

CONNECTION

Q2 2026

A New Year Message from Our Executive Director

Spring is a time of renewal—longer days, warmer weather, and new opportunities to connect. While winter encourages reflection, spring invites us to move forward with energy, hope, and curiosity.

Recently, our Senior Center members celebrated Hoodie Hoo Day, a lighthearted tradition chasing away winter and welcoming brighter days, a perfect reflection of the warmth and connection our programs bring to older adults every day.

Spring is the perfect season to get involved. From friendly competition at our spelling bee, laughter at the annual Carnival, walks and exercise classes, travel adventures, or volunteering to lend a helping hand, there are countless ways to stay active, engaged, and connected.

For those turning 65, our New to Medicare Information Sessions help navigate options and build confidence in planning for the future.

We are grateful for the community we share and the ways we can grow, learn, volunteer, and support one another. Thank you for being part of it, we look forward to a vibrant and meaningful spring together!

Susan Long, Executive Director, Diakon Community Services



*“If we had no winter, the spring
would not be so pleasant.”*

– Anne Bradstreet

What a winter!

Mahanoy City Senior Community Center members are enjoying time together before the next winter storm. (picture taken January 2026).

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Diakon Community Services Discovers TV Stars!

The Meals on Wheels program was fortunate to have the help of the Mahanoy City Senior Center Volunteer Team to participate in a recruiting commercial with the Sam Lesante productions "All Around Town".

Big shout out to Dave Bowen for being our spokesperson for the Meals on Wheels delivering volunteer. We were also pleased to have many of our meal packing volunteers make their television debut. Many thanks to John Herring, Elaine Trusky, Elaine Hydock, Julia Boxer, Linda Truskowsky and Victoria Myre for showing Schuylkill County as to what goes on behind the scenes of the Meals on Wheels program.

We also thank our leadership team at the center, Kim Woodford and Lizzie Russell Chelak for leading the charge. Job well done! It definitely shows that it takes a village to make this program work. We at Diakon Community Services could not be more proud and honored to have the dedicated Volunteer Team that we have. Thank you for all that you do. Please share the link below for the commercial.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaT7XVgNwQ>



Spring Into Service with Meals on Wheels!

Did you know that any age can adopt a Meals on Wheels route?

Whether you're a retiree, working adult, student, or family looking to give back together, you can help deliver meals and smiles to neighbors right here in our community.

- Routes take about 60-90 minutes
- Flexible commitment
- Make a real difference



Spring is a season of new beginnings... adopt a route and be someone's reason to smile. Call Kathi at 570-624-3013 to get started.

diakon.org/MOW



This program is funded, in part, under a contract with the State Agency on Aging for Schuylkill County. Diakon Community Services manages the delivery of Meals on Wheels under a contract with the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services, with funding from the State Department of Aging.

Meals on Wheels of Schuylkill County



Meals on Wheels of Schuylkill County has served 14,624 frozen meals to 463 older adults so far in 2026 as of 2/28/2026. The weekly menu is created by a dietitian to meet the Pennsylvania Department of Aging, Aging Program Directive of 1/3 of the daily recommended nutritional allowance for seniors. In addition to the frozen meals, we have been delivering extra frozen, Emergency Meals, since November 2025 and have delivered 3,914 meals to be used in the event of a meal delivery cancellation.

There will not be meal delivery on Friday, April 3 due to Good Friday and Monday, May 25 due to Memorial Day.

If you would like In Home Meals for yourself or someone else age sixty or older and a Schuylkill County resident, please call the Schuylkill County

Office of Senior Services (OSS) at 800-832-3313 and ask for Information and Referral. If approved by OSS, Diakon Community Services/Meals on Wheels of Schuylkill County will then manage meal delivery. Meals are delivered Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between the hours of 10 AM and 1 PM.

Operation Reach Out (ORO), our friendly phone call or telephone reassurance program, is available to all Meals on Wheels participants. A volunteer or staff member calls participants on Tuesdays and Thursdays to check on their wellbeing and overall meal delivery experience. So far in 2026, 2,369 calls have been made. Calls are also made in the event of a meal delivery cancellation. A participant of ORO will ideally receive up to five contacts in a week from Diakon Community Services.



Serving Our Seniors



Meals on Wheels America Champions

The Meals on Wheels America Champions Week was March 23-March 27, which is a special week dedicated to raising awareness about the vital role Meals on Wheels plays in supporting seniors throughout our communities.

Champions Week marks the anniversary of the establishment of the Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program on March 22, 1972, which laid the foundation for the expansion of the Meals on Wheels network that now collectively serves more than 2 million seniors each year.

During this annual celebration, local dignitaries are invited to join our dedicated volunteers on meal deliveries, giving them the opportunity to see firsthand the meaningful impact this service has on the lives of older adults.

This year we were delighted and grateful to have Bob Cook, Shenandoah Mayor, Sharyn Yachenchick, County Controller, Teresa Gaffney, County Register of Wills and Sheri Hammer, District Director for Representative Tim Twardzik join us for the meal delivery. The dignitaries accompanied some of our wonderful Meals on Wheels volunteers who acted as ambassadors for the Meals on Wheels program. Their participation helped shine a light on the importance of Meals on Wheels and the difference it makes every single day. A big “thank you” goes out to our dignitaries and ambassadors. We look forward to having you join us next year for Meals on Wheels Champions Week.



Mayor Bob Cook, Shenandoah Mayor, accompanied volunteer Tanya Meriondale.



Sharyn Yachenchick, Schuylkill County Controller, accompanied volunteer Don Schwartz.



Teresa Gaffney, Register of Wills for Schuylkill County, accompanied volunteer Joe Costanzo.



Sheri Hammer, District Director for Rep. Tim Twardzik, accompanied volunteer David Bowen.

LIVING & LEARNING Drop-In Fitness Class Schedule

Zumba Gold: Mondays & Thursdays No Class 5/25
9:30 - 10:30 am / Sch. Haven Center - 340 Haven St., Sch. Haven

Zumba Gold: Tuesdays
5- 6 pm / Trinity Episcopal Church - 201 Howard Ave., Pottsville

Zumba Gold: Thursdays
6 - 7 pm / 23 Meadowbrook Center - Route 183, Sch. Haven

Functional Fitness: Tuesdays
No class 5/12
9 - 10 am / Sch. Haven Center - 340 Haven Street

Gentle Yoga: Tuesdays No Class 4/21, 5/19, 7/21, 7/28
6 - 7 pm / 23 Meadowbrook Center - Route 183, Sch. Haven

Seated Yoga: Wednesdays
10:30 - 11:30 am / Sch. Haven Center - 340 Haven Street

Seated Yoga: Fridays No class 4/3, 7/3
11 am - noon / Mahanoy City Senior Center, 138 W Centre Street

Line Dance: Mondays No class
Basic Steps: 6:15 - 6:30 pm / Lesson: 6:30 - 7:30 pm / Dancing 7:30 - 9 pm Walk In Art Center - 20 Parkway 3rd Floor, Sch. Haven
\$6/class—punch cards cannot be used for line dance class.

If it's your first time at a drop-in class—or it's been a while—please give us a call ahead of time. Schedules and locations can change.

TRAVEL ADVENTURES

with Diakon Living & Learning After 50

Caribbean Cruise Adventure August 19-29, 2026

We're heading to the Caribbean aboard the Norwegian Escape—and we'd love for you to join us!

During this 10-night cruise, we'll explore the vibrant streets of San Juan, the stunning beaches of Philipsburg, and the crystal-clear waters of St. Thomas. Enjoy relaxation, great entertainment, delicious dining, and wonderful company while traveling with the Diakon Living & Learning After 50 group.

Book your cabin soon to take advantage of the best rates!

Celebrate the Season in the Smoky Mountains

Dollywood Smoky Mountain Christmas Tour
December 1-5, 2026

Experience the magic of the holidays in the Smoky Mountains! Along with Dollywood's spectacular Christmas celebration, travelers will visit The Island in Pigeon Forge, known for its massive synchronized fountain show and charming holiday shopping.

The tour also includes a stop at the Titanic Museum Attraction, home to the world's largest collection of authentic Titanic artifacts, offering a fascinating look at the lives of the ship's passengers and crew.

Join Diakon Living & Learning After 50 for this festive holiday escape filled with lights, music, history, and holiday cheer.

To learn more or reserve your spot: Boscov's Travel – Fairlane Village Mall
570-622-8983 • bostravpottsville@boscovs.com



JOIN DIAKON LIVING & LEARNING AFTER 50 ON A CRUISE TO THE CARIBBEAN ONBOARD THE NORWEGIAN ESCAPE

Wednesday, August 19 – Saturday, August 29, 2026



Hoodie Hoo Day!

What do we want?
SPRING!
When do we want it?
NOW!



Hoodie Hoo! Hoodie Hoo! Hoodie Hoo!



Make a difference as a PA MEDI Volunteer!

Make a difference in someone's life who is trying to navigate their Medicare journey. This is a rewarding way to give back to your community. All the training is free. If you like to talk to people and enjoy problem solving this type of volunteering may be a great fit for you! To learn more about volunteering opportunities please contact

Kathi Conahan-Baltzelle 570-624-3013 or conahan-baltzellek@diakon.org

Let me share this great opportunity with you!



Laughter is good for the heart and soul

THE JOY OF SHARING

The little old couple walked slowly into McDonald's that cold winter evening.

They looked out of place amid the young families and young couples eating there that night. Some of the customers looked admiringly at them. You could tell what the admirers were thinking. "Look, there is a couple who has been through a lot together, probably for 60 years or more!"

The little old man walked right up to the cash register, placed his order with no hesitation, and then paid for their meal. The couple took a table near the back wall and started taking food off the tray. There was one hamburger, one order of French fries and one drink.

The little old man unwrapped the plain hamburger and carefully cut it in half. He placed one half in front of his wife. Then he carefully counted out the French fries, divided them into two piles, and neatly placed one pile in front of his wife. He took a sip of the

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PA MEDI

**Are you getting ready to turn 65 years old?
Confused on how to navigate your Medicare journey?**

Attend one of our Diakon Community Services PA
MEDI New to Medicare Information Sessions

Conducted by Renee Stefnic,
PA MEDI Coordinator for Schuylkill County.
Call to make your reservation at 570-624-3026

Monday	June 8, 2026	6 pm-7:30pm
Tuesday	September 8, 2026	6 pm-7:30pm

All sessions are being held at our Pottsville location at
2020 W Norwegian St, Pottsville, PA 17901.

**We are looking for volunteers to assist us with
counseling at Diakon Community Services
Please call Renee @ 570-624-3026
for all your appointments
and if interested in joining our team**

KIM WOODFORD
SENIOR CENTER MANAGER

Spring Produce

Spring is a vibrant season for fresh fruits and vegetables, offering a variety of options that are both delicious and nutritious.

Spring fruits and vegetables to choose from:

- Strawberries
- Cherries
- Pineapples
- Spinach
- Radishes
- Rhubarb
- Apricots
- Asparagus
- Peas
- Artichokes



These seasonal produces are rich in vitamins and minerals, making excellent choices for boosting health. Eating in season not only saves money but enhances flavor.

Spring fruit salads are a refreshing way to celebrate the season's fresh produce. They are vibrant in color and easy to prepare. You can make your fruit salad more flavorful with a simple vinaigrette or dressing.

Fresh citrus juice brightens fruit flavors, prevents browning while adding natural sweetness.

Try these simple dressings for your next spring fruit salad:

Honey Lime Vinaigrette

½ cup lime juice
1 tablespoon honey

Citrus Herb Vinaigrette

½ cup orange juice
2 tablespoons fresh mint

Creamy Dressing

½ cup plain Greek yogurt
1 tablespoon lime or
lemon juice
1 tablespoon honey

Laughter is good for the heart and soul *Continued from P. 7*

drink; his wife took a sip and then set the cup down between them.

As the man began to eat his few bites of hamburger the crowd began to get restless. Again, you could tell what they were thinking. "That poor old couple. All they can afford is one meal for the two of them."

As the man began to eat his French fries one young man stood and came over to the old couple's table. He politely offered to buy another meal for the old couple to eat. The old man replied that they were just fine. They were used to sharing everything.

Then the crowd noticed that the little old lady had not eaten a bite. She just sat there watching her

husband eat and occasionally taking turns sipping the drink. Again, the young man came over and begged them to let him buy them something to eat. This time the lady explained that no, they were used to sharing everything together.

As the little old man finished eating and was wiping his face neatly with a napkin the young man could stand it no longer. Again, he came over to their table and offered to buy some food. After being politely refused again he finally asked a question of the little old lady.

"Ma'am, why aren't you eating? You said that you share everything. What is it that you are waiting for? She answered, "The teeth."



Meet Lizzie, Center Assistant, Mahanoy City Senior Community Center...

My time with Diakon began in October 2024 as the Assistant at the Pottsville

Senior Community Center where I became part of the "Pottsville" family immediately. In December, 2025, I transferred to the Mahanoy City Senior Center as the Center is closer to home.

In my free time, I enjoy reading, walking in the woods, Locust Lake and the trails, and bicycling. I enjoy being out in nature. Exercise is a weekly routine for me. I am a huge fan of movies of horror, zombies, documentaries, and history, but not a fan of gore. Jerry Seinfeld and Cheers were two of my favorite shows, to

which I still watch the reruns. I love jokes but I am awful at telling them. I can be quite the prankster, too!

My all-time favorite movie is "It's a Wonderful Life." Pride and Prejudice is high on the list, also! I enjoy all genres of music and am one of Elvis's biggest fans. I sing often but cannot carry a note but still sing away...!

My favorite childhood characters are Mr. Heat Miser, Tigger and (Mr.) Bumbles. I love animals, especially cats and dogs (labradors are the best). I have a soft spot for stray cats sauntering into my yard and will take care of them properly. I collect inspiration sayings and quotes, coffee mugs, music boxes, scarves, and antiques.

I bake a mean carrot cake and a surprisingly tasty tiramisu. Two of my favorite things to do are enjoying a delicious meal and/or appetizers with good friends and most certainly enjoy a "great" cup of coffee. If I can drink it in the sun, then so be it. Coffee, to me, is cathartic as is Moscato in moderation.

When I officially retire, I would like to go antiquing up the coast, return to ceramics, adopt a labrador and shelter dog and cat. I am going to learn to jar/can and make great sourdough bread! I have been a volunteer since I was very young and will continue to volunteer until I no longer can.

That is all for now...
Lizzie



For the love of it...

A quilt will warm your body and comfort your soul.

A hobby...an act of love...65 years...that's how long Linda Truskowsky has been sharing her story through this beautiful work of art. Beginning at age 16, Linda's best friend's mother introduced her to this amazing past time.



Linda shared her love of quilting with students at the Vocational schools in Schuylkill County for 5 years and with members of the Mahanoy City Senior Community Center.

When Linda talks about quilting, she is excited to show pictures and tell stories. One of her quilts is on display in a hotel in Tokyo, another was gifted to one of her exchange students as a wedding gift sent to Italy. Her quilt sizes range from small framed items to 90x120 bed spread.

A dying art...Linda prays not...as she continues to share this act of love.

Ringtown Exercise Club Celebrates 17th Anniversary

The members of the Ringtown Senior Fitness Club had great reason to celebrate on February 2. The club has reached its 17th year of offering no-cost exercise classes to older adults in the Ringtown Valley and surrounding communities. To put this milestone into perspective, that's providing classes every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning for 17 years (minus holidays and a few snow days)! This is certainly a feat of dedication and teamwork. Not only did this venture require the cooperation of the Ringtown Valley Senior Citizens association, in whose building the exercise sessions have taken place, but also the teamwork of a number of volunteers working together over the years to keep the club going. To really appreciate this dynamic we really have to go back to the origin of the group.

Bernie Francaviglia and Joan Medlinsky were the original leaders. As per Joan's scrapbook, it started through a connection with Teddi Cunningham from Diakon Community Services for Seniors who was involved with health initiatives at the time. In 2008, Teddi invited Bernie and Joan to attend a training for a program called "10 Keys to Healthy Aging" and they became certified Health Ambassadors for the program. Afterwards, they received permission from the Ringtown Valley Seniors to run the program in their building, which they did successfully. The program sparked an interest to start exercise classes at the building. This led to an exercise demonstration being done at one of their meetings and an article being placed in Pottsville Republican promoting the start of weekly classes. As a result, there was plenty of interest

and Bernie and Joan stepped up as volunteer leaders, with Bernie taking the lead role. The rest is history—the club has been going strong ever since! Little did they know that their

initiative in bringing exercise classes for older adults into the community would lead to an on-going senior fitness program that has been meeting three times a week, year after year, since early 2009. They were true trail blazers! A special thank you was given to Bernie and Joan at the celebration event along with a Certificate of Appreciation for their dedication. The attendees responded with applause and warm smiles. Upon receiving her certificate, Bernie said that she's really had a lot of fun being involved with this group. Bernie has passed the baton as the lead contact of the group but will continue as a helper.

Other leaders honored were Judy Llewellyn and Luann Scodari and they were given an "Oodles of Hours" award for their contribution toward maintaining the Ringtown Senior Fitness Program. A special acknowledgement was given to Diane Rumbel, who has been handed the torch in assuming the role as the lead contact person for the club. A special thank you goes to these leaders and to the countless others who also have been and continue to be regular contributors.

Over the years, the steadfast volunteers who have given their time and talents to this exercise group have created a quality fitness experience in a friendly, family-like atmosphere—the perfect recipe for a long-standing exercise club. There is always a warm welcome for newcomers. Several leaders were trained in safe and effective exercise for older adults and these folks definitely understand the mental and social benefits as well. The teamwork of the facility stewards, the club leaders and the participants positively contributes to the success of this club and has made all the difference in creating a no-cost exercise opportunity for older adults that will undoubtedly continue well into the future. To learn more about our Exercise Clubs and Walking Clubs in the county, please contact Jenny, Diakon Health & Wellness, at 570-624-3017 or wagnerje@diakon.org.



Past and present Ringtown Senior Fitness Club Volunteer Leaders: from left, Luann Scodari, Judy Llewellyn, Bernie Francaviglia, Joan Medlinsky and Diane Rumbel.



Members of Ringtown Senior Fitness are all smiles during the 17th Anniversary Celebration: Joan and Bernie, the original leaders, are seated in front and continue to participate.

You Were Seen at...



Clay snowmen enjoying the sun in Pottsville



Diamond Art, Diane, in Schuylkill Haven



Celebrating 250 years of local trees



Painting in Pottsville



Join me in my kitchen!

JAN WALKINSHAW



Polynesian Chicken

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 chicken breasts cut in half (8 pieces)
- ½ cup flour
- 1/3 cup of veg oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- Sauce**
- 1 can (1lb. 4 oz) pineapple slices
- 1 cup of sugar
- ¾ cup vinegar
- 2 Tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 Tablespoon soy sauce (Low salt)
- ¼ teaspoon ginger
- 1 chicken bouillon cube (or equivalent)
- 1 large green pepper slices

DIRECTIONS:

Wash chicken and remove skin. Coat chicken with flour. Fry chicken in oil for a few minutes on each side just until browned. Remove to a shallow roasting pan (13x9), sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Drain pineapple; set pineapples aside. Pour juice into a 2-cup measuring cup. Add water to make 1 ½ cups total liquid. Combine juice, sugar, vinegar, cornstarch and soy sauce in saucepan and bring to a boil. Add ginger and bouillon. Simmer (stirring constantly) until it starts to thicken (about 2 minutes). Pour sauce over chicken.

Bake at 350 uncovered for 20 minutes. Spread pineapple and pepper slices over chicken and bake 20 minutes longer or until chicken is tender.

Serve with fluffy white rice. Enjoy!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- April 3, 2026 Meals on Wheels: No Delivery
- May 25, 2026 Meals on Wheels: No Delivery
- June 1, 2026 Senior Centers: Senior Spelling Bee
Pottsville Senior Community Center
201 N Centre St, Pottsville
Register by May 18 by calling 570.624.3016
- June 2, 2026 Senior Centers: Senior Spelling Bee
Schuylkill Haven Senior Community Center
340 Haven St, Schuylkill Haven
Register by May 19 by calling 570.624.3016
- June 8, 2026 PA Medi: New to Medicare, 6-7:30 PM
Must be pre-registered
2020 W Norwegian St, Pottsville

Senior Centers: Senior Spelling Bee
Mahanoy City Senior Community Center
138 W Centre St, Mahanoy City
Register by May 25 by calling 570.624.3016.
- June 11, 2026 Senior Centers: Senior Spelling Bee
Tremont Senior Community Center
139 Clay St, Tremont
Register by May 28 by calling 570.624.3016
- June 18, 2026 Volunteer Recognition, Schuylkill Haven
Senior Community Center
340 Haven St, Schuylkill Haven
- June 24, 2026 Senior Centers: Senior Spelling Bee finals
(Location to be announced)
- June, 2026 Be on the watch for information on the
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program;
call Debbie at 570.624.3016 in May
for more information.
- July 3, 2026 Meals on Wheels: No Delivery
- July 16, 2026 Senior Centers: Senior Carnival
Schuylkill Haven Senior Community Center
340 Haven St, Schuylkill Haven
Register by June 25 by calling
570.624.3016
- October 13, 2026 ***Save the Date:
Diakon Living & Learning Senior Expo***

If you have questions about the above events,
please call the phone number listed above.

(Schuylkill County)
Health & Wellness
Jenny Wagner
570-624-3017

Living & Learning after 50
Susan Long
570-624-3018

(Schuylkill County)
Meals on Wheels:
Melissa Hepler and Sarah Kolbe
570-624-3010

(Schuylkill County)
PA Medi
Renee Stefnic
570-624-3026

(Schuylkill County)
Senior Centers
Debbie Herb
570-624-3016

Volunteers
Kathi Conahan-Baltzelle
570-624-3013

