board member, volunteered with distribution activities at that Lower Susquehanna Synod congregation.

The Rev. Karl-John Stone, assistant to the bishop of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, was enthusiastic about the concept of Diakon Kathryn's Kloset from the minute he saw the center and met Wade Brown, the program's executive director. Stone envisioned establishing four distribution points within the north-central Pennsylvania synod to reach the most people.

"The more networking with organizations out in the community, the better," he says. "That creates a ripple effect and ultimately you reach those most in need."

Muthler and the members of St. Matthew have seen firsthand how the mission of Diakon Kathryn's Kloset can work at the community level. They're convinced other communities can benefit as well.

The program's concept allows a far greater



Pastor Wayne Muthler of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Shamokin Dam, Pa., center, works alongside Ken Stitley, left, and Matt Funk, right, both members of Grace Lutheran Church in Sunbury, Pa., loading a vehicle with items from Diakon Kathryn's Kloset.

amount of donated products to reach those in need, says Brown. "Small community organizations don't have the space to take a truckload of products," he says. "We have a 53,000-square-foot warehouse where corporations can donate in volume."

"It's a fascinating ministry," Muthler says. "It's exciting to get people involved." ■■

 No money is ever exchanged for items distributed through Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. The generous support of donors makes Diakon Kathryn's Kloset possible. Because annual costs associated with maintaining a program of this breadth and magnitude are significant, your generous gift will help not only to cover current operating expenses, but also to build the endowment needed to support this vital program.



## Your generosity is appreciated

In 2010, 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.diakon.org](http://www.diakon.org). Thank you.

## Receiving help, then giving back

Passion is sometimes described as a gift of the spirit that can enable people to overcome obstacles, to see the world as a place of possibilities. Such passions have helped Elaine Young, Sandy Hoffman, and Marie Perniski rise above their obstacles.

Young's passion—teaching—arose at an early age. Five years ago, however, her vision had diminished to the point she could no longer read, even with magnification. She considered giving up teaching her Sunday school class, but instead contacted Diakon Volunteer Home Care and found a volunteer to read the Sunday school lessons to her.

Diakon Volunteer Home Care is an interfaith outreach ministry offering short-term, non-medical assistance to older adults through the support of volunteers. Non-medical help including transportation, errands, friendly visits, and assistance with meals and outdoor and light household chores is offered at no cost in the Berks County, Schuylkill, and northern Dauphin counties, and Hazleton/Northeastern Pennsylvania regions.

Young's passion continues to evolve into new areas, such as volunteering. When people volunteer, she says, they give a part of themselves to others, including time, energy, and skills.

Like Young, Sandy Hoffman knows the impact Diakon Volunteer Home Care can have. Over a decade has passed since she was forced into early retirement by health issues. Following surgery, she prayed for a ministry that would allow her to share the blessings she had received. Volunteering

seemed the perfect option.

"I couldn't wait until I could get well and help others," says Hoffman.

When she contacted Diakon Volunteer Home Care, she was asked to help coordinate a pool of volunteers to provide transportation to clients.

"When I was healthy, I ran errands for clients of Diakon Volunteer Home Care," says Hoffman. "It's a different kind of volunteerism for me now, but it fills a void in my life."

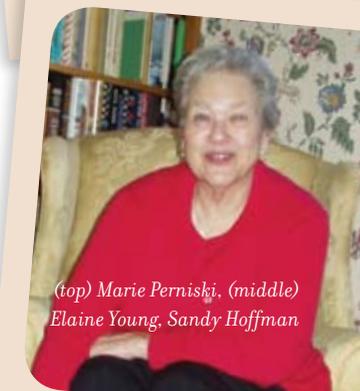
Like Hoffman and Young, Marie Perniski relies heavily on the Diakon program's support. In the last year, her husband passed away at the same time macular degeneration forced her to give up driving. If it had not been for volunteers, she would have remained in her home, alone, for days on end.

"I don't know what I would do without Diakon Volunteer Home Care," she says.

The three women are among the hundreds of people who rely on Diakon Volunteer Home Care.

"There is less government support out there, yet the need for these services is growing," says Hoffman. "We all need to give back. There are so many things that people can do to help." ■■■

Because Diakon Volunteer Home Care services are provided free of charge, monetary donations and volunteer support remain crucial to the program and its free services. Please use the enclosed envelope to give generously.



(top) Marie Perniski, (middle) Elaine Young, Sandy Hoffman