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Lutheran Social Ministries



DIALOG

Diakon: Disaster response partner

Life in Crisfield, Md., says someone familiar with the area, is not unlike “living in Mayberry RFD.”



Electrician Billy Drewer works on a new home.

And that’s not meant as a negative comment. Residents of Crisfield, the southernmost town in the state, tend to know one another; they wave as they pass in cars or on the street, says Ken Wermuth, construction manager for the Somerset County Long-Term Recovery Committee.

Many, he adds, are lifelong residents of the bayside community, known as the “crab capital of the world.”

Joe Pinto, born and raised in Crisfield, remembers the town in its heyday. “Every shop was filled and there were four movie theatres and five hardware stores in town.” At one time, according to a recent Washington Post article, the town’s seafood industry shipped as many as 29 train cars full of fish in a single day, along with innumerable soft crabs and thousands of gallons of crabmeat.

Recent times, however, have not been kind to the city.

In fact, when Pinto returned to Crisfield after having moved away years ago, he found it had changed dramatically. Many of the storefronts were vacant, the movie theaters and hardware stores gone. The economic slowdown—along with a steady decline of natural resources in the Chesapeake Bay—had taken its toll on his beloved town. He saw dilapidated homes that were once places of pride.

And just as the city of 2,700 was strategically focused on transitioning from seafood to tourism based on its past—its most prominent event is National Hard Crab Derby—Superstorm Sandy struck.

Surge and winds from the late-October 2012 hurricane hit the area with devastating force, sending four feet of water from the Little Annemessex River throughout town streets. No one died, but hundreds of people had to flee their homes. About half of the houses in Crisfield were damaged.

But, given the extent of damage in New Jersey, New York, and other parts of Maryland, it was easy for media and other officials, at least initially, to forget tiny Crisfield.

“This was the last straw for many people,” says Wermuth. “It was either make it or break for this town.”

Now, with the help of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries as a partner with Lutheran Partners in Disaster Response, and a wide range of other organizations including the American Red Cross, Crisfield is making a comeback.



The Rev. Phillip Huber stands in front of Charlie Adams' new house.

The Rev. Phillip Huber recently preached at a worship service recognizing the storm’s one-year anniversary, a day before he took part in the dedication of the first two newly built homes in Crisfield.

“Jesus walked on the water intending to pass by the disciples to show them the presence of the divine. When they were too scared to recognize even that, Jesus came over and got in the boat with them to show his presence and calm their fears. The same has been true for us here in Somerset County over the past year,” says Huber.

“Jesus has walked across the turbulent waters of the Chesapeake and gotten in our boat through Mennonite Disaster Services, Lutheran Disaster Response, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, United Methodist Committee on Relief, Episcopal Relief and Development and all the other groups that have represented Jesus in the midst of our frightening storm.”

Having worked in Somerset County, Md., since the storm hit, Huber is Diakon’s disaster preparedness and response coordinator within the

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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: Many Hands, guided by One Heart, transforming the lives of children, families, and older adults. With programs ranging from adoption, foster care and at-risk youth services to counseling and comprehensive senior living services, Diakon annually helps thousands of people of all faiths through compassionate service, gracious hospitality, and charitable care.

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The President's **DIALOG**



Mark T. Pile

AS YOU WILL SEE ON PAGE 5 OF DIALOG, I recently was honored with an alumni award from the university from which I obtained my master of social work degree.

To say honored, though, is understatement. Truly, the award was humbling.

But it also was rewarding as I had opportunity, as part of the recognition, to speak with current students at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Social Work, one of the leading such institutions in the country. In those discussions, I learned what motivates them to participate in and contribute to a field whose very reason for being is service to others.

I was heartened and inspired by what I heard.

None of us works for awards. We work to make a living, to provide for our families, to produce a

product, to serve others in a variety of ways.

But if we are fortunate enough that others believe what we have done in our careers is worthy of some mention (and let me here express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Edward W. Sites, professor emeritus of the school, who was instrumental in my nomination), that situation, I have found, offers pause for reflection and, especially, for expressions of appreciation.

And both opportunities revolve around others—and how much we depend on them in whatever we do. Even the novelist, one of the most solitary professions, relies on editors, publishers, printers, and, certainly, readers.

My point, of course, is that while receiving such recognition is a wonderful and meaningful experience, the true "award" comes from working collaboratively with so many others to fulfill mission.

I have spent the last 16 years of my work-life with Diakon and a predecessor organization. While those times have seen their share of challenges, they also have been among the most rewarding of my life as we have worked together to sustain and expand a ministry that, in various ways, touches the lives of nearly half-a-million people annually.

I am privileged to have held and continue to hold a leadership role in which I am able to help discern and shape that mission so that it not only stays true to our nearly 150-year-old roots but also grows to meet ever-changing need.

Yet that deliberative process—and the work afterwards that brings it all to fruition—also requires the support of our boards of directors in terms of strategy development, general oversight, and fiduciary responsibility and, especially, the insights, skills, and dedication of committed staff members throughout the organization, from other members of management to those caregivers who directly offer solace and support daily.

And so, as an expression of appreciation during this time of honor, I want to share this recognition with so many others, particularly our Diakon staff members who daily make our ministry real in the lives of people in need—and who help to make my role the joy that it is.

Being thankful for those people upon whom we depend in life is appropriate year-round, but especially fitting this time of year.

As you take time to reflect on life during this season of thankfulness and promise, I hope that you will recall all those who bless your life and to thank them for what they mean to you.

Just as now I underscore my thanks to you for your particular role in this wonderful ministry we call Diakon.

Mark T. Pile, MSHA, MSW
President/CEO

Automotive program drives students to new roads in life

Boiling Springs, Pa.

A FULL-FLEDGED AUTOMOTIVE SHOP is slowly emerging on the campus of the Diakon Wilderness Center, with hopes that a certified automotive program won't be far behind.

Andrew Wagner, a counselor with Diakon's Center Point Day Treatment Program, knows a thing or two about cars and wants to share that knowledge with students.

Wagner, who holds an automotive technology degree and is an ASE-certified mechanic, has developed a program that prepares students to step into an entry-level automotive technician role or lays the groundwork for enrollment in a technical college or trade school.

"I give them enough training to be an automotive technician," says Wagner, referring to his curriculum, which includes units on tools and safety, basic engine theory and parts, brakes and steering suspension, manual drive trains, automotive electronics and electricity, and state inspection.

"I am teaching them what they need to know to fully comprehend what is happening in an engine."

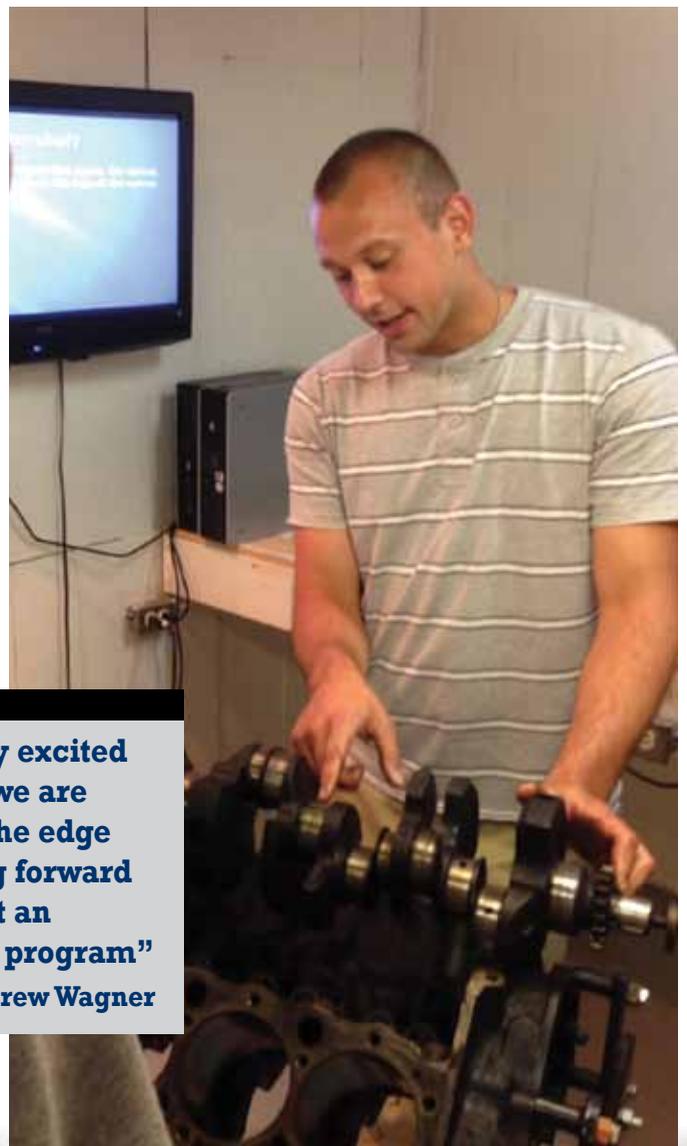
Over the past year, students worked with Wagner to create a working automotive shop by renovating an existing storage facility on the wilderness center campus near Boiling Springs, Pa. Their real-world classroom features salvaged parts and demonstration engines mounted on stands.

"We have a good time here," says Wagner. "We do things a little differently than in a typical classroom setting."

In support of the program, Castrol recently donated \$1,000 worth of lubricants to the center. "The donation of motor oil will allow the automotive program to move toward getting some real-world job experience for our students," says Wagner. The current goal, he adds, is to obtain needed resources to establish a fully functional classroom to train students in the field of auto mechanics.

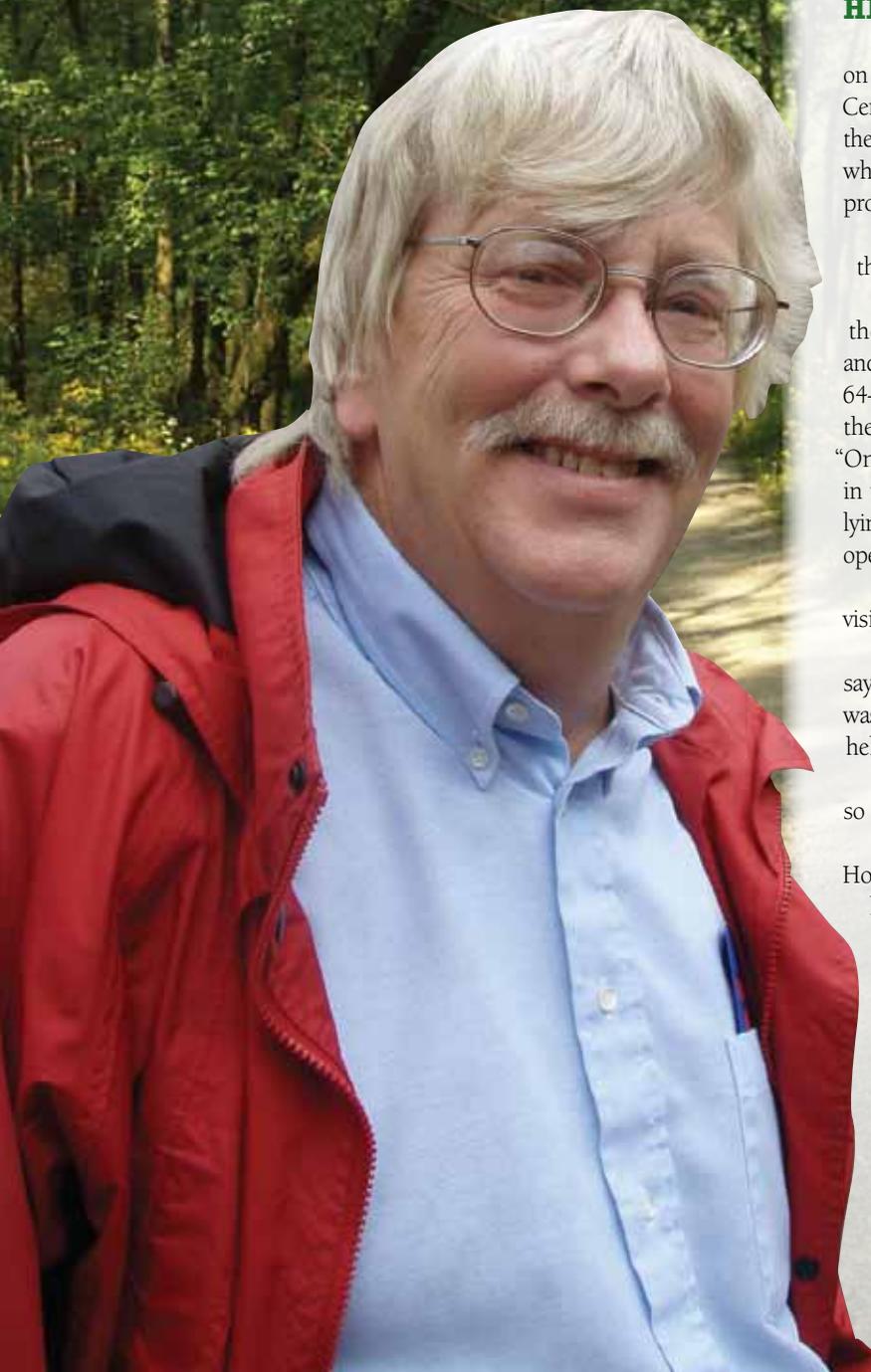
While the program currently serves only students in the Center Point Day Program, Wagner believes it eventually can serve participants involved in other Diakon Wilderness Center services.

"I'm very excited because we are right on the edge of moving forward to make it an awesome program," he says. "I believe we can make this not only ASE-certified, but also a full-fledged running garage where students can leave with internship experience they can put on a resume. The possibilities are endless."



"I'm very excited because we are right on the edge of moving forward to make it an awesome program"
— Andrew Wagner

Volunteer gives of himself, receives 'payment' of *love and respect*



Boiling Springs, Pa.

PETE HOUGHTON LIKES TO SAY HE FOUND HIS NICHE ON THE MOUNTAIN.

As a Diakon Youth Services volunteer, Houghton spent many hours on the mountain that serves as the backdrop for the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa. More than 10 years ago, he ventured there as part of a five-person group of Alcoholics Anonymous members who volunteered to meet weekly with youths in the then-residential program who had addiction issues of their own.

Within six months, Houghton was the only member of the group that remained.

"My purpose was to educate them about drugs and alcohol and how to combat that," says the 64-year-old Houghton, adding that the youths regularly tested him. "Once you had that relationship in which they knew you weren't lying to them, you could have an open conversation and trade ideas."

Houghton returned week after week, eventually expanding his visits to two times a week.

"I learned a lot from those boys and I took a lot from them," he says, explaining that he has been in recovery for nearly 14 years. "I was there to learn things and keep straight and narrow myself. They helped me to do that wonderfully."

Over the years, as Diakon Wilderness Center programs changed, so did Houghton's role as volunteer.

"I got to know Rob [Kivlan], who started the Flight Program," says Houghton of the mentoring and training program for youths who have aged out of county-based services, such as Diakon Wilderness Center programs, but still need guidance and mutual support to stay on track to success in life. "He invited me for dinner Friday nights and I never 'left.'"

"Flight is one of the best programs I've ever seen because these kids really want to be there," he says. "We have a program changing young men's lives, and I'm allowed to be part of it."

When Houghton finds himself sitting around a fire circle with program participants, he sometimes wonders why they listen to what he has to say. "I find it both heartwarming and amazing," he says. "I really am paid with their love and respect. I get so much more than I could ever give."

**"I learned a lot
from those boys
and I took a lot
from them"**

Diakon CEO named university's 'distinguished alumnus'

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Mark Pile, Diakon president/CEO, has received the Distinguished Alumni Award for Social Work Practice from the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work. The award, says Dr. Edward W. Sites, professor emeritus of the school, who was involved in the nomination, "acknowledges and honors a social work alumnus who, throughout her or his career, has consistently demonstrated exceptional contributions to the profession and the community-at-large."

According to Sites, "Mark's career is a perfect model for this award. His career has encompassed a wide range of social work services, all social work methods, and challenging leadership positions. The university is proud to honor Mark not only for his many years of outstanding performance as a professional social worker, but also for the honor he has brought the University of Pittsburgh as one of its most distinguished alumni."

Nominations are based on the individual's contributions to social work practice, including advocacy; clinical practice with individuals, families, and/or groups; field instruction or supervision; education; community organization; administration; program development; research; public and corporate policy; and social planning.

"As a board member," says Lutheran Bishop Emeritus A. Donald Main of Lancaster County, "I watched Mark take the reins of Diakon and make careful adjustments that focused its services on what we would call its core ministries. This process was deliberative and while focused on coping with the financial challenges that most non-profit social service organizations experience today, it always kept those we serve at the forefront ... this focus on the well-being of others is a hallmark of Mark's tenure as Diakon CEO, as well as during his earlier work as chief operating officer," he notes.

"Mark has used his significant management skills to navigate the challenges of today's

business climate while not losing sight of the ultimate mission of the Diakon community," says Lawrence Delp, chair of the Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries board of directors and a member of the Diakon Lutheran Fund board.

Joanne Judge, Diakon's corporate counsel, says that "Mark has demonstrated a commitment to service and mission during the fifteen years that I have known him and he is a shining example of success by a University of Pittsburgh alumnus. His degree in social work provided a foundation for his dedication to service and an understanding of the need for business strength in order to deliver those services. This is a well-deserved recognition."

"Mark is concerned about people and mission and is always willing to listen to others' concerns, weighing his own opinions in light of what others bring to the table. When he expresses concern about someone, he truly is concerned, demonstrating that not only through his demeanor, but also his behavior," adds Main.



Courtesy of University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work

Dr. Edward W. Sites, professor emeritus of the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, left, presents Mark Pile with the school's Distinguished Alumni Award for Social Work Practice.

Pile has been president/CEO of Diakon since Jan. 1, 2010. He was named chief operating officer when Diakon was formed in 2000, having held a similar role with one of the two organizations that created Diakon. Before joining that organization—Lutheran Services Northeast—in 1997, Pile served as vice president of Somerset Hospital and, before that, was executive director of Twin Lakes Center, Somerset.

A Fellow with the American College of Health Care Executives and a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers, Pile is a 1974 graduate of Lycoming College, Williamsport. He earned his Master of Science in Social Work degree from the University of Pittsburgh and also holds a master's degree in health administration from the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, Va.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work is one of the top-ranked schools of social work in the United States.

Life in Crisfield *Continued from Page 1*

Delaware-Maryland Synod. Representing Diakon, the national Lutheran Disaster Response, and the local Lutheran Partners in Disaster Response—or LPDR, a cooperative ministry among the Southeastern District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA; Diakon; and Lutheran Mission Society, an LCMS-affiliated organization—Huber knew one of the first tasks was to help form the long-term recovery committee and hire staff for it.

Huber; the Rev. Thom Sinnott, disaster consultant with LPDR, member of the long-term recovery committee, and interim pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Cordova, Md.; Pinto, grant manager for Episcopal Relief and Development and also a long-term recovery committee member; and many others then began the long-term process of assessing storm damage.

Immediately following the storm, the Federal Emergency Management Agency had deemed only 10 of 2,600 homes as non-repairable. However, as the local group early on went door to door, its members found the number staggeringly higher. FEMA then reassessed the damage and ultimately condemned 1,200 homes.



Lynette Coleman, administrative assistant and volunteer coordinator for local disaster response, surveys a home under construction.

The number was so high, Huber says, because county zoning regulations require that a building be repaired to code specifications if damage to it amounts to more than 50% of its assessed value. Because area housing values were—and continue to be—depressed, that percentage was quickly reached.

As the committee began to focus on long-term recovery following initial relief efforts, it set about prioritizing needs but, based on culture, history and recent economic challenges, townspeople were skeptical of the promises being made. Latasha Wallace, former case-manager for the committee, says that people did not want to let committee members into their homes because they were cynical or busy trying to earn a living.

“One man,” she says, “told us, ‘Don’t bother me now. I’m crabbing. Come back in September.’”

Confidence improved significantly, however, when the committee hired a lifelong Crisfield resident as administrative assistant and volunteer coordinator. Most local residents knew and trusted Lynette Coleman, says Huber, and within the next several months, half of the community’s residents had inquired about available aid.

Before long, demolition had begun on the first two houses, with the first groundbreaking celebrated in June of this year for a new home for Charlie Adams.

Nearly everyone was adamant that helping Adams was a priority. “He raised all of his brothers and sisters here. He sold newspapers on a street corner”—now named for him—“for 70 years,” says Wermuth. “If anyone ought to have a new house, it’s him.”

Adams’ family, however, was skeptical that a new house would be built free of charge, says Huber. “They asked, ‘If you give him a new house, will he be able to afford it?’ They wanted to know what the catch was.” As volunteers were pulling down his house with chains and a truck, Adams was on his hands and knees crying. He couldn’t understand why someone would simply “give” this to him.

Adams’ house was one of the two recently dedicated.

Construction continues on other new houses, with additional groundbreakings scheduled. In addition to the two houses—built from the ground up—recently dedicated, “we are in various stages of planning and beginning the work on seven more,” says the Rev. Cindy Camp, who oversees Diakon’s disaster programming.

“In cooperation with other groups working with the Long Term Recovery Committee, we have rehabbed 64 other homes. Sixty-five other properties have been approved by case review and assigned to the construction group, while 60 more cases have been opened, but are not yet in process.” Some 130 volunteers have given time and energy to the rebuilding process.

In addition to the construction work, local efforts range from providing emotional support to cleaning out waterlogged furnishings. Despite this progress, says Huber, much work remains to be completed.

“But we’re committed to staying in Crisfield to the end,” he adds.

Much of the work is occurring as a result of significant grants from Lutheran Disaster Response and the American Red Cross. In late summer, the Red Cross awarded \$10 million in Superstorm Sandy-related grants to eight non-profit groups, including \$1.965 million to Lutheran Disaster Response to repair homes, provide financial assistance to survivors of the storm, and support volunteer management and programs for children. Of that nearly \$2 million grant, \$575,000 is going to the Crisfield effort.

“The funding covers local staffing—two part-time coordinators, a volunteer manager, and a construction coordinator—and related expenses, unmet needs, construction materials, and funds for matching a community challenge to raise \$50,000 locally,” says Camp.

The American Red Cross funding is in addition to a Lutheran Disaster Response grant of \$200,000, more than half of which has been received, to staff the disaster recovery office with a case manager, data-entry person, construction manager, and—before the ARC grant arrived—the disaster response coordinators and volunteer manager, as well as cover travel-related costs.

In addition, more than \$120,000 has been raised by Lutheran congregations in Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia. In mid-October, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development released an additional \$19 million in Community Development Block Grants for Maryland communities hit hardest by the storm.

Yet more volunteers and funding will be needed.

“Rebuilding is a slow but steady process. Yet we are having a lot of success,” says former Case-manager Wallace. “I can’t walk a block without talking to someone we’ve helped. It’s very rewarding.”

“We are putting the city back together,” Noah Bradshaw, Crisfield’s town inspector, recently told a writer for the Baltimore Sun. “It’s going to go on for a couple years.”

Being home means different things to different people, but home is nowhere else but “the crab capital of the world” to most residents of Crisfield, Maryland. They are eager to be settled in their homes, once again, in their beloved town.

And Diakon and Lutheran Partners in Disaster Response will continue to work to make that possible.

If you would like to contribute financially or serve as a member of a Lutheran Partners in Disaster Response work group, please visit www.lpdr.org.

Diakon Digest



Coach Herman Boone, about whom the film “Remember the Titans” was made, was the guest speaker for

the recent Dining with Diakon – Eastern Pennsylvania. The event attracted nearly 260 people and raised more than \$120,000 for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. Boone spoke of the values of respect, teamwork, and community involvement, as well as the importance of character and the value of education in overcoming obstacles. He lauded the adoption program for its work and asked those present to work diligently to help “our youths become whole.”

A filmmaker associated with the French television network Canal TV recently documented resource-parent training provided by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care to prospective adoptive and foster families. Here, Nathalie Gros of the CAPA TV production company interviews Cathy Balliet of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, who helped to conduct the training. The 10-minute news item will be shown on a current-affairs program similar to the U.S. program “Frontline.” According to Yves Schaeffner, a New York City-based associate of the network, issues with adoptive placements in Europe prompted the report. “The starting point of our report is a recent investigation by Reuters [in Europe], but we would like to show that certain groups and organizations like [Diakon] are trying to prepare parents who want to adopt children to make sure that the adoption goes well.”



In mid-September, Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, Lewisburg, Pa., dedicated its \$16.2 million health-care and rehabilitation



center. According to Robert Musser, executive director, the transition to the new facility has gone very well, with residents settling into life in the center’s leading-edge neighborhood concept. The 102-bed center consists of five neighborhoods—four residential and one for short-term rehabilitation, each equipped with private country kitchen (shown here) and common living area. The neighborhood concept is allowing the facility to emphasize patient-centered care, which allows residents to make more decisions about schedules and other daily activities based on individual preference.

Communicating with you in the ways you want

Dialog is just one way of keeping up with the programs of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries. Each month, we disseminate one or more *eDiakonnect* emails to interested people; many of those emails include stories of service that don’t appear in *Dialog*. While those stories do appear on a section of our website—found at www.diakon.org/ediakonnect—you may wish to sign up to receive them directly.

You can do so at www.diakon.org/stay-in-touch.

Are you a Facebook user? If so, did you know that Diakon has 25 Facebook pages, ranging from one for the overall organization to multiple program-specific pages? For example, each senior living community has its own Facebook page, as do Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, the Diakon Flight Program, the Diakon Wilderness Greenhouse, and so on inclusive of newly introduced pages for senior community centers in Schuylkill County, Pa., where Diakon manages community services for seniors.

Do you Tweet? If so, follow Diakon @diakonwes3.

Like Instagram? The Diakon Wilderness Greenhouse posts numerous images on Instagram.

Do you like to “pin” items? Recipes and other information from our Dining with Diakon events, for instance, are uploaded to Pinterest.

Plus, we will very shortly introduce *Many Voices. One Heart.* (based on our *Many Hands. One Heart.* theme), a blog written by individuals throughout the organization. Watch for it to launch on a section of our website in January if not before then.

Certainly we hope that you will continue to like and read *Dialog*—but we invite you as well to join us on any—or all—of these social media platforms. A helpful list of our social media pages and links can be found under About Us on the Diakon website.



Former program participant learns anew as program coach

Williamsport, Pa.

Lessons we learn in life often become more meaningful when we are able to share them with others.

Alanna Harding made that discovery when she volunteered to be a junior coach for Girls on the Run of Lycoming County last summer, years after she was a program participant herself. What she had learned then, as a fourth- and fifth-grader—to respect yourself and others, to stay healthy and positive—seemed to resonate even more as she worked with girls in the program today.

“Being a junior coach really cemented those ideas in my brain,” says Harding, who will graduate from Williamsport High



School in 2014. “It was a unique experience to see the other side and to help pass those messages along.”

Sponsored by Diakon in Lycoming and Lehigh counties, Pa., Girls on the Run® is a national program for girls in third through eighth grades that teaches healthy living, self-respect, and confidence. Working with schools, families and volunteers, Girls on the Run combines running events, other physical activities, mentoring and skills development in a fun and inspiring curriculum.

Harding says she saw herself in some of the girls with whom she worked.

“I especially liked to engage the quieter girls to try to bring them out of their shell, to talk about their lives,” she says. “In some ways, that was me when I was younger.”

As Harding plans for her future, plans that include college and a career in business and finance, she values what she learned through Girls on the Run—as both participant and coach.

“It is such a great program,” she says. “I want to continue to be involved for as long as I’m able.”



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