

STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELING FOR DUAL DIAGNOSIS PROBLEMS



For many years, counselors working with drug abuse and mental health issues operated in separate worlds. But a recent push to look more closely at dual diagnosis issues has meant new opportunity for Diakon Family Life Services.

The Cumberland/Perry Drug and Alcohol Commission last year approached the program to provide school-based counseling for Cumberland County students at risk for a dual diagnosis, such as a mental health and a substance abuse problem. By providing the services at school, transportation is not an issue for parents.

In January, Diakon Family Life Services – Capital Region began offering the necessary counseling two days a week to all but one school district in the county. “We work with their student assistance teams, which discuss their concerns with the students. If they

identify substance abuse and mental health issues, they are calling us,” explains a program executive. “We coordinate our efforts with the guidance counselors and try to work around the student’s schedule.”

The response to their presence in the schools has been very positive, says Patricia O’Donnell, coordinator of the school-

based services. “The kids are very receptive to working with us,” she says, explaining that a non-confrontational approach works best with adolescents. “Speaking to them in a way that takes the focus off them in the beginning makes it possible to address other issues as they come up.”

One objective is to intervene before behaviors arise that require placement in a treatment facility. “With adolescents, often times you are dealing with ADHD or depression that is not always medicated appropriately or possibly going untreated. The students tell me [smoking] marijuana helps them deal with things,” says O’Donnell. “We try to get them to see that they are using these substances to cope with symptoms that may need professional attention. We want them to see that there is a healthier way of dealing with their symptoms.”

- Cumberland Crossings, Carlisle*
- Diakon Adoption & Foster Care*
- Diakon Family Life Services*
- Diakon Youth Center*
- Diakon Youth Services*
- Frey Village, Middletown*
- Senior Centers (Cumberland County)*
- Diakon Volunteer Home Care, Northern Dauphin County*



WISH LIST

BIG SPRING, MECHANICSBURG & WEST SHORE SENIOR CENTERS

- Three new computers
- 19-inch or larger television and VCR or TV/VCR combination

CUMBERLAND CROSSINGS

- Memory boxes for resident rooms
- TV/VCR/DVD

DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

- Gift cards for department-type stores to purchase clothing and personal-care items
- Gift cards for restaurants and bookstores
- Stickers, gel pens, poster board paper, etc.
- Back packs, duffel bags or small suitcases

DIAKON FAMILY LIFE SERVICES – CAPITAL REGION

- DVD player/television combination and appropriate DVDs for children
- Gift certificates for play-therapy supplies—arts and crafts items
- Sand box for play therapy, sand, dress-up clothes, baby doll clothes, baby bottles, simple board games (gently used is fine)

FREY VILLAGE

- Donations for courtyard project

Diakon Place: Helping to Change a Neighborhood

In early October, Diakon staff and board leaders and local community and governmental officials dedicated Diakon Place, a major investment in an economically challenged East Baltimore neighborhood. Formerly an auto center and supermarket, the abandoned building, now completely refurbished, houses offices for Diakon Housing & Community Development and Diakon Family Life Services – Maryland and Diakon KidzStuff's state-of-the-art child-care center.

DELAWARE-MARYLAND



UPPER SUSQUEHANNA



Roll in the New, Donate the Old

When Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries began to replace all of its nursing care beds with new electric ones, staff members had no idea their decision would help people halfway around the world. When the two Diakon senior living communities in the Upper Susquehanna Synod—Ohesson Manor at Lewistown and Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village in Lewisburg—rolled in the new beds, the older electric and manual ones were rolled out and donated to several causes.

Ohesson donated nearly 100 manual beds to the Upper Susquehanna Synod, which in turn sent them to Liberia.

“The hand of the Lord is in all of this,” says Dr. Robert Bradford, global missions facilitator for the synod. “This project came at a particularly good time.” Just as a group of synod volunteers returned from Liberia, where they helped to rebuild Curran Lutheran Hospital, Zorzor, damaged during the Liberian civil war, they received word of Diakon’s

gift. “The volunteer work crew put a new roof on the hospital, replaced walls, laid new tile on the floor, and completed general renovations,” says Bradford. “It was ready to receive patients again—it just needed beds.” Rebels had stolen the beds and, without the means to replace them, the hospital could provide only outpatient care. But with Diakon’s contribution and the synod’s effort to help rebuild the war-torn country, the hospital will once again function as a hospital should. Responsible for shipping the beds to Liberia, the synod also has worked to raise funds to purchase new mattresses.

“We are so pleased that our beds will be used to care for others, continuing Diakon’s mission to serve those in need,” says Cork Leiter, Ohesson Manor executive director.

Buffalo Valley’s donation of beds benefited those involved in a different reconstruction effort.

Once a month, since Hurricane Katrina’s devastation of the Gulf Coast, volunteers from Christ Wesleyan Church, Milton, have been helping to rebuild area homes. During a recent trip, the crew transported five donated electric beds to offer to older adults or those with special physical needs. “We will be making life a whole lot easier for people,” says Russell Davis, facilities director at the church. The remaining 13 electric beds, out of an 18-bed donation, may be used for the homebound and terminally ill among its 1,200-member congregation. The beds could also serve area individuals from all faiths as Christ Wesleyan Church participates in a community effort, the Hands Up Foundation.

“This is just another example of how Diakon is resourceful in serving as many people as possible,” says John Allison, Buffalo Valley executive director.

LOWER SUSQUEHANNA

Violin's Tradition Leads to Special Gift



Every year Kim Elicker would buy a Christmas gift—usually a toy or a piece of clothing—for a child served by Diakon's foster care program. As she perused this last year's gift list, something caught her eye.

It was a request for a violin.

A musician, Elicker was intrigued. Just how serious was the child about playing? Investigating, she came to learn

that a teenage girl, who had played the violin for six years, had made the request because her instrument had been sold when she entered foster care.

Touched by the youth's situation, Elicker immediately approached her fellow musicians in the Hershey Symphony. One woman quickly raised her hand, offering to donate a violin that belonged to her.

"For her to say, 'here,' was a huge, huge thing," says Elicker, noting that the instrument was more than 100 years old with an intriguing story behind it. "From the beginning, this violin was always given, never sold, except for its original purchase. The girl would be the fifth owner."

The donor was no longer playing the violin and believed it was time to pass it on. "She wanted to keep the tradition of the violin alive and give it to someone who would appreciate it," says Elicker. "She even cleaned up the violin and added new strings."

The opportunity to share the holiday spirit with children and youths served by Diakon is a long-standing tradition at Zion Lutheran Church, Hummelstown. When Elicker returned to her congregation with news of the donated violin, other members stepped forward to make sure the gift included a new case, bow, shoulder pad, chin rest and other accessories, as well as Hershey Symphony tickets.

"It was very much a community gift," Elicker insists. "Because I play the viola, I understood we would need the accessories if we wanted to make it a complete gift. With the donation of the violin, we were able to do that."

The magnitude of the gift was not lost on the girl. When Kelly Smith of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care presented her with the gift, the youth "cried for several minutes and kept repeating that it was the best gift she had ever received. Ironically," says Smith, "her high school orchestra concert was that same night and she was able to take the violin and play it at the concert."

Zion's members "have gone out of their way for years to ensure that kids get their specific requests," adds Smith. "In this situation, they were able to make a miracle happen for a very special young lady."

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Bereavement Camps Offer Safe Haven

For youngsters like Jessica Adamczyk, 11, Camp Evergreen, a Diakon Children's Bereavement Program, provides a safe haven to explore and discuss the emotions experienced after a loved one dies.

"I came here to express my feelings and talk with the other kids and the counselors. My dad died in a car accident when I was just two years old and my friend, who was 8, just died in a four-wheeler accident," says Adamczyk.

In the rural setting of Camp Kresge, White Haven, Adamczyk and approximately a dozen other campers, ages eight to 14, participated in a weekend camp this summer. Geared towards helping youngsters cope with loss through therapeutic activities and peer, counselor, and volunteer interaction, the camp helps children regain normalcy in life.

"When participants meet other kids who have experienced loss, they know they are not alone," says Christina Fedorko, children's bereavement specialist and camp organizer. "They quickly bond and support each other throughout the weekend."

Camp Evergreen offers a myriad of activities such as fishing, swimming, boating, sand art, creating memory boxes, journaling feelings, campfire time, planting flowers and a symbolic evergreen tree. Through informal and formal activities, children discuss their experiences with death with one another and the trained volunteers and counselors.

Diakon recently began an expansion of the program to enable more children to be served.

SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Twining Village Purchased

Earlier in 2006, Diakon announced the purchase of Twining Village, a Continuing Care Retirement Community in Holland, Bucks County, Pa.



IN MEMORIAM

The following memorial gifts were received between October 22, 2005 and June 26, 2006. Diakon programs thank these donors in the Lower Susquehanna Synod for their generous contributions.

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CUMBERLAND CROSSINGS GAMES BRING GENERATIONS TOGETHER

While athletes from around the world were heading to Italy for the start of the Winter Olympics, a group of equally dedicated teammates prepared for their own version of games in Carlisle.

Led by their coach and community life director, Sally McClintock, residents of Cumberland Crossings, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community, joined forces with fourth-graders from nearby St. Patrick School for fun that spanned generations.

Although the event was only the second time partners Blair Saxman and John Leigh met, the buddies had no problem combining efforts and cheering each other on during the word search, volleyball, and egg race events.

Saxman, a resident who has participated in the intergenerational program since it began, enjoys the student visits. "I like the fact that I can get with someone younger and get acquainted with them," he says with a smile. "I was a school teacher for 31 years, and I like to ask questions."

The program partners residents with students in the third grade and works on developing those relationships until the child completes fifth grade, when a new cycle begins with another third-grade class.



Blair Saxman and John Leigh

FREY ABIDER'S MINISTRY PROVIDES COMFORT AT DIFFICULT TIME

It didn't take long for the Rev. John Schier-Hanson, chaplain of Frey Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community, to realize that he could simply not be at the bedside all the time of every resident who was dying. Wanting to do all that he could at this difficult time, he searched for a solution.

"I hit on the 'Abider's Ministry,' which was pioneered in the Midwest," he says. "I contacted the pastor, who actually won an Innovation Award for the program. He sent me everything, right down to their manual, so I could get a group started here."

Schier-Hanson implemented the program four years ago and now has eight "abiders," who volunteer to sit with dying residents during their final days. They can read Scripture, pray, talk and reassure, even hold hands.