

DIALOG

INSIDE...
Annual Donor Report



Scott D. Habecker

The President's Dialog

Working together to develop our “new normal”

In what felt like the blink of an eye, 2022 came and went...and we were nearly three full years into a pandemic that had tested our

patience and resilience far longer than we desired. During these challenging times, it is no surprise how frequently I heard someone longing to “get back to normal.”

I do not want to sound critical of anyone seeking *back to normal*—of course, there is comfort in the consistency and familiarity of the past. However, I am convinced that those seeking *back to normal* may be waiting forever. Although it may be an overused phrase at this point, I wonder if we should all encourage each other to think about the future in terms of “the new normal.”

As it relates to the Diakon organization over the past several years, one thing seems clear...the process of developing a *new normal* occurs, at some level, every month or year that goes by. Sure, a pandemic created a *new normal*, but we routinely respond to changing conditions, assess appropriate strategies and implement action steps where appropriate. In the process, we ensure that Diakon maximizes the number of people we can serve with the inherently limited resources we are fortunate to hold.

In 2022, we spent most of the year transitioning our senior living operation into a smaller, more nimble business with less exposure to certain unique and evolving risks of the healthcare system. At the same time, we redeployed available resources to expand our independent living services, specifically the commencement of a large expansion and renovation project at our Luther Crest community in Allentown. We look forward to its completion

and the positive impact it will have on both current and new residents.

During the past 12 months, we also introduced certain technology enhancements and artificial intelligence into our skilled nursing services. By the end of 2022, we had implemented our first fall detection technology system into a nursing center, enhancing patient safety in ways we might have never thought possible. We expect technological advancements will continue to have a meaningful impact on the way we deliver care in the future.

Our child and family services also completed another successful year, highlighted by continued strength in our adoption and foster care programs as well as our response to an escalating need for mental health counseling services. With the growing national need for treatment of mental illness, our Diakon team was able to provide nearly 20% more mental health treatment hours than the prior year, in part because of virtual options now available to aid access to care for those in need.

I am so proud of the many services that we provide, and I commend our team for having such an enormous impact on the communities in which we operate. Yes, our world sometimes changes faster than we might prefer and for many reasons—technological advancements, economic cycles, basic human needs and desires, generational differences, infectious diseases and many other factors. Nevertheless, within those sometimes-uncomfortable changes lies the opportunities that help us ensure a greater and longer-lasting impact on everyone we have the pleasure of serving or will serve in the future.

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Our Mission

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon will demonstrate God's command to love thy neighbor through acts of service.

Diakon: 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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Whether you are reading this as a Diakon team member, volunteer, board member, donor or other service partner, please know that we appreciate your commitment, your generosity and all that you do. Together, we will positively influence thousands of lives each day by continuing to create our *new normal*.

Scott D. Habecker, CPA
President/CEO

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Diane Batchik, Pete Knudsen, Scott Habecker, Ken Mertz, Em Cole, Jennifer Schlegel – not pictured: Maury Bobst, The Rev. Dr. Don Main, Susan Schellenberg



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Nels Hendrickson, Doug Hough, Carol Taylor, Mike Lehman, Larry Delp, Scott Rehr, Jennifer Schlegel, Scott Habecker – not pictured: Jennifer Goldstein, Susan Schellenberg





Personal connection strengthens volunteer's charitable focus

Gleasy Bilger admits she's always had a soft spot for children.

In fact, the retired schoolteacher and her husband, Tim, have made a point of supporting children and youth in their charitable work. However, their focus hasn't always been so clear.

While their children were growing up, the couple did their best to instill in them the importance of giving back to the community.

"We always put in our time with soup kitchens and such, especially around the holidays," Gleasy said. But it was during the 10 years that Tim spent as director of development for Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries that they discovered a connection that made their giving personal. Tim's parents had adopted his brother through Tressler Lutheran Services, which had affiliated with Lutheran Services Northeast in 2000 to create Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries.

"We were surprised that we had a connection with Diakon," Gleasy said. "It was then that our support of adoption and foster care services became very personal for us."

About the same time, they learned that many of their neighbors had adopted or supported adoption services. Those same friends were taking notice as Gleasy regularly donated coats and shoes to foster children in need every Christmas.

"It's a real eye-opener for people and raises awareness in the community of adoption agencies and foster children," she said, adding that she knew

her family could only do so much. "So, last Christmas I decided to make [our efforts to give back] a bigger event and organize something that could benefit more children."

What materialized was a collaborative effort with several local business organizations that kick-started the inaugural "Coats for a Cause" campaign with a goal of collecting 50 new coats. Joining in the endeavor were Anne Marie Supinski, owner of AM Luxe in Bethlehem, as well as Edge Restaurant, Franklin Hills Vineyards and the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce.

"We went all out and decided to kick off the campaign with an exclusive event for clients at AM Luxe

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CRADLES TO CRAYONS

offers lifeline to families in need

Stacks of diapers are piled high in every corner of Fayrouz Azer's office. Although they make it difficult to move around, the executive director of Diakon's Family Reunification and Preservation Services isn't complaining.

The diapers are a lifeline for the program's clients in Bucks County, who are fighting to keep their families together. Having access to free diapers can mean the difference between stretching their budgets and going without.

"The diapers by themselves aren't going to change the situation, but it strengthens our commitment to working with them by reducing some of their financial burdens," Azer admits. "If someone doesn't want to meet with us, having these items opens doors for us and helps us give families concrete help."

The diapers come courtesy of Cradles to Crayons, which provides children from birth through age 12 with essential items they need, free of charge, through service partners like Diakon. In addition to diapers and wipes, they offer clothes, coats, shoes, hygiene kits and school supplies. Cradles to Crayons sources the new and nearly new children's items through grassroots community drives and corporate donations. They've been reaching children in the greater Philadelphia region since 2006.

Many of the families that Azer and her staff work with who benefit from the donations are struggling with more than a lack of clothing or diapers in their fight to keep their families together. In addition to relying on welfare or living paycheck to paycheck, they face mental health issues, addiction and homelessness.

"Offering these things to a young mom who doesn't have any money is something that can help prevent the baby from being taken away," Azer says. "If we can stabilize the family, we're keeping the unit together. It's much better for the children."

In addition to providing everyday essential items, Cradles to Crayons supports four annual seasonal initiatives: Gear Up for Winter, Gear Up for Baby, Spring Greening and Ready for School. As the names imply, each one is focused on providing the items children need to thrive at specific times throughout the year.

In the eight years that Jessica Burgos has worked for Diakon's Child, Family and Community Ministries, the family permanency supervisor has seen the positive effect Cradles to Crayons has had on her clients. Take for instance, the school backpacks that come loaded with basics like crayons, notebooks and markers.

"They're the little things that add up when you're sending five or six kids to school," she says, adding that

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Tabitha's Friends

bring joy and comfort to others

Every second and fourth Friday of the month, a growing number of female residents can be found in the Arts and Crafts room at Luther Crest, sewing, turning and ironing in service to others.

Inspired by Acts 9:36, "Tabitha was always doing good and helping the poor," the group calls itself Tabitha's Friends. Their purpose: to make pillowcases for Ryan's Case for Smiles, a volunteer organization with a goal of boosting the spirits of hospitalized children and helping the healing process.

Group founder and future Luther Crest resident Phyllis Frodsham had been making the pillowcases on her own for years. It was when she had finalized plans to move to the continuing care retirement community that she floated the idea of participating in the service project to her future neighbors.

"When you move to Luther Crest, where they take care of all your maintenance, you have time of your own and want to do something. You want to be purposeful," Frodsham said. "Everyone was interested in doing something serving God."

Making whimsical, kid-friendly pillowcases that put a smile on a child's face seemed like a good fit.

"We're the generation of women who still know how to sew and iron," Frodsham explained. "That's a lot of what this project is."

Before the group meets, Frodsham completes the first of three seams on each pillowcase. Once everyone comes together, they work in assembly-line fashion to sew the remaining seams, turning each pillowcase and ironing it between each step. Once the cases are complete, they must be washed and dried before they are returned for a final ironing and packaged for delivery.

"When Cindy Kerr started [Ryan's Case for Smiles] in Philadelphia, the whole point was to help children in crisis," she said. "I don't know that she had any idea how much fun the volunteers would have when they come together to make these."

Resident Deanna Robinson welcomed the opportunity to join the group as a way to connect with her neighbors.

"You learn more about people when you are ironing and you talk," she said. "It's a way for us to bond and do something for someone else."

Members of Tabitha's Friends want companionship, friendship and purpose at this point in their lives, according to Frodsham.

"This mission gives us all of that," she said. "The beautiful thing is it fits Diakon's mission as well. It's a win-win for everybody."

Especially for the children on the receiving end. For one parent, that made all the difference.



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR Director of Advancement



Stacy Klann

Hello, and thank you to all of our donors, volunteers and staff members who have contributed their time, talent and treasure to Diakon during 2022. My name is Stacy Klann, and I am the new director of advancement here at Diakon. My role is to identify opportunities to raise money for unfunded needs provided by the programs and services offered through Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries and Diakon Child, Family & Community Ministries.

Since joining the organization in January 2023, I am learning there are many amazing colleagues across Diakon doing incredibly inspiring work! I am humbled to have the honor of supporting our staff and programs to raise funds so we can continue the great strides we are making to improve the lives of children, youth and seniors in our communities.

As we work to create a more robust and responsive fundraising program to support our organization's needs, I look forward to getting to meet more of you, our loyal donors, and learning more about why you choose to support Diakon's programs and services and sharing those stories with other potential donors.

Personal Connection Continued from p. 3

on Nov. 29, which was Giving Tuesday," Gleasy said. "The Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce publicized it to members, Edge Restaurant provided food and Franklin Hills Vineyards provided wine. It was great how the community came together to support us."

In the weeks that followed, enthusiasm for the fundraiser grew as the group shared an ongoing tally of their donations and worked toward their goal.

"People would stop by the shop and ask how they could help. We'd take pictures every day of the donations," Gleasy remembered. "In the end we collected 57 coats, as well as nearly \$300 in gift cards and cash donations. It worked because it was a fun community thing to do."

Lifted by their success, Gleasy is determined to get an earlier start this year and increase her efforts to support Diakon's Adoption and Foster Care program.

"We just know that if we want to give, this is our place," she said. "We know it will be put to a good cause, something close to our hearts."

Thank you to **Konhaus Marketing**, **Dreamworx Roofing** and **West Shire Decks** for facilitating a holiday gift drive that resulted in more than 100 toys and over \$5,200 in donations for our Diakon Adoption & Foster Care program.



Second Chance Fund helps tip the scale in youth's favor

A second chance. It's something that everyone aspires to at some point in life.

For Kaleb Darr, who found himself under court supervision following some poor choices, it was something he thought was impossible.

"I don't know everybody's story, but most of the time when kids are in my situation, there aren't too many people out there ready to help them," he said.

But Darr's opinion started to change after he met Rob Kivlan and enrolled in Diakon's Bridge Program, a community-based support and mentorship program. The program's focus on accountability is supplemented by in-home or at-school visits, ensuring close monitoring of youths' activities and the opportunity to provide guidance as needed.

Kivlan, who serves as its program manager, provided the male role model that had been missing from Darr's life.

"[Participating in the program] helped me figure out what I want to do in life, where I want to go beyond high school," he said. "It helped me to accomplish my goals."

But before he could face those goals head on, Darr had to overcome the fact that a suspended license meant he was

without reliable transportation to and from work and school. It was then that he learned about Diakon's Second Chance Fund—a fund-matching program that helps young people overcome obstacles that would otherwise delay their positive growth—and applied for help to purchase an electric bike.

"Kaleb was fortunate. [Diakon's Second Chance Fund] partnered with Boiling Springs Bubbler Foundation and split the cost of the e-bike," Kivlan explained. "It was good community support."

That support is also what landed him a spot with Launch Pad Independent Living, which helps youth transition into successful adulthood. Not only does Darr have a place to live, but he's learning vocational skills that are helping to guide his career aspirations.

"It started out when I put together a room for a new roommate. After that we redid the whole kitchen. We're redoing the bathroom. We put up a ceiling," he said. "It's not one specific thing, just carpentry, electrical work, plumbing. This is helping me get a feel for exactly what I want to do after high school. I want to go to trade school."

The combined efforts of Darr's school social worker, the Bridge Program, Second Chance Fund and Launch Pad have removed barriers that were holding him back and put him on track to succeed, according to Kivlan.

"He works the overnight shift in a FedEx warehouse. During the day, he juggles all these commitments—meetings, counseling, renovations around the house and finishing schoolwork," he said. "It's amazing, but not surprising. Once you surround someone with good, supportive people, then help them find stable housing, stable employment and transportation, they will blossom. And, like Kaleb, they will become a leader in the community. I truly feel he is unstoppable now."





Diakon Celebrates Our Many Hands. One Heart. Society Members

We invite you to be part of the Many Hands One Heart Society—exceptional people who share their compassion and generosity with those in need. The following list represents gifts made during 2022. Thank you for your support!

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Benevolent Care

Through a shared commitment to serve those with limited resources, Diakon maintains a more-than-150-year tradition of care for people of all ages, especially those with limited financial resources. In 2022, Diakon provided nearly \$1.23 million monthly in uncompensated care. Those funds underwrote services in the following ways:

Diakon Senior Living Services*	\$ 13,818,987
Diakon Child, Family & Community Ministries	\$ 877,758
Total	\$ 14,696,745

*Consists of actual costs to operate in excess of Medical Assistance reimbursement for skilled nursing care and benevolent care provided to those primarily in personal care who have exhausted their financial resources but for whom Diakon continues to care.

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Over \$614,000 in total grants received.

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Two Rivers Health and Wellness Foundation
United Way of The Greater Lehigh Valley

Cradles to Crayons Continued from p. 4

diapers and wipes continue to be the biggest need. "Diapers are expensive, and you go through a lot. Now they include bigger sizes, which are helpful for our older kids."

While thankful that they have the diapers, school supplies and clothing to use as a "greeting card" to discuss their family reunification and preservation services, Burgos and her coworkers work hard to ensure that their clients' need for these items will be short-lived.

"Children and Youth puts Diakon in place as a means of support because they understand families need a little help to get back on their feet," she explains. "We're hopeful by the time we're closing their case, that they have the support or budget they need to buy the diapers themselves."

Tabitha's Friends Continued from p. 5

"This group is so special. My own daughter was admitted to the hospital about a month ago and received one of those pillowcases. It just so happened that the pillowcase matched her pajama pants that she was wearing," the parent revealed in a Facebook comment. "It was the first time she had smiled in two days. A pillowcase might not seem like much, but to a kid who is scared and sick, it can bring them joy and comfort."

With awareness of their mission building, Frodsham says increased financial donations are key to their ability to not just make the colorful pillowcases which cost up to \$10 each to create, but also to diversify their projects over time.

"Everything is falling into place. Donations are coming in. The people are coming. God is really pleased," she said, adding that they will eventually look for other ways to serve, such as mending for residents who can't do it themselves. "It will be fun. People will be helping people. We'll just let God lead us."



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