

# DIALOG

A publication of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries

Winter 2007

## PROGRAM SUPPORTS MILITARY FAMILIES

█ Ever since her husband of 17 years, William, was deployed to the Middle East in September, life for Traci LaBarre and her five children hasn't been the same.

"It has been very stressful and lonely," she says. "Until you are living it, you don't understand the tremendous sacrifice service men and women and their families are making."

To help bring education, awareness, and support for families such as the LaBarres, Diakon Family Life Services - Upper Susquehanna has formed Mountie's Mission Homefront through its South Williamsport, Pa., school-based outreach counseling efforts. As a local spin-off of Mission Homefront, a Pa. Department of Education initiative aimed at raising awareness of students' needs during deployment, the group was launched in July.

"I was walking down the halls of Rommelt [Middle School] and I saw a boy wearing dog tags. I said, 'Cool dog tags, where are they from?' The boy said his brother was in Iraq and I thought wow, how uninformed am I?" says Pat Peltier-Russell, Diakon Family Life Services outreach counselor. "I remembered hearing about the state organization at a conference and thought a similar group on a community level would help provide support in our area."

*Traci LaBarre, center, and her five children proudly display William's photograph and the American flag. Back row are daughters Marquelle, Makenzie, and Mara. Sons are Mitchel, on chair, and Micah, holding photo.*

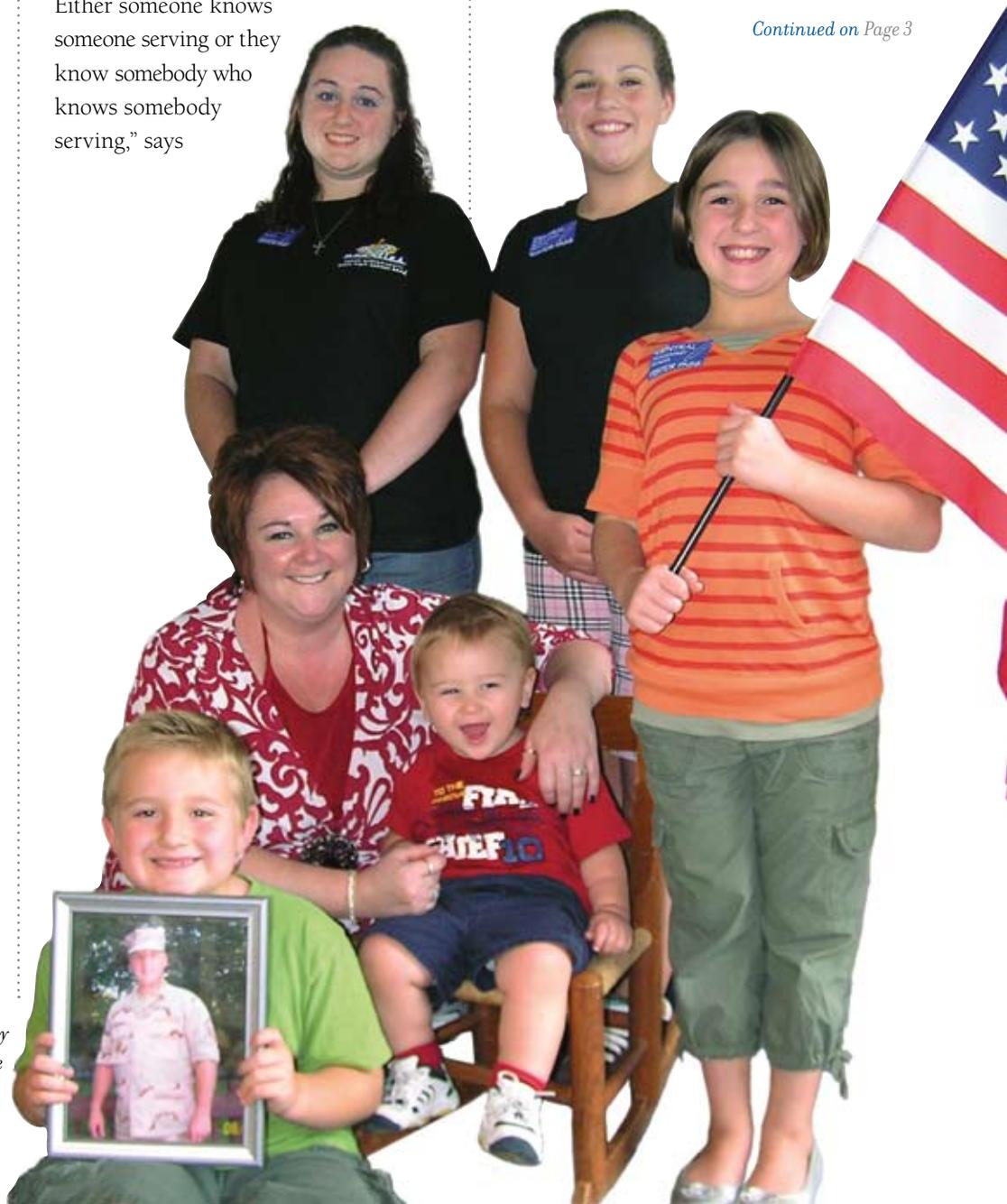
In its initial stages, Mountie's Mission Homefront is reaching out to students, military families, and the community.

"We are a small community.

Either someone knows someone serving or they know somebody who knows somebody serving," says

Mountie's Mission Homefront committee member Jamie Flick, whose son is serving in the military and whose brother-in-law was killed in Iraq last spring.

*Continued on Page 3*



# COUPLE OPENS HOME AND HEARTS TO ADOPTION OVER AND OVER AGAIN

■ As soon as you come through the front door of Pam and Bill Tynan's home, you're aware of the presence of kids. The noise, laughter, and occasional shriek of children's play, the scattering of toys, are indications of a household bustling with the busyness of young lives.

The Tynans of Freemansburg, Pa., have the kind of unique family that can come together only through adoption.

To create their special family, the Tynans opened their hearts and home not just once, but again and again—five times, in fact.

Their journey began about a dozen years ago. Pam had been married previously and had two children, but when she and Bill wed, they wanted a family together. They turned to Diakon.

Ethan was the first to arrive, followed by Andrew and then Matthew. Johanna joined the family about three years ago, with the baby, Billy, making it five. Matthew and Billy are Ethan's brothers. Various circumstances affected the birth families and placed the children in a position to be adopted. All came to the family as newborns.

"At first, I felt two was enough. Then Matthew came along and we wanted to keep the siblings together. So we grew a little more from there," Pam says. "The word adoption is used here," she adds. "We're open about it. We say, 'Your mother wasn't able to take care of you' and that's it."

Managing the busy family is challenging at times, Bill notes. There's always somewhere to go between school and sports activities and dance classes for Johanna, and travel can be chaotic. "Some people think we're crazy," he laughs.

Pam enjoys sharing their story and is willing to speak to anyone considering adoption. After having gone through the process five times, she says there's nothing she hasn't worried or wondered about, including what is considered to be a very common concern.

"I asked myself if I would be able to love them as my own," she says.

"The answer is yes." ■

*The Tynan family, from left to right, consists of Andrew, Ethan, Billy, Pam, Johanna, Bill, and Matthew.*



*Bill and Pam Tynan welcomed their children through a range of Diakon programs that reach out to children in need—Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's special-needs adoption and foster-to-adopt programs, and Diakon Pregnancy Services.*

- Children with special needs are those who are five years of age or older; sibling groups; those with emotional, social, or physical challenges or a genetic predisposition to them; those of minority heritage; or those within the child welfare system.
- Foster-to-adopt placements typically involve children who have been living with a foster family that intends to adopt them when possible.
- Diakon Pregnancy Services helps a birth mother arrange for placement of her infant with an adoptive family she thinks is best suited to parent the child, if she chooses adoption.

Continued from Front Cover

“Three to five years ago, the war was front-page news. Now it is in the back pages,” Flick says. “We need to bring it to the forefront. The bottom line is, we can’t do enough to offer support.”

The group began educational efforts about deployment by placing world maps in the local elementary school. Used to track South Williamsport area military personnel, the maps have been funded in part by AAA and The Sean Thomas Foundation, organized in honor of Flick’s brother-in-law.

Still searching for a complete list of area service men and women, the organization hopes to link the list to a family photo collage to spark conversation among students and demonstrate the connections they have to members of the military.

Teachers such as Stephanie Trimble, who also is a Mountie’s Mission Homefront committee member, are planning for classes to “adopt” soldiers. Through the adoption process, students will learn about world geography relative to the location of the soldier, write letters, make cards, and gather items for care packages.

Children coping with a parent, sibling, other relative, or teacher who is deployed or in the military can also receive counseling to help them cope with the stresses and fears of war. Similar support groups for adults are also being formed and special event family nights are being planned.

The group hopes to generate interest from other communities, so additional areas can establish similar programs.

“I wish I would have had this support system when my husband was first deployed,” says Kathy Furman, Central Elementary School principal and wife of a military chaplain. “My daughter was just 16 at the time, and she had a hard time.” Although the military provides support to families, Furman says local support is also very helpful.

For Traci LaBarre, it is hard to see her oldest daughter, also 16, learning to drive without guidance from her father. Her youngest son, Mitchell, 17 months old, had to undergo surgery with his father halfway around the globe. She says her husband’s deployment, which she hopes will be short-term, is like being in a sea of the unknown.

“I go through waves of emotions. Just knowing that someone is thinking of you is tremendous. My husband always puts our needs in front of his own. He is very concerned about us and knowing that I have a support network is a big help to him as well,” LaBarre says.

“I am sure this group will alleviate stress for many more military families.” ■

**For more information on Mountie’s Mission Homefront, readers may contact Pat Peltier-Russell at Central Elementary School at (570) 323-3694 or at Rommelt Middle School at (570) 320-4470.**



Antoinette Janson, right, a member of the Navy Reserves, points out to her sons where she has been stationed (Iraq and Kuwait) on a map funded in part by AAA and The Sean Thomas Foundation. From the left are Scott Janson and Nikko Janson.

## 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, and home care, in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. With many hands and one heart, Diakon staff members each year touch the lives of more than 70,000 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 138-year tradition of hospitality and care for people of all faiths.

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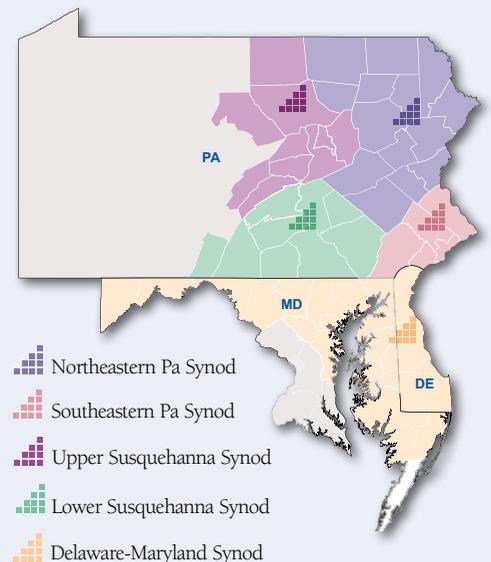
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## DIAKON SERVICE TERRITORY



# THE PRESIDENT'S DIALOG



**“We believe this is an exciting time for Diakon and all of our residents as we expand our accommodations and services.”**

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

As we did two years ago, we recently contracted with Holleran Consulting of Lancaster County, Pa., to survey residents of our senior living accommodations and assisted living communities as well as the families—and, in some cases, residents—of our nursing centers.

Such surveys are a regular part of our focus on meeting and exceeding the expectations of our residents and their family members.

If you participated in the survey, I want to thank you for sharing your opinions! We conduct surveys for exactly that reason—we want to know the level of satisfaction our residents and their families have with Diakon’s services and accommodations.

We have produced a brief Diakon-wide overview of the responses we received, which we are sharing with residents, families, and staff members. In addition, the communities’ executive directors are providing local results to their residents and their family members.

While our goal is always to exceed residents’ and families’ expectations, we were not surprised that a number of responses from residents in our senior living accommodations (which sometimes are called “independent living”) ranked below Holleran’s “typical” responses to those questions.

At the same time, responses from residents in nursing care (or from their family members) often ranked above the “typical” ratings.

Let me briefly explain these ratings. Updated every quarter, Holleran’s national database contains information gathered within the last 24 months from 330 senior living communities in 30 states.

Current data reflect more than 48,000 independent living surveys, 6,900 assisted living surveys, and 9,800 nursing-care surveys. The mean score or average responses provide a useful “scorecard” against which to rate our services and accommodations.

In senior living accommodations, several indicators of satisfaction were below the national “mean-score” benchmarks by a few points, including “overall satisfaction” and “long-term confidence.” At the same time, several of Diakon’s 2007 mean scores represent positive changes from those received in 2005.

While the results in AL showed that on the primary indicators of satisfaction—overall satisfaction, value for price paid, and long-term confidence—Diakon was approximately 3 points on each below the national database, five communities were above the benchmark in terms of frequency of “excellent” and “good” responses to overall satisfaction, with one community scoring a 100%.

In terms of frequency of “excellent” and “good” responses to overall satisfaction, nearly 70% of Diakon’s nursing care centers performed significantly better than the national benchmark, with one achieving a 100% rating. In the four primary “indicators of overall satisfaction,” Diakon outperformed the national benchmark in all categories but one and that difference was only by one-tenth of a point.

Diakon was significantly above the benchmark (93.3% to 89.7%) for the factor, “would you recommend the community to a friend or relative.”

Overall, our responses—often below the benchmark in senior living accommodations but frequently above the ratings in nursing care—reflect Diakon’s heritage. For much of our history, we have concentrated on health-care services. Over the last several years, however, we have embarked on an extensive program to begin offering or expanding the continuum of senior living services at as many of our communities as possible.

In that short time, we have formed local task groups to plan renovation and expansion at each community, built and sold senior living homes at one community and planned the construction of new homes on four additional senior living campuses, spent nearly \$20 million on immediate capital improvements, and begun an extensive staff-training program on gracious service and hospitality.

Any process to refocus services may create uncertainty in the minds of some residents. Because of the time it can take to create plans and secure appropriate governmental permissions,

residents may also wonder why work is not under way on their campus. Further, actual construction and other renovation activities can be disruptive to the lives of our residents.

Nevertheless, we believe this is an exciting time for Diakon and all of our residents as we expand our accommodations and services.

The responses we receive from this and future surveys provide invaluable guidance as we outline the future of senior living services. They also indicate where we need to place immediate attention to improve or upgrade our current services.

These explanatory comments in no way minimize any concerns raised by the study, which revealed areas both of strength and opportunity, correlating them with factors Holleran indicates are “key drivers” of resident satisfaction. As in 2005, a top identified strength is Diakon’s “competence of staff” and the “respect” with which staff members hold residents.

Primary areas for improvement include “timeliness and quality of communication,” “fulfillment of expectations as promised by marketing,” “resolution of and responsiveness to inquiries/complaints,” and food service. Please know that, in addition to our expansion and training efforts, we continue to focus on ways to address these areas of opportunity.

Again, let me thank you for your feedback. Your guidance helps us to focus efforts to exceed your expectations of our accommodations and services.

Please know we welcome your suggestions at any time, not just during surveys.



The Rev. Daun E. McKee, Ph.D.  
President/CEO

*If you would like a copy of the booklet that briefly outlines overall responses to the survey, please contact our Office of Corporate Communications at 960 Century Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. Telephone: (717) 795-0307.*

## DIAKON COMMUNITY PROVIDES RESPITE CARE FOR CANCER PATIENT

■ With a sparkle in her eyes, Bobby Goehringer radiated a casual warmth that lit up any room. She had a zest for adventure unequalled by someone half her age and had always been the picture of health and vibrancy—until suddenly that all changed.

Goehringer began tiring easily and collapsed four times in her home. A CAT scan confirmed her worst fears—she had Hodgkin’s Lymphoma.

Over the next four weeks, Goehringer was in and out of the hospital. Upon her release, she received home-based nursing care; after a time, program staff suggested she receive respite care at Pocono Lutheran Village, a Diakon Senior Living Community in East Stroudsburg, Pa.

Because her sister had been a resident of the village for two years, she knew the quality of care she would receive. “I knew it was a well-run facility with a caring, patient staff,” says Goehringer.

Goehringer began her stay almost immediately and after several weeks returned to her home feeling much stronger. “It was the best thing I could have done,” she recalls. “The staff at Pocono Lutheran Village helped me with bathing and shopping and took me to my appointments. I couldn’t have done those things by myself.”

Goehringer completed her chemotherapy in September “without one moment of discomfort,” but did experience some physical changes associated with the treatment.

“I lost all of my hair, but that’s okay. I’m hoping it comes back in red, and curly!” she says with that sparkle in her eye again. And she is off on her next adventure—a 10-day cruise to the Caribbean. ■



*Bobby Goehringer*

# Annual Harvests Bring Bo

## GARDENS PRODUCE VEGETABLES, FLOWERS, AND ENJOYMENT

■ A simple request for freshly grown tomatoes has blossomed into a plethora of gardens—both vegetable and flower—at the Assisted Living Community of Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, a Diakon Senior Living Community in Lewisburg, Pa.

The vibrant flowers that line the building's entrance and patios and the abundant fresh vegetables found in the garden to the north of the building have been nurtured primarily by the community's "green thumb," Activity Coordinator Shirley Franquet.

But the beautiful marigolds and geraniums and nutritious vegetables didn't pop up overnight. About 10 years ago, a resident who loved to eat fresh tomatoes asked Franquet if she could grow them. Although the 26-year village employee knew little about gardening, she thought, "tomatoes can grow everywhere," so she put in several plants. "I asked the residents a lot of questions," she says. "I learn a lot from them."

Through the years, the small tomato patch has grown into a large garden that raises vegetables such as zucchini, squash, cucumbers, peppers, and parsley. The community's Betty Crocker Club prepares the vegetables for meals and makes specialty dishes such as zucchini bread and casseroles.

"We all eat out of Shirley's garden because it is fresh and good," says Malcolm Leiby, who moved to the assisted living community at Buffalo Valley last year. "I gardened all my life—last fall was my last garden. I can't really garden, but I enjoy watching Shirley's plants grow. We all do—she has the most beautiful plants you've ever seen."

There is a reason behind the beauty. Franquet comes in early in the mornings, stays late after work, and often visits the gardens on her days off to do such tasks as weeding and watering.

"She is a 'silent hero' who does many things for the residents that most do not even realize. The residents receive great enjoyment from what she does," says Lennea Brown, Buffalo Valley executive director.

Franquet dismisses such praise. "I do it for the residents. They love to see the flowers and it is stimulation for them. If they see something pretty outside, they go out and sit and enjoy it," she says. "Some of them even reminisce back to when they had gardens of their own."

To further residents' participation, she offers them the opportunity to work in raised flower boxes. She also captures attention with her "butterfly garden," which she begins indoors by placing caterpillars and milkweed in an aquarium.

"We watch them hatch from the cocoons. When they hatch, we release them. Everyone enjoys this," says Leiby. "I look at her gardens the same way I used to look at mine—for the enjoyment of seeing things grow. All my life, I've enjoyed it, and I appreciate Shirley's hard work." ■



*Shirley Franquet stands beside the flower-lined entrance leading to the Assisted Living Community at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village.*

## RESIDENT ENSURES THE COMMUNITY IS EATING ITS VEGETABLES



*Arlene Roberts loads up her harvest for delivery to Project S.H.A.R.E.*

■ When Arlene Roberts made the last of her weekly drop-offs to a farm stand in a low-income neighborhood of Carlisle, Pa., this summer, her total donation of vegetables for the season was more than 1,000 pounds.

Her initial goal was not to raise more than half-a-ton of vegetables in the small garden she cultivates at Cumberland Crossings, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Carlisle. It just turned out that way.

Her effort began when Project S.H.A.R.E., a non-profit program that offers supplemental food each month to more than 850 families in the Carlisle area, came to speak to Cumberland Crossings residents in 2006. Roberts was so moved by their mission, she offered her time to the group. This summer represented her second year on the project.

*Please turn to Page 11*

# Beautiful Blessings to Others

## GARDEN REAPS UNEXPECTED BOUNTY FOR YOUTHS

■ Cultivating character. That's the aim of the horticulture program at Diakon Wilderness Center in Boiling Springs, Pa.

This growing season, youths branched out and spent more than 100 hours farming a half-acre garden off campus, donating the entire bounty to a local food bank, Project S.H.A.R.E.

"We teach them work ethics—how to work with tools, stay at a task, work as a team, and basic job skills—following directions, respect for each other and the land. It's also character building. They see the start of something as well as the end product. They've accomplished something, a goal realized and they are giving back to the community," says Nina Poe, horticulture director at Diakon Wilderness Center.

Despite complaints about the heat and getting dirty, youths worked hard and, at the season's conclusion, donated more than 2,000 pounds of fresh produce to the bank, including 579 pounds of potatoes. Many of the teens helped Project S.H.A.R.E. pass out their produce on food distribution days to people who are less fortunate.

"As we would gather produce we took it to Project S.H.A.R.E. They enjoyed meeting the recipients of the food because it tied the entire project together," says Poe.

For Jerry, the payoff was more than an edible one. "The most important thing I learned is giving is a lot sweeter than receiving. Breaking my back at the garden and like 'why am I doing this?' Finally on distribution day, I didn't think anyone was going to show up but I looked outside and saw a line that went halfway to the parking lot. I was like 'wow, all these people need this help,' why not break my back doing things," he says.

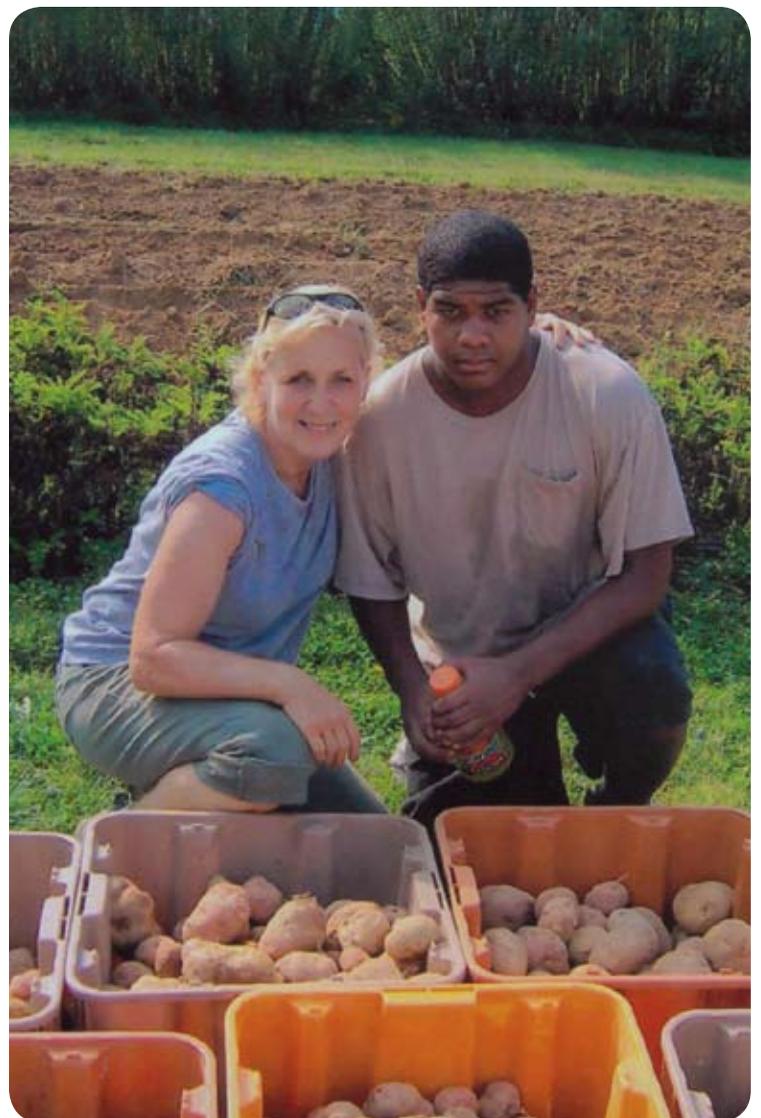
Devon learned a similar lesson—not to judge. "I learned that even though you don't know someone you should still be respectful—you don't judge people by the way they look or how much money they have because they're the same as us," he says.

Nigel, now an aspiring landscaper, learned the value of volunteering. "You don't have to do stuff to get stuff in return," he explained. "Helping out in the garden and taking food to other places, you can do something and not expect something in return. It was worth it."

The half-acre plot is owned by the Lloyd family of Centerville, Pa. Each year, the Lloyds allow a community group to farm the land with the understanding that everything grown must be donated to Project S.H.A.R.E. Youths completed all tasks to cultivate the land including tilling, planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting. They also learned about different crops.

Jerry learned that one vegetable, in particular, was hard to swallow when he mistook a very hot pepper for a sweet one. "I didn't know what it was. I drank a lot of water and all my juice, and my lips were still tingling when we left!" he exclaimed.

The entire experience was new to Chris who had never been to a garden and was surprised to find himself working in one. But the project helped his character blossom. "It felt good to help people—I felt good inside, like a bigger man." ■



*Nina Poe, horticulture director at Diakon Wilderness Center, and Chris, with produce grown in the center's garden.*

## BOUNTIFUL BLESSINGS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE



**Senior Volunteers Mentor Youths** Joe Judge, a Senior Corps RSVP volunteer, works side-by-side in an Allentown, Pa., garden with a young man as part of a project between Senior Corps RSVP and the Lehigh County juvenile probation program. Senior volunteers mentor youths, who take part in the community service project as a means of restitution. Harvested vegetables are donated to the Second Harvest Food Bank.



**Eagle Scouts Build Fence** Jason Eshelman, an Eagle Scout from Troop 115 of the Keystone Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, stands before a fence that he and his fellow troop members erected as part of a community service project. The fence protects the gardens at Cumberland Crossings, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Carlisle, Pa.

## FRIENDSHIP ENDURES A LIFETIME



■ Jean Smee and Winifred Kinley had been best friends since they were in kindergarten.

Whether they were participating in church, school, or Girl Scouts, they were never far apart.

Although time and circumstances eventually made it difficult for them to stay in touch, fate brought them back

together as next-door neighbors at Frey Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Middletown, Pa.

“I was so surprised when they moved two doors down from us,” remembers Kinley.

Once reunited, they enjoyed sharing memories of their life-long friendship. One played on the basketball team, while the other served as team manager.

Kinley was something of a thespian, while Smee excelled at sports. They vacationed together, double-dated, and even stood for each other when they were married.

When they set up homes in Oberlin, Pa., each rearing a son and daughter, the two were never more than a stone’s throw away from each other.

“We shared all our secrets,” remembers Kinley. “She was always my best friend.”

*Friends and staff of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries express condolences on the recent loss of Jean Smee and her husband, Bill. ■■*



Jean Smee, left, and Winifred Kinley later in life.

# SIX NEW HOMES COMING TO OHESSEON MANOR



*As part of efforts to expand a range of accommodations and services at its senior living communities, Diakon plans to complete the initial phase of cottage development at Ohesson Manor, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Lewistown, Pa., by building six new homes. Work on the potential development of new senior living accommodations at several other campuses is under way, including marketing-related focus groups.*

## WE'RE THANKFUL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

Most of the Diakon programs and services depicted in *Dialog* provide benevolent care in a variety of ways. Diakon depends on generous donations from corporations, synods, congregations, and individuals to enable it to serve so many people, especially those with limited financial resources. Because of your gifts, Diakon KidzStuff, one of Diakon's many programs, is able to provide child care and education to dozens of children of economically challenged families in Baltimore each year.

You, too, can make 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 our ministries, please call our Office of Advancement at 1-877-DIAKON-7, option 2, extension 21219.*

*Thank you!*

*A recent field trip gave children attending Diakon KidzStuff in Baltimore the chance to experience a local farm and pumpkin patch.*



## KNITTING GROUP MAKES BLANKETS FOR FELLOW RESIDENTS



Participants in a knitting group at Twining Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Holland, Pa., proudly display a finished lap blanket. Resident volunteers, and a few staff volunteers, meet every Tuesday with a goal of completing more than 70 blankets to be given to residents of Twining's Health Care Center as holiday gifts. Pictured left to right are Betty Ann Liss, Catherine Schaffer, and Helen Cooney.

## PETER KERN RECEIVES DIAKON PRESIDENT'S AWARD



Peter L. Kern of Brodheadsville, Pa., receives the Diakon President's Award at the Celebrate Social Ministry Event for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Kern received the award in recognition of his leadership on Diakon's board of directors and for his community service.

## POCONO CELEBRATES THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

Throughout August, residents of Pocono Lutheran Village, a Diakon Senior Living Community in East Stroudsburg, Pa., celebrated canine companions with a variety of dog-based activities and volunteer efforts.

Local animal groups visited the community with demonstrations that included various wild animals and therapy dogs and a dog-agility demonstration.

To demonstrate their concern for animals, residents reached out to local animal organizations, including the SPCA of Pennsylvania, by filling a doghouse with a variety of items, including toys, blankets, collars, crates, cages, and more.

Pocono Lutheran Village's baking club made homemade dog biscuits and treats while the activities department led a craft to make dog toys for homeless pets. ■



Pocono Lutheran Village resident Lea Katz and her dog, Precious Treasure.



Lorraine Ragonese, left, and Dorothy Reilly, right, make dog biscuits.

## DINING WITH DIAKON EVENT SCHEDULED

On Thursday, March 6, 2008, Diakon will hold its annual Dining with Diakon event. This one-of-a-kind tasting and networking experience features leaders from the central Pennsylvania region who serve as guest chefs. Participants will sample their favorite recipes, bid on silent auction items, and connect with friends and colleagues from around the area. The event will take place at the Hilton Harrisburg, with proceeds benefiting the Diakon Wilderness Center.



## SNOWSTOPPERS PROGRAM ELIMINATES SNOW WORRIES



## 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY DIAKON BENEFACTORS DINNER DIAKON TO PRESENT AN EVENING WITH JOHN TESH

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2008

The public is invited to a dinner celebration in the ballrooms of the Sovereign Center for the Performing Arts in Reading, Pa., after which John Tesh will delight guests with a special performance in the theater. Guests can attend dinner and the show, or just the show. Celebrate, reminiscence, dine, and be entertained all in one spectacular evening. For pricing and more information call 1-877-DIAKON-7, option 2, ext. 50464.



*John Tesh, former co-host of Entertainment Tonight, recording artist, music director, and syndicated radio host, will be the special guest for the 20th Anniversary Diakon Benefactors Dinner.*

Before this past winter, “Mary,” a 75-year-old Berks County, Pa., resident with arthritis, would look outside at a falling snow and worry about how her visiting nurse would get to her front door. With no family in the area, and no money to hire someone to shovel her out, Mary was only one of many older adults in the area with similar concerns.

Diakon SnowStoppers, a volunteer snow-removal program, was developed in response to the needs of seniors and people with disabilities for snow-removal assistance at no cost to them. Particularly important to those receiving in-home services such as meals on wheels or visiting nurses, a clear walkway also ensures uninterrupted mail delivery.

After contacting Diakon SnowStoppers—a service of the Topton-based office of Diakon Volunteer Home Care—Mary was matched with a volunteer who shoveled her sidewalk throughout the winter season. Within 24 hours of a snowfall, Mary’s volunteer would call her to make arrangements to shovel her front sidewalk and clear a path to the door. (Volunteers do not shovel driveways or remove packed ice.)

The individuals volunteering for Diakon SnowStoppers include groups of students who shovel for the neighbors of their college, families volunteering together to teach their children the value of community service, and individuals with flexible schedules. Every effort is made to match volunteers to locations within walking distance, or a short drive, from their homes. ■

### *Community Eating its Vegetables Continued*

“Growing up, we always had a vegetable garden, so I knew what it took to grow the vegetables,” she says. “The ground was available to me; I just had to get the vegetable plants. I just thought this was a wonderful way to help those in need in the community.”

“This venture has been a great success because of the creative initiative of Arlene,” says Ellen Kievit of the Project S.H.A.R.E. Food Bank. “Low-income families in our area now have the opportunity to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, with good nutritional value, that they wouldn’t be able to afford on their own. It is truly a blessing to help the community like this.” ■

# GIVING BACK WITH COMMUNITY FARM DAY



*Michael McMillin befriends a pig in the petting zoo.*

■ Farm Day has been an important part of the community of Hagerstown, Md., for several years. The Village at Robinwood and Ravenwood Lutheran Village, both Diakon Senior Living Communities in Hagerstown, pleased a record-setting crowd of more than 1,500 this September at an event that historically has brought in about 500 people annually.

“Farm Day is designed to simply provide a way for our staff to give back to the community,” says Pete McMillin, manager of marketing and sales at the two communities. “We enjoy seeing the smiles on the children’s faces as they ride the ponies or the barrel train. I overheard one parent say, ‘I haven’t seen her smile like that in a long time.’ This is just one more way that our many hands express the love of our one heart.” ■



*Caroline Harrington beams as she rides a pony.*



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