

Summer 2021 A publication of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries and Diakon Child, Family

& Community Ministries

The President's DIALOG Leadership in Challenging Times

TAKING THE LEAD OF ANY LARGE ORGANIZATION

can be a daunting task. Taking the lead during a pandemic can be simply anxiety-inducing.

Fortunately, some of the natural anxiety I have felt as the new CEO of Diakon has been mitigated by having more than a decade of experience inside the organization, most recently as Diakon's chief operating and financial officer.

However, a number of other factors made the CEO transition at the beginning of this year a bit easier:

- The unwavering dedication of all of our staff members, many of whom were on the front lines of the pandemic from the very beginning.
- The support and understanding of our residents, patients and clients, as well as their family members.
- Technology solutions that have allowed us to continue services through virtual means to those in need and that have allowed our teams to facilitate connections between those we serve and their family members when face-to-face visitation was not possible.
- The support of our Boards of Directors and many service partners who helped to enable and broaden our service outreach.
- The commitment of our donors and volunteers who, through their monetary and non-monetary contributions, helped ensure services continued to those in need during this difficult time.

Creativity in Community

This issue of Dialog features several stories that detail life during the pandemic. It also includes our annual report of the significant support that our many partners provide to our organization.



Scott D. Habecker

The pandemic has persisted for longer than we all hoped, and it creates uncertainties that we would gladly live without. However, we remain steadfast to protecting all who we serve as

well as our team members while navigating the "new normal", expanding services and managing our resources in a prudent manner. Two key developments-a groundbreaking and an expansion project-are noted elsewhere in Dialog.

To all who played a role in supporting Diakon during this unprecedented time, thank you!

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Scott D. Habecker, CPA President/CEO

LOCKDOWN. THE WORD ITSELF INVITES

visions of a changed world.

America and the rest of the world endured extensive lockdowns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Those affected included residents of senior living communities across the country, including those operated by Diakon Senior Living Services.

But residents and the dedicated staff members at those communities strove to remain as active as possible, volunteering and creating other activities-all with the goal of creating the key word in their name: Community.



Our Mission

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon will demonstrate God's command to love the 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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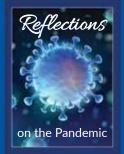


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The Rev. Dr. Colleen Kristula,



chaplain at a Diakon senior living community, wrote a series of reflections on the pandemic. Brief excerpts are presented throughout Dialog to help depict the impact of COVID-19 on "front-line" organizations.



On March 12, 2020, everything changed. That was the day we closed our doors to visitors to protect our residents ... In an instant, most of the tasks of the chaplain fell away. Before Covid, in any given week, I would lead four worship services, three Bible studies, and visit new residents for spiritual assessment, in addition to multiple

interdisciplinary meetings. Now, only the meeting part of my work remained. In the blink of an eye, the role of the chaplain became "connecting" ... and so, the first thing I was thankful for are the people who created Zoom and FaceTime and Skype, and other such technologies ... These amazing resources allowed me to connect residents and their families to be face-to-face if not physically present, to connect with words and smiles and tears and blown kisses.





broke ground for an additional cluster of 10 senior living homes on its campus. The new cottage-homes will incorporate between 1,400 and nearly 1,900 square feet of living space and will feature a master bedroom suite with walk-in closet, two or three additional bedrooms, an open living/dining area, kitchen, sunroom, patio and two-car garage. They include 24-hour call systems and priority access to care within the community's personal care and rehab/nursing care centers. The senior living community currently has more than 100 independent-living homes on its campus. Breaking ground are, from left to right, Shari VanderGast, Diakon chief operating & administrative officer; Kathy Aberman, among first signed residents for the expansion; Melissa Stanton, manager of marketing & sales for Cumberland Crossings; Henriette Evans, president of the Cumberland Crossings IL Residents Association; Scott Habecker, Diakon president/CEO; and Robert Musser, vice president for operations, Diakon Senior Living Services.

Diakon Expanding, East and West



LUTHER CREST, A DIAKON SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY IN ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA IS TAKING THE

first steps toward expansion. Dependent on a successful pre-sale campaign, Luther Crest will be adding 72 independent-living accommodations in a new building called Greenwood in celebration of the on-campus nationally accredited arboretum. The building will feature both one- and twobedroom apartments, all with dens and many other amenities. Square footage ranges from 920 to nearly 1,900 for corner units.

Despite the Challenges...

Luther Crest Residents Express Gratitude

WALTER AND BARBARA LIEBERMAN, INDEPENDENT LIVING RESIDENTS AT LUTHER CREST, WERE SO

uplifted by the community's efforts to bring cheer at Christmastime last year that they penned a letter to the editor of The Morning Call to say so.

The couple said "cheers" to the activities group at Luther Crest "for bringing smiles to our faces during a Christmas season of being apart from our families." They also said Luther Crest's in-house TV station brought them many happy hours.

"We were very happy with what they were doing here and wrote the letter," Barbara says. "Christmastime [could be] lonely, especially for people who live alone," she adds, noting that people couldn't see their family or go to church.

Barbara, 86, and Walter, 87, have two daughters in the area, but had to communicate by phone during the lockdown.

Luther Crest and its activities committee did all it could to minimize isolation. Brandon Giuttari, activities coordinator, opted to work on Christmas and steered activities such as Christmas bingo and a Christmas scavenger hunt, a physically distanced gathering for hot chocolate and cookies and a screening of an orchestral concert and television show on the in-house station.

Giuttari works in tandem throughout the year with independent living resident Grace Olson, chair of the activities committee, to chart activities. "We talk about what they'd like to see on the calendar and what they don't want to see on the calendar anymore," he says.

Michelle Gaugler, executive director, characterizes the activities committee's involvement as "robust." In addition to planning activities, the committee also helped to work out details on how to broadcast on the in-house station and set up Zoom events.

"They really did whatever they could to provide a range of different activities. The internal TV channel was a real benefit to the campus during this time," she says.

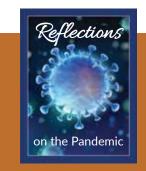
COVID-19 affected everyone's life, Gaugler adds, and "people needed something to keep going. They could have a feeling of community even through the TV, knowing people down the hall were watching the same thing. Community life adapted, and the activities committee kept the spirit going!"



Luther Crest independent living resident Barbara Lieberman and Brandon Giuttari, activities coordinator, watch Tammy Strunk, wellness coordinator, lead an exercise class earlier this year on Luther Crest's in-house TV station.



Luther Crest independent living residents in motion during a March 8 exercise class in Crest Hall.



COVID-19 spurred incredible inventiveness, especially early-on ... While our administration worked tirelessly to maintain a constant supply of protective equipment for our staff, independent living residents got to work immediately making cloth masks that were distributed to residents. Our maintenance staff created face shields. Our activities staff imagined new ways to do activities with residents as they stayed in their rooms

We Stayed Connected

Colorful Masks Brighten Lives

MASK-MAKING WAS A CONSTANT DURING THE

early stage of the pandemic and residents of Diakon Senior Living communities quickly volunteered.

One of those residents was Mary Ann Owens who lives at The Lutheran Home at Topton.

She was part of a group that had met in Kutztown to make pillowcases for a national program; the Lehigh Valley chapter provides 500 pillowcases a month to Lehigh Valley Hospital, Lancaster Hospital and Reading Hospital.

At Topton, she had joined the "Stitcher" group, residents who knit or crochet for charity; she launched a group to make pillowcases to add to the total made in Kutztown.

"When the pandemic hit, we could no longer gather in large groups or mix residents from the cottages and apartments in one project. But there was an immediate need for cloth masks," she says. The project took off from there, with many residents joining in.

During the next two months, nearly 500 masks were produced. As the need for cloth masks waned, residents began to sew pillowcases again, along with a supplemental effort to create fabric eyeglass cases for people entering the hospital.

Their overall efforts resulted in a letter sent to the pillowcase-project coordinator affirming the impact of their work:

"In December, we received the worst news of our life for our little girl" who was in the hospital and then transferred to undergo three surgeries in one week. "We found it very sweet that this Peppa Pig pillowcase went



A sampling of the cheerful face masks and pillowcases made by Mary Ann Owens, resident and volunteer at The Lutheran Home at Topton.

with her all the way ... and was with her for a month—it was a constant and familiar for her.

"It is very kind what you do and it does not go unnoticed—it makes a difference and it is appreciated." In fact, a relative uses the pillow cases to sew "into beautiful skirts that sometimes my daughter will wear." In addition, some are sent to other countries as part of an international project. "Please know that your gift is given in many waves across the seas. God bless you and thank you so much for your kindness."

Veteran Celebrates 100th Birthday at Frey Village

"THERE'S NO SECRET TO LIFE-YOU JUST LIVE IT," SAYS QUENTIN SMITH, WHO CELEBRATED HIS 100TH

birthday during the COVID-19 pandemic.

And live it he has.

The resident of personal care at Frey Village served in the U.S. Air Corps during World War II and is a WWII buff. Moreover, he is a long-time follower of the Philadelphia Phillies, Penn State football and Big Band music.

The celebration earlier this year followed all safety protocols and included an outdoor presentation by the American Legion and Quilts of Honor, during which he received a certificate and a quilt. In addition, the Phillies gave him a jersey, towel and baseball cards.

Smith moved to the Middletown, Pennsylvania, senior living community in 2016 after his wife, Josephine, passed away. The West Fairview native lived much of his life in Hummelstown, having worked for the post office for 35 years. He has three children, three grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

"We were honored to celebrate Quentin's 100th birthday," says Shauna Threnhauser of the village staff. "He is quite the gentleman and well-loved around the village."



The Secret of Living to 100

WANT TO KNOW THE SECRET OF LIVING TO THE century mark?

Well, says Ernestine "Teeny" McCoy, an independent living resident at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, Lewisburg, there is no real secret. Rather, she says, just look to the well-known adage, "The Lord willing and the creek don't rise!"

The resident celebrated her 100th birthday earlier this year, near the apparent end of the worst aspects of the pandemic, with balloons and a banner festooning her home.

Katherine Asche, manager of marketing and sales, says administration invited other independent living residents and staff members to visit the cul-de-sac on which Teeny lives—wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing—to drop off cards, sing and pick up an individually packaged cupcake in honor of her birthday.

While senior living communities often have residents reach 100 or more, it's not as common to see the centenarian in independent living.

She says her typical day includes knitting—"I like to knit dishcloths, usually one per week"—walking to the mailbox and watching sports on TV. Her favorite team is the Philadelphia Phillies.

Her advice for a young person is simple: "Be happy." In fact, she says that if she could travel back to any age, it would be 18. "I was having a happy time!" Teeny answers.

Teeny terms the telephone and the washing machine the most important inventions of her lifetime. And, overall, she is quick to adapt to change.

Her son, David, had told her she needed a cell phone and a coffee maker, but she didn't want them. Now, she says, she doesn't know how she'd live without them.

The Lewisburg native was married to her husband, Robert, from

1945 until his passing in 2013. She graduated from Lewisburg High School in 1939 and became a junior chemical analyst at the TNT plant in Allenwood during World War II before being transferred to Naugatuck, Connecticut, until the end of the war. Following their



Ernestine "Teeny" McCoy

marriage, she and Bob

moved to Terre Haute, Indiana, and then to Petersburg, Virginia, because of his work. They returned to Lewisburg permanently in 1950 and she worked as co-proprietor of a locksmith business.

While she says her husband did not want to travel overseas after the war because he had seen "too much sadness," the couple spent three to four weeks driving cross-country and visiting family. They traveled to California and went on to Hawaii, a favorite memory.

Teeny's fighting spirit and positive attitude have brought her through many challenges including cancer, the loss of her husband and, most recently, a bout with the COVID-19 virus but she remains indomitable and is looking forward to a great year.

Having lived at Buffalo Valley since 2007, she enjoys visits with her three great-grandchildren, Paul, Joy and Lucas—who are at least part of the recipe for aging successfully:

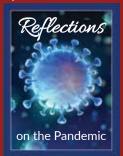
"They keep me young at heart!"

Reflections on the Pandemic

I am thankful for the community that surrounds us ... and the ways they have supported us through this long, oh-so-long journey. From the hand-made signs

thanking our staff to the "happy cards" and musicians standing in cornfields to sing and play ... the Pop-Up Parade that with the help of area churches, organizations and school district brought more than 60 cars, fire trucks and emergency vehicles, decorated, with honking and hooting and smiles to cheer our residents. Too many kindnesses to name, but so appreciated. I am thankful for Diakon's front-line heroes who have shown up day after day, caring for our residents with every ounce of energy they could muster ... People call them heroes, but we don't really comprehend what that means. For our staff, this "job" is not just a job, it is a vocation, a ministry. Residents are not just patients, they are part of our

extended family. We care for them with our hands and our hearts, sometimes for many years. When a resident becomes ill, our hearts hurt.



Diakon Adoption & Foster Care Earns Two Awards

THE YEAR 2020 WILL NOT BE REMEMBERED

fondly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the way it turned many aspects of life upside-down.

But there have been points of light in this tumultuous year, including two awards earned by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.

"Diakon Adoption & Foster Care continued to have a great year despite the pandemic and all the flexibility that required," says Joyce Riche, M.A., director of permanency services for Eastern Pennsylvania. "We were fortunate to be recognized for our hard work with two very special awards."

Riche says Pennsylvania's annual Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network (SWAN) statewide meeting was to be held in June, but became a virtual meeting. Awards are given at this event.

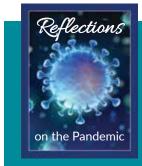
"In 2020, Patricia Menow, supervisor of the Topton office's foster care program, and Erin Oshansky, permanency case

The SWAN Permanency Teamwork Award is presented to a team that exemplifies a collaborative effort that promotes permanency for children with special needs.

"A second, national award was presented to one of our Diakon programs, again at a virtual event, in November 2020," Riche says. The Administration for Children and Families, part of the federal Department of Health and Human Services, recognized Pennsylvania's Older Child Matching Initiative (OCMI) with a 2020 Adoption Excellence Award. OCMI is a program of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' SWAN.

Riche says DHS first approved OCMI in 2008 and awarded the contract to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care with partners from Bethanna, Project STAR at The Children's Institute and Family Pathways, which continue to be partners.





The most amazing connection is the way in which God leads our journeys through paths and learnings that only later become important or needed in the ever-changing work we are called to do. I watched as staff here and communities outside chose to respond in myriad ways using what they had but also knowing how to connect and serve in new ways and in a new time. What the future will hold is still unknown, but hasn't it always been so? What we can count on is that we always remain connected to one another and to God—that is God's purpose, and promise to us.



PARTNER · INVEST · SUPPORT

Diakon Celebrates our 1868 Legacy Society Members

Diakon's 1868 Legacy Society recognizes our friends whose generous gifts support Diakon's many programs and senior living communities through the creation of planned gifts during their lifetime or through their estate.

The Legacy Society was formed as a lasting thank-you to all of those who have contributed to Diakon or who have made plans to do so in the future.

Membership in the Legacy Society is in perpetuity and is available to individuals who have provided for Diakon by:

- including Diakon in a charitable estate plan or will
- making a life-income gift with Diakon at least a 51% beneficiary
- establishing a charitable trust benefiting Diakon
- providing a gift to Diakon through a retirement plan
- naming Diakon as a beneficiary or owner of a life insurance policy.

This published list includes all active Legacy Society members. A complete list of all Legacy Society members, who number more than 900, is available on the Diakon website.

Diakon is most grateful and appreciative for these generous benefactors.

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*Denotes Deceased Member IMO-in memory of

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The Diakon Lutheran Fund Board of Directors oversees Diakon's investment portfolio, including endowment funds, a significant portion of which generates income specifically to support services for children, youths, families and older adults.

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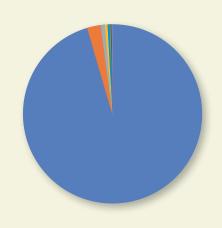
Every year Diakon's need for benevolentcare funding increases. We appreciate your generosity in helping us to bridge this gap. The current pandemic has only exaggerated this situation and we need and value your support. Your gifts help us to serve our most vulnerable children, families and older adults. Thank you and God bless.

Benevolent Care

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 2020, Diakon provided nearly \$1.7 million monthly in uncompensated care. Those funds underwrote services in the following ways:

Diakon Senior Living Services*	\$ 18,494,161
Diakon Youth Services	\$ 684,493
Diakon Adoption and Foster Care	\$ 307,749
Diakon Family Life Services	\$ 296,549
Diakon Adult Day Services	\$ 194,061
Diakon Disaster Response	\$ 105,706
Diakon Family Reunification & Preservation	\$ 73,368
Girls on the Run – Lehigh Valley	\$ 73,090
Diakon Youth Scholarships	\$ 56,898
Total	\$ 20,286,075



*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 (assisted living in Maryland) who have exhausted their financial resources but for whom Diakon continues to care.

Diakon Celebrates our Many Hands. One Heart. Society Members

We invite you to be part of the Many Hands One Heart Societyexceptional people who share their compassion and generosity with those in need. The following list represents gifts made during 2020. Thank you for your support!

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The Rev. Paul L. Buehrle, D.D.

The late Rev. Dr. Paul Buehrle served as president of The Lutheran Home at Topton from 1975 to 1995. A native of Bucks County and graduate of Muhlenberg College and the former Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, he served as a parish pastor before being named executive director of the Wilmington Senior Center in Wilmington, Delaware, the role he held before his appointment at Topton.

He was responsible for overseeing significant change at the institution whose history is now continued by Diakon. Because of changes in state regulations, children and youth had to be relocated from the children's home into community settings, a challenge he successfully completed at the same time he directed a significant expansion of services and accommodations for older persons in several locations, along with a range of community-based programs for children, youth and families. Among these services were foster care, adoption and counseling programs that continue within Diakon today.

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*Denotes Deceased Member

Mr. and Mrs. James H. Fulton

Runner's Charitable Giving Creates Positive Ripple

WHEN KAREN HENDRICKS DECIDED TO RUN 50

races to benefit 50 causes while she was 50, she had no idea that her charitable giving would generate a positive "ripple" long after her adventure ended.

"I wanted to put purpose and gratitude into my miles by helping others," she says of her motivation, noting that her first race was the September 2019 Diakon Outdoor Adventure Challenge 5k. Held at the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania, that run had 127 participants who raised more than \$41,000; the 2020 event was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There were countless ripple effects throughout the year, as friends joined me for races, read my race recaps and made additional donations to many of my designated charities, all of which was humbling and oh so rewarding."

At times her resolve was shaken, including when more than a dozen spring 2020 races for which she had signed up were canceled

or postponed because of the pandemic. But she continued on, resolute in the knowledge that she needed running in her life more than ever before.

"And so, running became a way for me to process the events of the past year," she wrote of her year-long adventure in TheBurg, a Harrisburg-based magazine.

"Through it all, I felt grateful to be alive, grateful to have the ability to run, grateful to be outside—often with my husband nearby on his bike—grateful for friends and family who donated to many of my causes."

One of those friends read Hendricks' story and was motivated by her experience to donate \$50 to every one of the 50 causes her running benefited, including Diakon.

"This generous dear man provided me with checks, and I am mailing them out with this letter of explanation—and, hopefully, inspiration," Hendricks wrote in the letter accompanying her friend's gift.

"There are indeed good people in the world who care deeply about worthwhile causes, such as yours ... making a positive difference in the world."



Adopted Youth Gives Back in Many Ways to Help Other Waiting Children

THEIR CAR WAS FILLED WITH YARD

signs the first weekend in February 2021 as the family drove through various neighborhoods, "spreading love."

Middle-schooler Cayden Roth was holding a fundraiser for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care in honor of the tenth anniversary of his adoption. He had designed yard signs and was placing them in yards for \$20 each. The boy used his own money to purchase an initial order of signs, hoping to double his investment to raise \$500. Within only a half an hour of his mother Lori's Facebook post, the goal was reached.

As of the second week in February, he had raised \$1,550! "I really hoped to show Cayden that by using your own money and putting in some work to come up with a fundraiser, you have the opportunity to contribute much more to an organization than if you just make your own donation directly. This has been such a wonderful learning experience," says his mother.

"He was quite young when we raised money for the playroom in Old Main but now it all makes more sense to him," she adds. For that fundraiser in 2018, Cayden's efforts included bake sales, a restaurant event and direct appeals. He had hoped to raise \$5,000 within three years, but he raised the whole thing in one year."

Thanks to the generosity of others, he had received clothing, shoes and even some toys to help him get started in his new home many years ago. As he grew, his foster and then adoptive parents celebrated his "gotcha" day each December with a shopping trip to recreate the generous donations given to Cayden when he came into care—clothes, toys and essential items for a toddler boy. He accompanies them every



Cayden Roth, 12, with one of his posters in front of the Lutheran Home at Topton.

year to the Diakon Adoption & Foster Care office in Topton to donate the same type of items for the next child who may need them.

The example instilled in Cayden a sense of appreciation not only for his family and the home they have provided for him, but also for the needs of other children like him. When Diakon renovated Old Main on the campus of The Lutheran Home at Topton to establish the Helen N. Palmer Center for Permanency, Cayden took on the challenge of raising funds to sponsor a children's play room in the center. His parents suggested he help sponsor a chair or some toys and books, but Cayden was determined to raise the \$5,000 necessary to sponsor the entire playroom. Having lived through the experience himself, he knew how important it was to make what he believed to be the most important part of the new center as comfortable and child-friendly as possible.

And today's 12-year-old continues to give back to the program that helped him find his "forever family."

"I wanted to do this sign fundraiser because it's my tenth adoption anniversary this year and I wanted to do something big to help other kids in foster care," says Cayden. "I wanted to do something that would show people they have someone who cares about them during quarantine. It was really hard to find something to do until my mom had a very good idea. She remembered how excited I was when someone surprised me with a sign for my fifth-grade graduation. We decided to sell signs like that and next, Diakon came and asked about it and we ended up selling a lot of signs. I was so happy! I am so glad this worked out."

2020 DONOR REPORT

Servant's Heart Award

DIAKON RECOGNIZES SPECIFIC DONORS EACH YEAR

with its Servant's Heart Award.

The proclamation recognizes each person for his or her "servant's heart," for "your steadfast and gracious support toward helping others in need. Your continued sacrifice and service embody and stand as an example to others."

Recipients are acknowledged for their "benevolent and abundant continued offerings of time, talent and treasures ... to benefit countless others ... you have touched the lives of so many and we are grateful for your passion, advocacy and compassion."



Virginia Miles and Sarah Fershee



SERVANT'S HEART AWARD

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA DONOR RECOGNITION Outstanding Volunteer – Virginia Miles and Sarah Fershee Outstanding Donor – Marion Kayhart

Outstanding Ministry Partner – East Penn Manufacturing Co.

CAPITAL REGION DONOR RECOGNITION

Outstanding Volunteer - Mark Rice Outstanding Donor - Em and Wanda Cole Outstanding Ministry Partner - McConkey Insurance & Benefits



Em Cole and his wife Wanda



Marion Kayhart



Chris Pruitt, President/CEO, and Dan Breidegam, Chairman, East Penn Manufacturing.

McConkey Insurance and Benefits has supported Diakon for more than 20 years through donations and event sponsorship.



Steven Buterbaugh, President; Aimee Gaspari, Commercial Lines Client Service Agent; John Olkowski, Vice President; Gail Macharsky, Business Insurance Executive; Edward Tobin, Director of Claims.



Gail Macharsky, Business Insurance Executive; John Olkowski, Vice President; Michael Shaull, Sr. Consultant-Benefits.



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