

# SUMMIT

FALL 2013

## Outdoor Adventure Challenge tops \$16,000

Instead of the heat and humidity often associated with a late summer morning, September 21 dawned cool and overcast—a perfect day for the second annual Diakon Outdoor Adventure Challenge.

“It was a great day to be outside and active,” says Robert Kivlan, development officer for Diakon Youth Services. “It set the stage for a successful event” on the Diakon Wilderness Center campus near Boiling Springs.

More than 160 runners and spectators took part in the 5k race and adventure experience, competing in the trail run, testing their skills on the high challenge course and Alpine tower, and placing bids on outdoor gear featured in a silent auction.

“We offer something in a 5k race that no one else is doing,” says Kivlan. “The participants love the fact that they are not running on a city street. They get to be in the woods all day and be adventurous. There was nothing but positive praise for the day.”

Moreover, the event raised more than \$16,000 for Wilderness Center programs and services, a 20 percent increase over 2012 results. The event also builds awareness of the center.

“We notice that people who participate want to come back and experience the Diakon Wilderness Center in other ways,” says Kivlan. “They join us on volunteer days and create connections with other organizations that can benefit the students. It gives them an opportunity to help continue the mission.”



*An Outdoor Adventure Challenge participant.*



*And they're off! ... Outdoor Adventure Challenge 2013*



*Climbing the tower.*



## Students benefit from volunteer connections

When 60 volunteers from three organizations showed up at the Diakon Wilderness Center for the United Way's Annual Day of Caring, they did more than set a record for the largest volunteer day to date on campus—they also showed students the importance of giving back to the community.



"When positive members of the community serve and give back for no monetary gain, but because they recognize the importance of giving, that speaks volumes in actions instead of words," says Robert Kivlan, development officer for Diakon Youth Services. "Ofentimes the kids are impressed by that and develop that same civic mindset and want to give back as well."

Among the Day of Caring volunteers were employees of Phoenix Contact, which has an office not far from Frey Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Middletown.

"We had heard of Diakon, but we had no idea that this center was out here," says Brian Yeich, product lifecycle process manager. "It was very impressive to me, particularly when Rob talked about the history of the place and the programs they offer."

"We want the community to see what we are doing, learn about the kids we serve, and use our center as a community resource," says Kivlan.

One way that is happening is by increasing the number of volunteers who set foot on the campus. During 2013, volunteers from various organizations contributed more than 1,000 hours of time and talents to such projects as landscaping, weeding, planting, and painting.

While volunteers often get a lot out of their experience, the students gain even more, notes Kivlan.

"The primary success of having volunteers come to the center and lend a hand is that they often work alongside our students. They hear stories of adult success and often get to share a little bit about themselves. Our students continually benefit from being connected to positive members of the community."

For information on how you can volunteer at the Diakon Wilderness Center, contact Kivlan at (717) 960-6755.

## York County recognizes WAP as Service Provider of the Year

Over just 10 weekends, staff members of Diakon's Weekend Alternative Program deliver life-changing experiences that have a positive impact on the lives of young people.

But the youths aren't the only ones who benefit, says Anthony Stukes, director of the weekend program, which provides activities and services at a time at-risk youths are vulnerable to peer pressure to re-offend or get in other difficulties.

"If you can get a kid to trust who you are as a person and what you are trying to do, then you have won the initial battle," he says, adding that trust and a desire not to disappoint follow. "That goes both ways. As a counselor, I do not want to let them down. I want to do everything I can to teach them to walk in the right direction."

That is exactly what Stukes and his staff members have been doing for 16 years—and their efforts have not gone unrecognized. Recently, the York County Juvenile Probation Office presented WAP with its Service Provider of the Year Award. Stukes believes efforts to be responsive and communicate on a continuing basis went a long way toward winning the award.

"Also key was the fact that two years ago we went through an improvement initiative to make our program solid in regard to the goals we want to achieve with the kids," he says. "Relationships are important, but we do measure outcomes on our ability to teach. We have objectives we have to meet every weekend to ensure the quality of our program."

Youths in the weekend program rotate through a series of specifically designed options that include counseling, community service activities, and the Diakon Wilderness Center's adventure-based activities—away from the distractions and temptations presented by peers in the youths' home community.

"The more focus and intentional effort they put into learning about themselves and planning for their future, the better their results will be moving forward," Stukes says. "In the end, though, it is the relationships formed that drive the engine that is the Weekend Alternative Program."

(L to R) Tylor Fresch, Weekend Alternative Director  
Anthony Stukes, Rick Street  
and Stephanie Kribs.





## Flight Program helps participants take next step

### *New program manager looks to expand worldview*

From Boiling Springs, Pa., to places such as the Bronx and Haiti, the Flight Program's Matt Reichard is helping young men on a journey to become successful, contributing members of society.

Reichard, who served Diakon's Flight Program as program assistant for three years, took on the role of program manager earlier this year. A married father of three who worked in church youth ministry for more than 10 years, he hopes to serve as a role model for the young men who often struggle making the transition from youth to adulthood.

"We meet guys at whatever spot they are—whether it is looking at college or entering the workforce—and help them figure out where they want to be and help them to make that happen," says Reichard of the 17- to 24-year-old demographic the program serves. Often transitioning from a Diakon Wilderness Center program, the young men previously had nowhere to turn. "Flight is the only program that works with that specific group of guys who were lost [when they aged out of youth programs] and helps them get to the next step."

Although the majority of the participants come from Cumberland, Dauphin and Lancaster counties, Flight recently began working with graduates of the Youthful Offender Program, a 30-day wilderness adventure offered by the Diakon Wilderness Center. Developed in conjunction with Bucks County, the program targets first-time, non-violent offenders ages 18 to 24 facing a felony conviction. If they successfully complete the program, the felony is reduced to a misdemeanor giving them a second chance at turning their lives around.

"They are a good fit for Flight because they are at a point they need direction—college or career," says Reichard. "They were making bad decisions from 18 to 21 or so, but now they are clean and sober and need to plan a new path or direction."

The Bucks County residents travel to the Diakon Wilderness Center or other locations each weekend to spend time with other Flight participants in a range of activities designed to enhance their community involvement and success in life.

Recently the group traveled to the Bronx, where they volunteered with a non-profit, packing school supplies, helping an inner-city school prepare for opening day and making sandwiches and distributing them to the homeless. Having been reminded of the different ways the community has given to them, Flight participants are eager to give



*Matt Reichard (center) with Flight participants atop Pole Steeple in Pine Grove Furnace State Park, located at the northern tip of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Pennsylvania.*

back and help others whenever they can, says Reichard.

"A lot of the guys have been in tough spots where they have received services from others, so for them to be giving to someone else is a unique experience," he says. "Many people can empathize with hungry children, but for these guys who have been in the same spot, it is a very different experience."

Over the New Year holiday, several Flight Program participants will join Reichard on a weeklong trip to Haiti, where he and his wife have a non-profit that operates three orphanages. While there, they will enjoy Christmas with the children, complete projects around the orphanages, and visit with families living in a nearby tent community. Reichard believes the young men will have a unique way of understanding the suffering of the Haitian children, because some of them have been homeless, dealt with absentee parents, or even lost their parents.

"We want to give them the opportunity to serve on a greater scale, doing things on a global scale to give back," he says. "We tend to understand things from our perspective and it doesn't always give a broad picture of what life is like in the world. Anything that will broaden that scope can do nothing but help them grow and mature."

For information on how you can support the Flight Program and the trip to Haiti, please visit [www.diakon.org/dwc](http://www.diakon.org/dwc) and select Flight program on the side menu.





## Upcoming opportunities to volunteer at the Diakon Wilderness Center

- November 23 • 2013

Hosted by the Bridge Program

- March 29 • 2014

Hosted by Diakon Youth Services

- April 26 • 2014

Hosted by Center Point Day Program

- May 31 • 2014

Hosted by the Flight Program

*Volunteer activities range from working in our greenhouse and gardens planting, pruning, and weeding, to general wilderness center campus landscaping or trail maintenance. Volunteers have the opportunity to work alongside our youths doing mulching, staining, and repair work, etc.*

*Volunteer hours are 9 a.m. until noon.*



[www.diakon.org/dwc](http://www.diakon.org/dwc)



*Hiking the Grand Canyon with the Wilderness Center's Flight Program*



*Keith, working hard as usual.*



*A beautiful walking path at DWC.*

Contact: Robert Kivlan, Diakon Wilderness Center • (717) 903-5102 • [kivlanr@diakon.org](mailto:kivlanr@diakon.org)