

# CONNECTION

Q4 2025

## *A Fond Farewell to Joan Baxter*

After 23 years with Diakon Community Services, we are celebrating the retirement of someone who has been so much more than just a co-worker. Joan has been a steady presence, a trusted teammate, and a caring friend to many.

She began her journey as a Meals on Wheels driver, later spent several years conducting reassessment visits, and ended her career as the voice behind the scenes—listening to consumers with a caring heart and guiding volunteers each day. From the very beginning, Joan brought warmth, kindness, and dedication to everything she did. Whether it was lending a listening ear, greeting anyone who crossed her path with a smile, or stepping in wherever she was needed, she showed what it means to serve with heart.

It's hard to put into words the difference Joan has made over the years—not only in the lives of the people we serve but also in the lives of those lucky enough to work alongside her.

While we will miss her daily laughter and energy, we are excited for this new chapter in her life. May her retirement be filled with joy, relaxation, and plenty of time to enjoy the things she loves most.

Thank you, Joan, for 23 wonderful years of dedication and kindness. The lives you've touched—both those you served and those of us who worked alongside you—will forever carry the mark of your caring spirit. You will always be a cherished part of our Diakon family.



## Welcome New Volunteer

WE NEED YOU!!! Consider joining our Meals on Wheels Volunteer Team. If you can volunteer even one day a month this is truly helpful!

Welcome to our newest team member Deb Bolinsky who has joined the St Paul's Lutheran Church Team delivering to our Orwigsburg consumers. Welcome aboard!!

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## Upcoming...

Watch for the winners of our puzzle competition!

Pottsville, Schuylkill Haven and Tremont have their winners. We are waiting for Mahanoy City to have their center competition to determine our grand puzzle champion for 2025.



# Participants Enjoy Healthy Steps in Motion Program in Ashland

This past July was an exciting time for Diakon Health & Wellness in Ashland. We had the privilege of providing our popular fall prevention exercise program called *Healthy Steps in Motion* to a wonderful group of older adults in Ashland. This was our first time offering one of our evidence-based Health & Wellness programs in this area and were truly fortunate to partner with the Crossfire Ministries on Centre Street. They couldn't have been more generous and hospitable in offering the use of their beautiful gymnasium as seen in the photos. This no-cost program took place for an hour twice a week for 4-weeks and the atmosphere was positive and amiable. The attendees participated in warm-up, strength, balance, and flexibility exercises that they could choose to do either seated or standing. The program also included a Physical Skills



Screening to determine a person's fall risk. The participants were encouraged to exercise at their current fitness level in order to receive the most effective and safe results. What made this group special wasn't just the results they were receiving. They really had a fun time together exercising as a group! This made my co-leader Linda's and my time with them very enjoyable. Couples and friends showed up together and new friendships were made. As the program came to a close, an amazing thing happened. Four of the participants volunteered to lead exercises as an on-going exercise club. The club started the week after the program ended and has been meeting ever since every Tuesday and Thursday from 11:00 AM – Noon at the same location. What a fun way to continue to lower their fall risk through exercise! For a full list of our no-cost on-going Exercise and Walking Clubs in the county and our evidence-based Health & Wellness programs please call Diakon Health & Wellness at 570-624-3017. We can't wait to see you at a program!

Jenny Wagner, Community Wellness Coordinator

## Be Community at the CENTER

Question – do you enjoy your local public library?  
Was your answer...oh my.... I have not gone to the library since I was a kid!

Do you know what you are missing?  
Dave Carroll, Pottsville Senior Community Center member, could tell you.

Dave frequently visits the Pottsville Free Public Library and takes advantage of this community treasure.

His past time, reference books and the computer. "You're never too old to learn something new!" Dave also has been part of book clubs, in which he enjoys "reading something different" than he would normally choose.

Becki White, the Reference Librarian at the Pottsville Free Public Library, commends Dave for his dedication to the library and always takes the opportunity to share all the library has to offer for all ages.  
Your next adventure – visit your local library!



David Carroll, Senior Center Member  
and Becki White, Reference Librarian,  
Pottsville Free Public Library



# TRAVEL ADVENTURES

## with Diakon Living & Learning After 50

### 10-Night Caribbean Cruise

Dates: August 19–29, 2026

Set sail aboard the Norwegian Escape for a relaxing and fun-filled Caribbean adventure. This package includes:

- Roundtrip transportation to the New York City cruise terminal
- 10 nights of accommodations aboard the ship
- Unlimited open bar and specialty dining package
- Prepaid shipboard gratuities
- \$100 onboard credit per stateroom

...and more!

### Dollywood – Smoky Mountain Christmas Tour

Dates: December 1–5, 2026

Celebrate the season with a magical motorcoach getaway to the Smoky Mountains. This festive trip includes:

- Roundtrip motorcoach transportation
- 7 meals included
- Tickets to the *Country Tonite Christmas Show* in Pigeon Forge
- A full day of holiday cheer at Dollywood

...and much more!

Don't miss your chance to travel and make memories with Diakon Living & Learning!

Stop by Boscov's Travel table at the Expo for more information or contact Boscov's Travel, Fairlane Village Mall: 570-622-8983, [bostravpottsville@boscovs.com](mailto:bostravpottsville@boscovs.com) [boscovstravel.com](http://boscovstravel.com)



JOIN DIAKON LIVING & LEARNING AFTER 50 ON A CRUISE TO ALASKA  
ONBOARD THE NORWEGIAN ENCORE  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2025



## 2026 TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES

Join **Diakon Living and Learning after 50** and **Boscov's Travel** for a travel presentation to learn all about the 2026 travel opportunities including a **10-night Caribbean cruise onboard the Norwegian Escape**, sailing August 19–29, 2026 and a **4-night Smoky Mountain Christmas motorcoach tour**, traveling December 1–5 2026. The travel presentation will cover all highlights, inclusions and benefits of traveling with this fun group!

**TRAVEL PRESENTATION: September 10, 2025 at 6PM**

Diakon Community Services, 2020 West Norwegian St., Pottsville, PA  
RSVP is required. Call or email Boscov's Travel, Fairlane Village Mall



Boscov's Travel, Fairlane Village Mall  
**570-622-8983**, [bostravpottsville@boscovs.com](mailto:bostravpottsville@boscovs.com)  
[boscovstravel.com](http://boscovstravel.com) [f](#) [X](#) [@](#)



# Walking Club Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary

In June, we had two exciting things happen at the Schuylkill Indoor Walking Club. They celebrated both the 90th birthday of one of its original members, Alice Henry, and their 10-year anniversary as a club. Six original members are still walking regularly with the newer members and four of them have been volunteer leaders since its beginning in June of 2015. That adds up to a lot of walking and giving of their time! These ladies shared that the members have a lot of fun socializing in addition to receiving the health benefits from the walking. We are so proud of this group for meeting this milestone and Happy Birthday to Alice! This no-cost club meets three times a week for an hour at the Schuylkill Haven Senior Community Center gymnasium and new members of all fitness levels are welcomed with open arms. Please call 570-624-3017 about any of our 10 walking clubs in the county.



*Schuylkill Haven Walking Club Celebrates 10 Years of Walking Together and joins Alice Henry in celebrating her 90th birthday.*



*Six original walkers from the Schuylkill Haven Walking Club that began in June 2015.*

## Meals on Wheels of Schuylkill County

Meals on Wheels of Schuylkill County has served 56,764 frozen meals to 574 older adults in 2025 as of 8/31/2025. The weekly menu is created by a dietitian to meet the Pennsylvania Department of Aging, Aging Program Directive of  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the daily recommended nutritional allowance for seniors. In addition to the frozen meals, 687 shelf stable boxes were delivered to 352 older adults in May 2025.

There will not be meal delivery on Friday, November 28, 2025 due to Thanksgiving and Black Friday.

There will not be meal delivery on Wednesday, December 24, 2025 due to the Christmas Eve holiday.

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. 8500 calls have been made to 224 participants in 2025 as of 8/31/2025. A participant of ORO will ideally receive up to five contacts in a week from Diakon Community Services.





DIAKON  
*Many Hands. One Heart.*

# Living & Learning After 50

## “Drop-in” Fitness Class Schedule

*No registration is needed. \$6/class*

*Punch cards are available at class at a discounted rate - - \$40/eight classes.*

### **Zumba Gold:**

Mondays & Thursdays: 9:30 - 10:30 am / Sch. Haven Center - 340 Haven Street

*No class 11/17, 11/27, 12/4, 12/25*

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

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

*No class 11/27, 12/4, 12/25*

### **Functional Fitness:** *No class 11/4*

Tuesdays: 9 - 10 am / Sch. Haven Center - 340 Haven Street

### **Gentle Yoga:** *No class 11/11, 11/18, 12/30*

Tuesdays: 6 - 7 pm / 23 Meadowbrook Center - Route 183, Sch. Haven

### **Seated Yoga:**

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

Fridays: 11 am - noon / Mahanoy City Center - 138 West Centre Street *No Class 11/28*

### **Line Dance:**

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.

*Schedule/location is subject to change.*

*Please call ahead if attending a drop in class for the first time*

[longs@diakon.org](mailto:longs@diakon.org)

570-624-3018

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

*Although the classes are geared toward the 50+ crowd, everyone is welcome.*

# Kim's Nutrition Tidbit...

Kim Woodford  
Nutrition Education Adviser, Nutrition Links  
Penn State Extension

## Why is soup so great for seniors?

Soup is generally affordable and nourishing, but the benefits of a bowl for seniors stretch past these elements. After all, there is a reason that we reach for soup when we're feeling under the weather!

- **Nutritious:** Many soups, stews, and chowders contain a variety of vegetables, herbs, and protein, making them rich in vitamins, minerals, and omega-3s.
- **Easy to digest:** High in fiber and potassium from vegetables, beans, and legumes, soups are easier to eat and digest than dense foods.
- **Low-calorie yet filling:** Homemade soups are low-calorie but filling, making them a great option for weight loss without the preservatives of canned versions.
- **Can treat inflammation:** Soup ingredients help keep you hydrated, reduce inflammation, and support cardiovascular health
- Easy to prepare: You can make soups and stews in one pot, which means fewer dishes to wash.
- **Gentle on the stomach:** Warm, brothy foods are easy to digest and soothing.
- **Customizable:** You can adjust recipes to fit dietary needs, like reducing salt for heart health or adding more fiber for better digestion.
- **Perfect for leftovers:** Make a big batch, and you'll have enough to eat for several days or freeze for later.

## Minestrone Soup

10-16 ounces frozen **vegetables**, any type  
30 ounces stewed **tomatoes**, canned, low sodium (2 cans)  
28 ounces broth, any flavor, canned, low sodium (2 cans)  
15 ounces **beans**, canned, any type (1 can)  
1 cup **pasta**, dry, any type (1 ounce uncooked)

1. In a large pot, combine frozen vegetables, tomatoes, broth and beans.
2. Bring the soup to a boil and add the pasta. Then reduce to low heat. Let simmer for 6-8 minutes or until the pasta and vegetables are tender.

Yields 6 servings, 1 cup per serving  
1 serving: Calories 240, Fat 1.5g, Carbohydrate 45g, Protein 12gm, Sodium 530mg, Fiber 9g, Calcium 10%



Recipe and photo source: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/minestrone-soup>



# For the FAITH of it...

— Phylis Hess

Why am I part of my church, St. John the Baptist ensemble?

“Singing is Praying Twice!”

When I first came to Pottsville, I knew no one. My family was at least an hour away. I went exploring Pottsville and discovered St. John the Baptist Church and the Pottsville Senior Community Center.

I found a place to worship and became closer to my God and wanted to sing His praises. So, I took the many steep stairs to the choir loft, and I felt a closeness to God (I get my exercise in doing those steps).



I found some very wonderful people in that loft...creating friendships as we praise God together.

On top of this, I went to the center also and found special people who became my second family.

Between church, the ensemble, and the Center, I am now nourished in body, mind, spirit, and creativity. When I finally lay my head on my pillow at night, I go to sleep a happier person for being part of the Ensemble and being able to praise and thank my Lord.



## PA Medi Volunteer Opportunities

We have volunteer opportunities for anyone who is interested in counseling for the PA MEDI program. This program is part of a federal program that offers free unbiased Medicare counseling. This program requires an extensive amount of training, and we would need a weekly commitment to this program. All training is free. If this sounds interesting to you, please reach out to Renee Stefnic, Schuylkill County's PA MEDI Coordinator at [stefnicr@diakon.org](mailto:stefnicr@diakon.org) or 570-624-3026.

## PA MEDI

When it comes to navigating Medicare health insurance choices, few things are more valuable than trusted guidance — especially during Open Enrollment. One community member, Eileen McGuire, shared just how impactful that guidance has been:

“Her name is Renee Stefnic, and she is the PA MEDI Program Coordinator for Diakon Community Services in Pottsville. We will all want to take advantage of Diakon, especially now during Open Enrollment for Health Insurance. Renee has the knowledge, experience, and most importantly, the information we cannot afford to be without.”

Eileen, who worked in Healthcare herself, added that despite her professional background, she still never makes a Medicare decision without Renee's input.

Through the PA MEDI (Medicare Education and Decision Insight) program, Renee and her team provide free, unbiased, and confidential assistance to older adults and their families. They help compare plans, review benefits, and ensure that everyone has the information they need to make the best possible decision for their situation.

As Eileen summed up perfectly: “We don't have to make this decision by ourselves — and we shouldn't — thanks to Diakon and Renee.”

If you or someone you know needs help reviewing Medicare options, reach out to Diakon Community Services today. With expert guidance from Renee and the PA MEDI team, you can feel confident in your healthcare choices this Open Enrollment season.

## Fun Fact

I have been walking the streets since childhood, like most of us growing up before the turn of the 21st century. If you wanted to go anywhere as a kid, you had to walk. So, as I grew into adulthood, I began hiking in the woods on my own and have not stopped! My love for this activity has evolved from doing it for cardio to slowing down and bathing in the sun's rays streaming through the forest canopy above. Stopping along the path in the Spring to observe the tiny frogs (young toads) hopping around the base of oak trees and watching the bright orange salamanders scurry across the trail and around the rocks.



Hiking in nature is naturally healing. I love the quiet soulful adventure it offers. I see lots of wildlife all around me. On many occasions, a family of white tail deer leaping over an embankment, Broad Wing hawks soaring way above the Pinnacle and the smaller Kestrels (falcons) resting on the tree branches. One time a bald eagle swooped down over my head while I was wading in the pond with my dog and while resting on a log at the top of a mountain, a scruffy old mouse that was blind in one eye sat near me like an old friend.

I could spend an eternity in nature and never be bored. There are infinite opportunities to experience the connection we have with all things. We still have a lot to learn from nature, and I plan on being her student forever.

Lisa Griffin, Schuylkill Haven Senior Center Manager



## TEAMS THAT SERVE TOGETHER, WIN TOGETHER!

Calling all local sports teams and community organizations—Suit up and make a difference off the field!



Join our Meals on Wheels Team and help deliver more than just meals—you'll be delivering hope, connection, and conversation to your senior neighbors.

Whether it's once a week or once a month, your team can huddle up to make a real impact.



**Be a champion in your community—  
join the Meals on Wheels team  
today—570-624-3013**



Diakon Community Services manages the Meals on Wheels program under a contract with the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services with funding by the PA Department of Aging.





# Craft Corner *AT THE CENTER*

Pottsville Senior Center “ROCKS”!

If you spent time at the Pottsville Senior Community Center over the last few weeks, you would have had the opportunity to paint rocks with a purpose...To Spread Joy in Our Community!

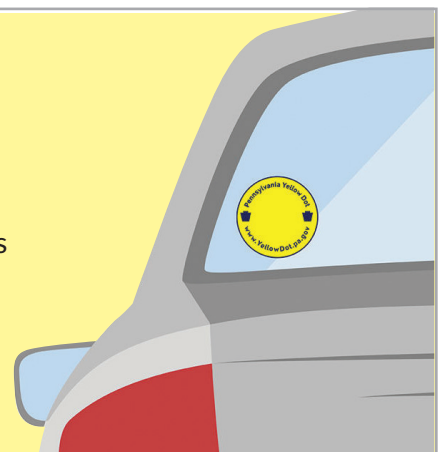
The seniors enjoyed painting inspirational, fun sayings and pictures on river rock.

The best part, sharing them with our neighbors. On a beautiful morning, they hit the pavements, placing their works of art for people to enjoy, to bring joy for that moment or for the day.



## “Yellow Dot” Presentation

The Yellow Dot Program helps you get the right emergency care in your time of need after a traffic crash. Placing a Yellow Dot decal in your vehicle's rear window alerts first responders to check your glove compartment for vital information to ensure you receive the medical attention you need. Presented by Sarah Mills, Highway Safety Network, Community Traffic Safety Project Coordinator



# Keep that Brain Sharp

Adult coloring offers seniors significant benefits, including improved motor skills, enhanced focus and cognitive function, stress and anxiety reduction, and a powerful outlet for self-expression and creativity. It provides a sense of accomplishment and can stimulate positive memories, reduce boredom, and foster social connections when done in groups.



## Cognitive & Mental Health Benefits

- **Reduce Stress and Anxiety:** The repetitive, mindful act of coloring can calm the mind, similar to meditation, leading to a greater sense of peace and relaxation.
- **Enhances Focus:** Coloring requires sustained attention, which can improve concentration and help seniors stay in the moment, distracting from negative thoughts or worries.
- **Stimulates Cognitive Function:** Creative activities like coloring can help maintain memory, problem-solving skills, and overall brain function.
- **Boosts Mood and Self-Esteem:** Completing a coloring page provides a sense of accomplishment and pride in one's creations, which can significantly improve mood and overall self-esteem.

## Physical Benefits

- **Improves Fine Motor Skills:** The act of holding and manipulating colored pencils or crayons strengthens grip, improves dexterity, and sharpens hand-eye coordination.
- **Engages Sensory Processing:** The combination of colors and textures stimulates sensory input, providing a gentle and enjoyable way to engage the senses.

## Social & Emotional Benefits

- **Provides a Creative Outlet:** Coloring allows for self-expression without strict rules, giving seniors a chance to be creative and develop personal style.

## *Laughter is good for the heart and soul...*

A retired man volunteers to entertain patients in assisted living homes. He visited one hospital in Brooklyn and brought along his portable keyboard.

After telling jokes and singing songs at patients' bedsides, he said farewell and, "I hope you get better." One elderly gentleman replied, "I hope you get better, too."





# You Were Seen at...



CarFit in Schuylkill Haven



Celebrating Senior Center Month at the Pottsville Senior Community Center

*A special recipe shared with love  
and lots of memories.*

We share this recipe with a heavy heart as it was a favorite of one of our members, Larry Matty, who passed away August 15, 2025. He enjoyed sharing his love of cooking with his friends at the center.

Heaven gained a cooking angel!

## Double Decker Fudge

### Peanut Butter Layer:

4 ½ cups sugar  
7 oz. jar marshmallow cream  
12 oz. can evaporated milk  
½ of a 12 oz. pack of Reese's peanut butter chips or ½ cup peanut butter

In a 4-quart saucepan, add the sugar, marshmallow cream, and evaporated milk. Bring to a rolling boil and boil 5 mins. Pour over the peanut butter chips or peanut butter and mix well until smooth.

### Cocoa Layer:

½ of a 12 oz. pack Reese's peanut butter chips or ½ cup peanut butter  
½ cup unsweetened Hershey's cocoa powder  
4 tbsp butter (1/4 stick)  
1 tsp vanilla

Melt butter. Add unsweetened cocoa powder and vanilla. Add peanut butter chips or peanut butter and mix well until smooth.

Grease 13x13 pan and line with aluminum foil. Optional: add a layer of parchment paper for easy removal from the pan. Pour in a layer of peanut butter mixture and smooth out. Cover with layer of cocoa mixture. Refrigerate until solid. Store in airtight container (about 4 lbs.).



# UPCOMING EVENTS

- Tuesday, November 4      Health & Wellness:  
**Start of Healthy Steps in Motion Program**  
thru December 2  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
300 W Arch St, Pottsville
- Tuesday, November 11      Senior Centers:  
**Fall Prevention Presentation**  
Mahanoy City Senior Community Center  
148 W Centre Street, Mahanoy City  
10:30
- Tuesday, November 18      Senior Centers:  
**Yellow Dot**  
Schuylkill Haven Senior Community Center  
340 Haven Street, Schuylkill Haven  
10:30
- Thursday, November 20      Senior Centers:  
**Yellow Dot**  
Mahanoy City Senior Community Center  
148 W Centre Street, Mahanoy City  
10:30
- Tuesday, November 25      Senior Centers:  
**Fall Prevention Presentation**  
Schuylkill Haven Senior Community Center  
340 Haven Street, Schuylkill Haven  
10:30
- Tuesday, December 2      Senior Centers:  
**Fall Prevention Presentation**  
Tremont Senior Community Center  
139 Clay Street, Tremont  
10:30

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

(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

## AVAILABLE JOBS

**Part Time  
Center Assistant**  
Senior Community Center  
(Pottsville)

**Per Diem  
Meals on Wheels  
Driver**

**For more information  
and to apply, please visit**  
[www.diakon.org/careers/](http://www.diakon.org/careers/)