

FAMILY CONNECTIONS



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Placement promises bright future for Cameron and Ruggero

Cameron, 13, has been in the foster care system on and off since he was 18 months old. After a failed adoption, Cameron became involved with the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program and the SWAN Older Child Matching Initiative program in December 2010. Both programs are grant-funded services designed to secure permanency for children over the age of 10 in the foster care system.

About this same time, a single man named Ruggero started the process of becoming a certified resource parent through Diakon. Ruggero had always hoped to provide permanency to a child in foster care and provide him or her with love and stability.

After Ruggero became certified, he was very active and diligent in searching for a child who would best fit into his home. He first saw Cameron's photo at the SWAN Winter Statewide Conference in Harrisburg in January of last year. After learning more about Cameron, he knew for sure that he was the child he would love to welcome into his home.

Despite Cameron's special needs, Ruggero was excited about what the future could hold for the two of them.



Cameron and Ruggero enjoy a day together at Hersheypark.

When they met last summer, Ruggero and Cameron made an instant connection, spending their first day together riding a train, hitting baseballs in the batting cages, and playing miniature golf. Both agreed to pursue the match.

After several day-visits and a few weekend visits, Cameron moved into Ruggero's home in July 2011. Ruggero now provides the unconditional love and care that

Cameron has been searching for all of his life.

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Ensuring others have ‘family privileges’

BY: **ELISA ESH**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

During the holiday season, most of us had “family privilege.” By “family privilege,” I am referring to a family, no matter what the composition, whether by birth, adoption, life experiences, friendships, or connections. That privilege is invaluable to our happiness, support systems, and success in life. I recently attended a 70th birthday party for my father and looking across the room of more than 100 attendees and lifelong “supports” for my father, I thought of the children in foster care without an identified adoptive family or who are at risk of aging out of the foster care system at the age of 18 with no family to call their own.

Recently, however, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett proposed a budget to implement fully the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. This proposal provides Pennsylvania with incentives to improve outcomes for foster youth and promote adoption and legal guardianship. Currently, adoptive and permanent legal guardianship families can receive adoption subsidy only until their children reach the age of 18. Youths in foster care can receive foster care services only until 18 unless they meet certain educational or treatment criteria.

The governor’s proposed changes would extend adoption and guardianship subsidies to the age of 21, the same age-limit that exists for foster care support, a change that would encourage permanent placements and improve educational and long-term outcomes for youths and children in the child welfare system. Eliminating the current financial disincentive to permanency by extending subsidy until youths turn 21 will help more young people secure a “forever family” through permanency options. The proposal would also allow more youths between ages 18 and 21 to benefit from the support of a foster family in cases in which adoption or legal guardianship might not be an option.

These changes would place significantly less financial stress on Diakon resource families and the youths they have committed to love and support during these financially challenging times. It also would allow foster families to continue to receive support for youths for whom adoption is not an option. Further, our state will save an estimated \$4.5 million in FY 12-13 because of a reduction in foster care placements as a result of additional adoptions related to the extended subsidy. Millions of dollars in additional federal support for the new initiatives also is expected.

Overall, changes to current practices will most benefit the children and youths we serve and their families. This additional support, of course, is of the utmost importance in complementing the important work our foster and adoptive families do each day as they care for children and youths.

In further thinking of support for our foster children during the holiday season, I was reminded that, “It takes a village to raise a child!”

Again this year, multiple organizations and individuals chose to provide Christmas joy to children in our foster care through donations of toys, clothing, school supplies, gift cards, and multiple other items. These gifts to vulnerable children made it very clear that not only did their safe, stable, and loving foster and adoptive families care for them, but also that a community is there to make them feel special and like children again—despite their often traumatic pasts.

We look forward to our continued work with resource families, county colleagues, community supporters and, of course, the children and youths we serve in 2012. The more support we as a community can offer our resource families and children, the better.

Our greatest hope, after all, is that the children and youths served by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care will have the “family privilege” they deserve and many birthdays and holidays with an endless number of family and friends to wish them well.

Elisa Esh

Help us to find forever families



Adam, 15

Adam is a young man who has an avid interest in electronics, particularly computers, and he hopes to work with computers in the future. He likes to figure out how things work. When he is not on his computer he likes to ride his bike around the neighborhood. Adam loves football, especially the Pittsburgh Steelers. For more information about Adam, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Cheilin, 18

Cheilin is a fun-loving, compassionate “social butterfly” who always makes the best of all situations. She enjoys having her hair done and having a manicure/pedicure. She likes arts and crafts, baking, playing board games, taking trips to the mall, socializing, making bracelets, and listening to music. Cheilin aspires to be a nurse in pediatrics or a therapist who works with children. She is open to any type of family, but would like to remain in Pennsylvania. Because of respiratory difficulties, she would do better in a family that does not have any animals. She wants her family to attend church and cook at home, and she needs a family that can understand and work with her medical needs. For more information about Cheilin, please contact Karen Knodel at (215) 355-6500, ext. 193 or kknodel@bethanna.org.



Dana, 16

Dana is a sensitive young lady who responds to positivism and craves attention. She enjoys music, dancing, walks, and doing hair and makeup. Dana needs much supervision as she learns rules and how to follow them. Dana is in 10th grade emotional/learning support classes. She does okay in school, but limited intellectual functioning interferes with peer interactions. Dana could be a great help at home as long as she receives attention and is complimented for her achievements. Dana is a feminine girl who would love to learn more about makeup and fashion. She especially dreams of shopping excursions with her new Mom. Dana is open to traditional families who will be able to work with her on a daily basis, helping her move forward in a positive manner. For more information about Dana, please contact Marian Kolcun at (570) 825-6425 or mkolcun@e-csc.org.



Destiny, 15

Destiny is an outgoing and talkative young lady who enjoys listening to music, reading, and watching horror movies. She is intelligent and does very well in school. Destiny aspires to have a career in which she can work with animals, possibly as a veterinarian. She is hoping to find a home in southwestern Pennsylvania. For more information about Destiny, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.

Help us to find forever families Continued from Page 3



Elizabeth, 13

Elizabeth has a passion for horses but loves all animals. She would like to have a pet one day. She spends her free time playing with Bratz and Barbie dolls and also enjoys watching movies and playing games. Elizabeth would do best in a structured living environment in which expectations are clear. She especially enjoys special attention from the adults in her life. For more information about Elizabeth, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Ester, 17

Esther is an introspective young lady who enjoys playing the violin and reading. She is particularly fond of mystery novels. Esther does well in school; English is her favorite subject. She hopes to go to college, but isn't sure which course of study would be best for her. She is hoping to find a family with whom she can explore her interests. For more information about Esther, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Evan, 15

Evan is a fun and creative teen who enjoys drawing and art; he has a particular interest in tribal art as well as nature. He has a good sense of humor. Evan also enjoys Tai Kwon Do. He needs a family who can guide him into becoming a responsible and mature young man, and he would prefer to be the youngest or only child. For more information about Evan, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Jaimie, 14

Jaimie is a fun-loving, active young lady. She enjoys playing sports including basketball, football, boxing, and fishing. She also likes playing the Wii and being outside and climbing trees. Jaimie loves animals. She needs some redirection in the home and would benefit most from a patient and supportive family. For more information about Jaimie, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Jessie, 16

Jessie is a playful young man with a creative imagination. He enjoys riding his bike and being outdoors. He also enjoys hands-on activities. Jessie is described as compassionate and loving. He is responsible for a variety of chores, including folding his clothes and making his bed. He would do well in a family that provides him with a structured environment. For more information about Jessie, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Joey, 16

Joey is a caring and energetic child who loves attention and enjoys being nurtured by adults. He likes to play baseball, swim, ride his bike, and hike in the woods. Joey is a dedicated fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers and Pirates. He is very friendly and playful, but requires some redirection and supervision. For more information about Joey, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Jordan, 17

Jordan is a very polite and sweet young man who enjoys arts and crafts. He also likes watching movies, especially those about superheroes such as Spiderman. Jordan likes playing sports in his gym class, and he enjoys doing household chores and takes pride in how well he does them. He will do best in a structured environment. For more information about Jordan, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Josey, 15

Josey is a charming, well-mannered young lady who enjoys spending time with her friends, bowling, cooking, and running. She currently participates on the high school track and cross country teams. Josey is a talented writer and has written several poems and stories about her life experiences. She does very well academically, and her dream is to go to culinary school and become a professional chef. Josey is in need of a family that will love her unconditionally, as well as give her the time and patience she will need to adjust. She would prefer a family with younger siblings and pets. For more information about Josey, please contact Elizabeth White at (717) 795-0479 or whitee@diakon.org.



Karimah, 16

Karimah is a soft spoken, sweet-natured girl with a bright smile who can be shy at first, but soon becomes vibrant and talkative. She sees herself as a generous, outgoing person who is a good listener, good student, and loyal friend. Karimah's favorite activities include drawing, reading, and singing. She sings in a gospel choir at her church and the school chorus. She also enjoys writing songs and playing the piano. Karimah enjoys spending time with her six biological siblings who are in five separate homes. The person she looks up to most is her mother, who died in December 2005. Karimah hopes to become a lawyer, a singer, or an actress. She hopes to find a family with siblings and pets. For more information about Karimah, please contact Karen Knodel at (215) 355-6500, ext. 193 or kknodel@bethanna.org.



Mary, 17

Mary is bright, insightful, and charismatic. She takes pride in her appearance and her surroundings, and keeps things clean and in order. She enjoys writing poetry, listening to music, playing her guitar, singing, and performing. Mary enjoys creative activities such as sewing, painting, and knitting. She loves animals and enjoys gardening. For more information about Mary, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.

Help us to find forever families Continued from Page 5



Nasir, 14

Nasir is a pleasant young man with a quiet and calm personality. He loves playing video games and is proud of his ability to master new games quickly. Nasir enjoys playing baseball and football with other children in his neighborhood. He is very helpful around the home and is willing to learn new things. Nasir wishes to be part of a loving, two-parent home. For more information about Nasir, please contact Karen Knodel at (215) 366-6500, ext. 193 or kknodel@bethanna.org.



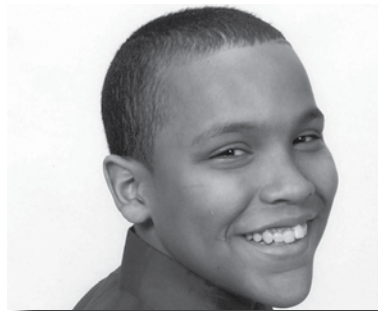
Robby, 15

Robby is a smart, quiet young man who likes to help people. He likes to ride his bike, listen to music, and play with mini skateboards. He also likes to play basketball and wall-ball, and play card games. Robby would like to be part of a family that includes both a mom and a dad and one in which he is an only child, or with only one brother or sister. He would also like to stay in the Philadelphia area. Robby would like his family to have pets, especially a dog, and to take him camping. For more information about Robby, please contact Karen Knodel at (215) 355-6500, ext. 193 or kknodel@bethanna.org.



Sasha, 14

Sasha is quiet and personable. She loves to shop and go to the movies. Shy at first, Sasha becomes talkative after she becomes comfortable. Sasha enjoys getting her nails done and listening to music, especially hip-hop. Well-liked by her teachers, Sasha enjoys school and likes sports, especially wrestling, basketball, and volleyball. Sasha would like a forever family who will support her wish to continuing visiting her siblings. For more information, contact Karen Knodel at (215) 355-6500, ext. 193 or kknodel@bethanna.org.



Shawn, 13

Shawn likes all sports including football, basketball, golf, wrestling, and a little bit of soccer, and would like a family that participates in sports. He also would like to go camping with his family, as well as cook out and attend church. He enjoys playing video and board games. Shawn is open to a family with two parents or one, but he would prefer to have brothers to play with. He would enjoy owning pets, especially dogs, and living in the suburbs. For more information, please contact Karen Knodel at (215) 355-6500, ext. 193 or kknodel@bethanna.org.



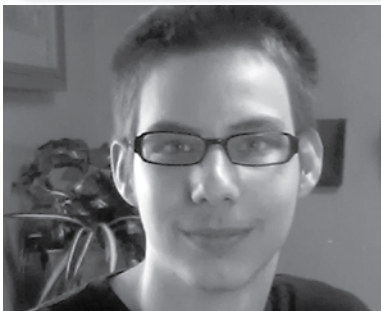
Tahkem, 14

Tahkem is a playful and talkative young man who is well-behaved, cooperative, and helpful. His favorite school subject is math. Tahkem enjoys playing video games and basketball. He likes playing outdoors, swimming, skateboarding, and gymnastics. In the winter, he likes snowball fights and sledding; in the summer, he enjoys overnight camping and going to amusement parks. Tahkem would like a family with a mom and a dad, but is also open to a single-parent family. He would like to have older brothers and sisters, and possibly a guinea pig; he would prefer to stay in Pennsylvania. For more information about Tahkem, please contact Karen Knodel at (215) 355-6500, ext. 193 or kknodel@bethanna.org.



Taylor, 13

Taylor is very artistic and likes to draw and create things with her hands. She would like to learn to play a musical instrument one day, but hasn't decided which one. She does well in school and hopes to attend college. She hasn't yet chosen a field of study, but is considering one that focuses on animals. For more information about Taylor, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Ted, 16

Ted is a polite and academically minded youth who aspires to attend college. He is interested in science and loves to learn. Ted does well in school and would do even better with encouragement from a supportive family. He also is interested in Japanese animation and spends his free time watching movies and reading. For more information about Ted, please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Thomas, 17

Thomas is a kind, respectful, and nurturing young man. He doesn't like to be touched and tends to become quiet and withdrawn at times. He likes to dress nicely and gets his hair cut every other week. He is ambitious, gets good grades, and enjoys playing football and going on Facebook. He also likes defending innocent people and hopes to be a lawyer one day. Thomas would like a family that is sincere, nurturing, respectful, caring, financially sound, and loves him for who he is. He would do well in a single-parent household, or one with a mother and father. He is open to families either with or without siblings, although he would enjoy caring for younger children. He would like his family to be willing to sit and talk with him. He would enjoy having a dog and would prefer to be close to Philadelphia so he can stay connected to his biological sister. For more information about Thomas, please contact Karen Knodel at (215) 355-6500, ext. 193 or email kknodel@bethanna.org.



Tyler I., 14

Tyler is an energetic young man who enjoys being in the woods and looking for fossils. He also is interested in geology. Tyler likes school, and playing video games. He would like to find a family that has a farm or lives near the woods, and one in which he has an older sibling to look up to. For more information about Tyler I., please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.



Tyler A., 16

Tyler is a fun young man who enjoys laughing. He is often in a good mood, is typically smiling, and likes funny movies and television programs. Tyler enjoys listening to music, reading, playing board games, camping, and swimming. He does well in school and is proud of his grades. For more information about Tyler A., please contact Nic Landon at (724) 284-9440 or nlandon@familypathways.net.

If you are interested in learning more about any of these children, please contact Elisa Esh, executive director of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, (717) 724-7979 or eshe@diakon.org.

Placements

Rosendo
October 3, 2011
Dawn
Ellitsburg, Pa.

Dynola
August 22, 2011
Steve and Trudy
York, Pa.

FINALIZATIONS

Daniel and Jacob
August 31, 2011
Michael and Jennifer
Lewisberry, Pa.

Chris
September 7, 2011
Rafael and Betsy Jo
Hamburg, Pa.

Josie and Kaiya
September 7, 2011
Jeremy and Lynn
Alburtis, Pa.

**Evely, Noelyanis,
and Iycsis**
September 7, 2011
Robert and Denise
New Tripoli, Pa.

Kahmorah
September 12, 2011
Lavelle and Rhonda
Harrisburg, Pa.

Daniel
September 14, 2011
Josh and Stevie
Gettysburg, Pa.

Amaris
September 14, 2011
Kevin and Lisa
Blandon, Pa.

Jayden
September 21, 2011
Mathias and Alicia
Shillington, Pa.

**Jesse, Hailie, and
Fredrick**
September 21, 2011
Daniel and Jennifer
Reading, Pa.

Grace
September 28, 2011
Robert and Stacey
Leesport, Pa.

Christopher
October 3, 2011
Sean and Abby
York, Pa.

Noel
October 4, 2011
Glenn and Casey
Allentown, Pa.

Quamir
October 10, 2011
Heather
Etters, Pa.

Jacob and Liam
October 13, 2011
Mark and Beth
Etters, Pa.

Emma
October 16, 2011
Crystal and Cleason
Shippensburg, Pa.

Christopher
November 4, 2011
Rick and Belinda
Littlestown, Pa.

Zachi
November 14, 2011
Marc and Susan
Allentown, Pa.

Chayse
November 22, 2011
KC and Dawn
Bangor, Pa.

Kaylee
November 29, 2011
Glenn and Casey
Allentown, Pa.

Derick and Kristopher
November 30, 2011
Nicholas and Tami
Allentown, Pa.

Sarah and Noelle
November 30, 2011
Daniel and Jamie
Reading, Pa.

Nevaeh
November 30, 2011
Robert and Cindy
Douglassville, Pa.

Thomas and Silas
December 1, 2011
Fedor and Angie
Steelton, Pa.

Skyler
December 13, 2011
Brad and Carol
Camp Hill, Pa.

Tavish
December 21, 2011
Jeremy and Lynn
Alburtis, Pa.

Daniel and Dominique
December 22, 2011
Scott and Melissa
Enola, Pa.

Jeremiah
January 3, 2012
Gary and Cathy
Bethlehem, Pa.

Katrice
February 13, 2012
Mike and Mary
Carlisle, Pa.

Cameron
February 22, 2011
Ruggero
Harrisburg, Pa.

Jazell
February 22, 2012
Quinten and Sharon
Tamaqua, Pa.

Victoria
February 8, 2012
Delbert and Amber
Bowers, Pa.

Alexis
February 29, 2012
Robert and Christine
Elizabethtown, Pa.



Chris joined the family of Betsy Jo and Rafael of Hamburg on Sept. 7, 2011.



Daniel and Jamie of Reading adopted Sarah and Noelle on Nov. 30, 2011, in Berks County.



Daniel and Jennifer of Reading adopted Freddie, Jesse, and Hailie on Sept. 21, 2011 in front of Judge Jeffrey Sprecher at the Berks County Courthouse.



Glenn and Casey of Allentown adopted Noel on Oct. 4, and then adopted Kathleen on Nov. 29.



Amaris was adopted by Lisa and Kevin of Blandon on Sept. 14.



Josie and Kaiya were adopted by Jeremy and Lynn of Alburtis on Sept. 7 at the Berks County Courthouse.



Jeremiah posed with the judge and his new family on Jan. 3, 2012, when he was adopted by Gary and Cathy of Bethlehem.



Edward and Mary of Laureldale posed with Judge Peter Schmehl after the adoption of Michael became final on Aug. 10, 2011.



Zachi and his new family had a little fun at the Lehigh County Courthouse when his adoption to Marc and Susan of Allentown became final on Nov. 14.



Judge Sprecher posed with Grace and her new family when she was adopted by Robert and Stacey of Leesport on Sept. 28.



Family came together for a picture with the judge when Nevaeh was adopted by Robert and Cindy of Douglassville on Nov. 30.

Wilderness Challenge offers self-reflection, growth

During the coldest months of the year, most people spend as much time as possible indoors, staying warm. For a small group of young men in the 30-Day Wilderness Challenge Program, however, that time is spent enduring all that Mother Nature throws at them as they journey along the Appalachian Trail, exploring new ways to cope with the intrinsic difficulties of being a teenager.

Far removed from cell phones, computers, and other distractions of modern living, the boys spend their first week near the Diakon Wilderness Center's campus, focusing their attention on mastering the vital wilderness skills it takes to live comfortably in adverse conditions. They become experts at setting up shelters, building campfires, and cooking foods that won't be found on a McDonald's menu. Through each of these activities, ample opportunities arise to demonstrate the value of building on communication skills, team work, and leadership.

Anthony Brau, program manager of the 30-day program, has been working with these groups for the past five

Since the 1980s, the Diakon Wilderness Center has been a leader in providing specialized, outdoor-based services for children and youths from across Pennsylvania. Historically serving young people who have been adjudicated delinquent or dependent by county juvenile courts or children and youth services, the center and its related programs offer a wide range of services designed to help young people become productive, contributing members of society. The Diakon Wilderness Center is located on 170 mountainous acres near Boiling Springs, Pa.



years. "Many of these boys have never been exposed to the intricacies of what it takes to be a positive contributor in a group setting. It takes good communication and tolerance and patience to work through some pretty strong differences of opinion."

After their basic wilderness skills are honed, the boys begin their expedition along the Appalachian Trail. Each day, by actively engaging in the planned activities of hiking, rock climbing, snowshoeing, and daily chores, a high level of trust and camaraderie is developed among the group members and the staff.

"As the instructors and students share in such intense experiences, strong relationships can be built that assist in fostering meaningful, self-reflective discussions that can greatly benefit everyone involved, including the staff," says Brau. A time is set aside each day for "main topics," engaging discussions that address issues with which teens often struggle, such as decision-making, conflict resolution, drug and alcohol

use, leadership development, and other life skills.

One of the more effective elements of the wilderness challenge comes midway through the program, when each student participates in a 72-hour solo experience. Placed in his own private campsite, the student uses the time to reflect and write journal entries on his own experiences. With the help of instructors, students begin to develop individual plans they can implement in their personal lives to help build successes.

Derek Hofeldt, the course's lead instructor, believes in the value of the experience. "Solos' are powerful experiences. They allow students to take a break from being in the group and focus more on themselves and their own, unique challenges. It also gives a chance for us, as instructors, to visit with the students away from the influences of their peers."

After completing the solo experience the group reunites, often refreshed, ready to take on the challenge of the

Continued on Page 13



Endowment fund continues to support children in need

The Daun and Mary Jo McKee Endowment Fund for Children will forever support Diakon's care of children. The endowment fund supports families who have welcomed one of Pennsylvania's waiting children into their home through Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. This ministry and others are the beneficiaries of the fund, continuing the nearly 150-year legacy of Diakon's service to children. This endowment fund relies on donations from corporations and individuals to serve the maximum number of children possible. For more information on how you can help, please call the Office of Development at 1-877-DIAKON-7, option 2, extension 21218, or email dickeym@diakon.org.



Cherished Children donates blankets, more

Doris Heim, left, and her daughter-in-law, Cheryl Heim, deliver homemade blankets, scrapbooking supplies, coloring books, and gift cards for children served by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care programs on behalf of Cherished Children. Cherished Children is a charity in New Ringgold that provides goods and services to demonstrate care and compassion for individuals in unique circumstances.

2012 COMING EVENTS

June 2: Walk For a Healthy Community

Friends and supporters of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care will be walking for their good health while collecting donations on behalf of Diakon. Grab your walking shoes and join this group for a 3.1-mile fun walk around Bethlehem. For more information, contact Annette Stolte at (610) 682-1270 or stoltea@diakon.org.

Sept. 29: Party for Poppa K golf tournament

Party for Poppa K is an annual charity golf tournament started by Pete Kareha in memory of his father, Poppa K, who benefited from the special programs of Diakon Hospice Saint John. For more information and to register, visit www.oldehomesteadgolfclub.com/partyforpoppak. Discounted rates are available before June 30.

Oct. 18: Dining with Diakon-Eastern PA

Dining with Diakon offers great food and networking opportunities, as well as a silent auction and chef challenge in which guest chefs challenge one another to see who can raise the most money for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. This year, special guest speaker Anthony Robles, 2011 NCAA Wrestling Champion, will share his inspiring story of how he conquered extraordinary physical and personal challenges. For more information call 1-800-877-DIAKON-7, ext. 50464, email trumpd@diakon.org, or visit www.diakon.org/dwd.

Nov. 26: Dinner at Aroogas

Dine at any Arooga's Grille House & Sports Bar or Brew 22 American Tavern Nov. 26 and 15% of your guest check will be donated to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. In order for your meal to count for Diakon, you must bring the coupon on page 15 and hand it in to your server or bartender at the time of your meal.

Staff, residents of Luther Crest donate gifts

Dianne Kareha, chaplain of Luther Crest, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Allentown, Pa., delivers gifts that were donated by staff and residents for children served by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.



Reunion to be held for Vietnamese adoptees

The Vietnamese Adoptees Reunion invites first-generation Vietnamese adoptees to spend a weekend in the Colorado Rockies, Aug. 31 to Sept. 3, 2012. The event will be a gathering of Vietnamese adoptees who left Vietnam from 1960 through 1975; at the event they will be able to meet other adoptees, family members, former caregivers, adoption agencies, and Vietnam Vets, as well as reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and gain insights from other adoptees who have shared similar experiences.

In April to May of 1975, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care (at that time known as Tressler Adoption Services) became part of the historical rescue of orphans living in orphanages in war-torn Vietnam; the evacuation of those children became known as Operation Babylift. As Saigon began to fall and U.S. occupation in Vietnam drew to a

close, it became apparent that children in need of adoptive homes were in imminent need of evacuation from the country.

Tressler Lutheran Services worked with Holt International and Betty Tisdale, leader of the rescue, to bring more than 200 children to the United States for placement with adoptive families. In less than six weeks, Tressler placed 219 children with adoptive families in Pennsylvania and across the nation in collaboration with other adoption agencies.

This courageous venture has been depicted in a Lifetime movie and discussed in the book, "Chicken Soup for the Adopted Soul."

For more information about the reunion, please contact Stacy Thuy Meredith at firstgenofvnapootees@live.com or (303) 995-5169.

Good food, good company, for the sake of the children

Elisa Esh, executive director of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care and guest chef, right, tells guests about Diakon's adoption services as they sample her dish, Chicken Cavatelli with wild mushrooms. The 2011 Dining with Diakon event raised more than \$104,000 in support of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. Special congratulations to Dr. Christine and Mike Caverly, who won the Chef Challenge contest, raising the most support for the program out of nine participating chefs.



Diakon continues participation in Wendy's Wonderful Kids program

For the sixth year in a row, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care is participating in the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program.

In late December, Diakon received a 2012 Wendy's Wonderful Kids grant of \$67,500 from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

"We are delighted to be able to continue to participate in this wonderful program," says Elisa Esh, executive director of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. "The program has been described as the heart and soul of the Dave Thomas Foundation. Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's, held to the simple belief that every child deserves a permanent home and loving family. He made it his life's mission to encourage others to take responsibility for these children and to be a loud voice for foster-care adoption."

Throughout 2011, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's Mechanicsburg-based Wendy's Wonderful Kids site succeeded in facilitating 10 matches and one adoption finalization. In late December, there were 10 additional children in pre-adoptive placements, with those placements scheduled to finalize through adoption early in 2012.

The Wendy's Wonderful Kids program began in 2006 with only six operating sites in the U.S. During the last six

years the program has expanded to include 122 operating sites covering all 50 states and several Canadian provinces and territories.

The foundation awards grants to carefully selected public and private agencies to hire adoption professionals who implement intensive, child-focused recruitment strategies for children who have been waiting the longest for a permanent family and who, typically, have histories of abandonment, abuse, neglect, and multiple placements.

The Wendy's Wonderful Kids program focuses on transitioning these children from foster homes, group homes, or residential treatment facilities to permanent homes by searching the children's inner circle of family and other important individuals and moving outward to the local surrounding community in which they live. The program empowers children by involving them as much as possible in the recruitment process and providing an avenue for them to voice their needs, wants, and concerns.

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care has been serving children in need since the early 1970s; it has offices in Mechanicsburg, York, and Topton, Pa.

Wilderness Challenge *continued from Page 10*

"final expedition." During this last phase of the program, instructors step back from directing the students and allow them to apply what they have learned. The students plan every detail of the seven-day expedition, holding one another accountable for behaviors that detract from the success of the group. This situation encourages each participant to practice skills worked on throughout the first half of the program and prepare to continue using them when returning home.

"The wilderness challenge program is like nothing else in the state of Pennsylvania," Hofeldt adds. "The woods provide a unique vehicle to capture the attention of today's distracted teenagers, allowing us to teach life skills that easily translate into healthy living—not to mention that the kids seem to appreciate what they have back home when they wake up to a fresh layer of snow on the ground!"

One parent of a former student agrees, having written that "[Our son] is doing well since coming home. He definitely is more pleasant and helpful. He is even taking more responsibility both for what needs to get done and when he does something wrong."

Mid Penn Bank makes holiday donation to children

During the 2011 holiday season, representatives of Mid Penn Bank, Harrisburg, dropped off toys and gifts for children served by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. Staff of Mid Penn Bank and Diakon Adoption & Foster Care include, from left, Kristine Kline, Amy Norris, Rosa Watson, and Jessica O'Shea.



Respite services provide needed 'break' for families

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care provides post-placement services to families who live in Pennsylvania and are caring for children under 18 through adoption, kinship, and permanent legal custodianship. These services include case advocacy, support group, and respite.

Respite services are offered to a child in a family identified by a SWAN (Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network) provider. The service is provided as a means to give the family a "break," so that they can continue to parent their child to the best of their ability.

Respite services are available for up to 48 hours per month and may be provided for a short time (4 to 8 hours), overnight (up to 24 hours), or for a weekend (up to 48 hours) depending on the needs of the family. Individuals or families providing respite are financially compensated for their time.

This service has proven to be crucial for some families providing permanency to children with special needs. Respite families come in all shapes and sizes and all have a desire to help others.

For more information on respite care or how you can become a respite provider, please contact Joyce Riche, permanency supervisor, at (610) 682-1552.

Child donates birthday gifts

Matthew Hill, 5, recently donated his birthday gifts to children served by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. Matthew was adopted through Diakon Pregnancy Services.



We're thankful for your generosity

Your financial support helps to bring together more families through adoption and foster care.

Through your support, you can help Diakon Adoption & Foster Care touch the lives of children and youths in need. From donating books for our resource libraries to offering financial assistance to help subsidize adoption fees, or providing items for foster children, your support is vital. Over the years, generous donations have helped our mission become a reality in so many young lives.

You, too, can make a difference! Simply use the envelope in this issue of *Family Connections* or log onto our Web site's convenient and secure donation form at www.diakon.org to make your gift.



For more information on how you can support Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, please call our Office of Development at 1-877-DIAKON-7, option 2, ext. 21219. Thank you!

Enjoy dinner with your family while supporting Diakon Adoption & Foster Care



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FUNDS FOR FRIENDS **Diakon Adoption & Foster Care**

November 26th 2012

Dine at any Arooga's Grille House & Sports Bar location or Brew 22 American Tavern on the above indicated date & 15% of your guest check will be donated to the above organization/charity.

**PLEASE HAND THIS VOUCHER TO YOUR SERVER OR BARTENDER
TO ATTACH TO YOUR RECEIPT TO RECEIVE PROPER CREDIT.**

Coupons/Vouchers must be distributed prior to event date. Any solicitation on site will result in forfeit of all monies to your organization/charity

Join the Diakon Adoption & Foster Care Strutters as they walk to support the children

Diakon is participating in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community presented by Highmark Blue Shield on Saturday, June 2, at the SteelStacks Campus in Bethlehem.



The Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community is a fundraiser that benefits local health and human service agencies including Diakon.

Highmark Blue Shield underwrites the cost of the walk so that 100% of the money raised by Diakon walkers benefits Diakon's ministry of service.

Mark Saturday, June 2, on your calendar, and start gathering friends, family members, neighbors, and co-workers to join you in walking to ensure a healthier community.

For more information, visit www.walkforahealthycommunity.org or contact Annette Stolte at (610) 682-1270, toll free at (877) 342-5667, ext. 21270, or by email at stoltea@diakon.org.



*When life gives you lemons,
make lemonade.*



Golf outing benefiting Diakon Hospice Saint John

Sept. 29, 2012

1 p.m. Shotgun Start

Olde Homestead Golf Club
(just north of Allentown, Pa.)

Party for Poppa K is an annual charity golf tournament started by Pete Kareha in memory of his father, Poppa K, who benefited from the special programs of Diakon Hospice Saint John during the most trying stage of his life.

Come join the fun!

Register online at:

www.oldehomesteadgolfclub.com/partyforpoppak

Discounted rate offered before June 30.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

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Elisa Esh, Executive Director

Kathy Roach, Director, Topton office

Michael Laird, Director,
Mechanicsburg office

Denise Roe, Director, York office

Carolyn Doerr, Editor

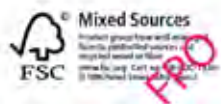
To be removed from our mailing list call (610) 682-3690 or email your full name and address to giving@diakon.org.

Fulfill a wish today.

How you can help children in need

A few dollars can go a long way to help the children of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. Won't you consider giving one or more of these items to them? Or simply send us a check in the enclosed envelope.

- Gift cards for book stores
- Department store gift cards
- Fast-food gift cards
- New, compact duffle bags
- Walmart gift cards



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