

WILDERNESS CENTER SUMMIT

Diakon Wilderness Center ♦ 717-258-3168

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Scholarships awarded to DWC grads

Four former students of the Diakon Wilderness Center have received a jump-start on their higher education.

At the center's eighth annual former student reunion, the four young people each received a check for \$1,750, paid to the university or college they are attending. The scholarships were provided through the Ruth Evinger Diakon Wilderness Center Scholarship Fund, named for a Cumberland County, Pa., woman who has made a generous donation to assist young people in getting their lives back on the right track.

"I see the future here," said Rob Kivlan of the center's staff during the presentation of the scholarships, the first such financial aid given by the center. "You can be very proud of yourselves for using the opportunities here at the Diakon Wilderness Center to be better men and women," he said. "We presented the opportunity. You took it."

Receiving the scholarships were:

- Natasha Lerner-Diaz of Chambersburg, Pa.; The Pennsylvania State University.
- James R. Martin of Chambersburg, Pa.; Hagerstown Community College.
- Gerard J. Christy of Boothwyn, Pa.; Hussian School of Art in Philadelphia.
- Matthew M. Moyer, Harrisburg, Pa.; Shippensburg University.

Moyer and Martin both had participated in the Weekend Alternative Program, LernerDiaz in the 30-day Wilderness Challenge Program, and Christy in both the Weekend Alternative Program and Foundations Residential Program. Several of the students indicated they

wanted to major in social work or psychology, so they could help other youths as they have been helped.

"Education can be an avenue for success for some of our students," says Corey Carothers, center administrator. "Many do not attempt to continue their education because they assume it's out of their reach. We want to show them that it's not."



Holding symbolic checks for their scholarships are, left to right, Natasha LernerDiaz, Gerard Christy, James Martin, and Matthew Moyer.

Foundations Residential Program receives new licensing

In completing its annual inspection of the Diakon Wilderness Center's Foundations Residential Program, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare has licensed the program as a "Residential Services-Community-Based" program.

As a result, Pennsylvania counties are now eligible for 80 percent reimbursement through Title IV-E funding for those youth who qualify.

The new licensing is a result of the short-term (four-month) nature of the program, the emphasis placed on engaging youths' families in programming, and the program's efforts to model aftercare services on Pennsylvania's Aftercare Initiative through Aftercare ISP's—additional home passes toward the end of care and assistance with providing post-discharge support services, which often include either

the Weekend Alternative Program, Diakon's Bridge Program, or both.

When these services are not available in particular counties, Foundations Residential Program staff members work with local probation offices to find appropriate support services in their communities. Increased program participation is expected in the coming year as a result of the licensing.



Summer program brings positive interaction

This summer, the Diakon Wilderness Center introduced its Summer of Success activities with a basketball camp, football camp, and a five-day retreat.

Held in June, the basketball camp ran for two weeks. The one-week football camp followed the next month. Both camps included contests, drills, and even staff-versus-student games.

“Many staff have taken the opportunity to bond with the students by supporting them during camps,” says Jeremias Garcia, Wilderness Center staff. “Students are proud to have a case manager, director, residential care specialist, teacher, chef,

or any Diakon employee support them. For some of these students, they have never had the privilege of having someone to encourage positive interaction.”

The summer program concluded with eight students spending five days of seclusion in Schuylkill County for self-reflection, camaraderie, and healing.

“A lot can be achieved, therapeutically, when you have five days with a small group in the peace of a remote setting with nothing to focus on except the issues at hand,” says Rick Street, one of three staff members to spend the entire five days with the group.



Students and staff compete in a friendly game of basketball.

“Many of the boys returned to the Diakon Wilderness Center better prepared to confront their issues and address the things they need to accomplish before leaving the program, in order to make their transition back home a successful one.”

Horticulture program teaches students entrepreneurship

Throughout the summer, students and staff of the Foundations Residential Program have been caring for 1,500 mums growing in the Diakon Wilderness Center’s greenhouse as part of the horticulture component within the center’s vocational program.

Nina Poe, horticulture program manager, uses the opportunity to teach students about entrepreneurship. Students take small plant cuttings, transplant them into pots, and help maintain

and care for them until they are ready to be sold in the fall.

This process allows them to experience all stages of retail production. Poe also guides them as they manage, operate, and oversee community sales of the mums.



Proceeds are used to pay restitution costs, fines, and fees the students owe in their respective counties, and to maintain the horticulture program.

Many of the sales take place in the communities in which the students live.

To have a future mum sale in your area, contact Nina Poe at (717) 960-6700, or by e-mail at poen@diakon.org. Please support our youths in this exciting project.