

# DIALOG

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Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries

Spring 2011

## Triplet recollects 90 years of life

Top row, left to right, Catherine Roth, Frances Hornberger, and Marguerite Miller as they look today. Second row, the triplets in 1939. Third row, the triplets in 1926.

■ In 1920, a gallon of milk cost 35 cents, Prohibition was just beginning, and the Kirchner triplets—Catherine, Marguerite (Marge), and Frances—were born in Brooklyn, NY.

Marge Kirchner Miller, the middle triplet, says they were “spoiled collectively” despite the fact that they were “children of the Depression”.

The Kirchner triplets were not only indistinguishable in looks, but also shared the same academic and active pursuits—and taste in men. As young children, they were placed in the same classes

and wore the same clothes. As young adults, they all attended William Smith College in Geneva, NY, became teachers, and married “Hobart men” from nearby Hobart College.

“We were very similar in many respects,” says Miller.

After they married, the triplets’ lives took different paths. Frances and Catherine remained in New York, but Miller and her late husband, Edgar, lived in several different areas of the country, eventually settling at Luther Crest, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Allentown, Pa., in 2003.

Miller, who says she “has no regrets about moving to Luther Crest,” has been committed to supporting Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries’ initiatives. Miller has contributed funds for a new organ, served as president of the Residents’ Association at Luther Crest, and supported the Luther Crest Benevolent Endowment Fund.

“Even though she is 90 years old, she’s still active and involved,” says Joie Barry, major gifts officer with Diakon. “She is positive, upbeat, and always smiling.”

Miller attributes her longevity to “good genes and an active lifestyle” that included tennis and golf into her 80s.

In the era in which they were born, the chance that all three girls would survive and thrive was slim. Nine decades later, they have lived through World War II, seen men walk on the moon, and felt the pinch of the skyrocketing costs of goods.

But to Miller, the most significant change is the impact electronics have had on day-to-day life. “My fourth-grade grandson knows more than I’ll ever know,” she says. “It’s mind-boggling.” ■



# OUR MISSION

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service.

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries is a leading provider of senior living accommodations and social services, including adoption, counseling, home care, and youth programs in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. With many hands and one heart, Diakon staff members each year touch the lives of more than half-a-million children, families, and older adults. We are proud to continue a nearly 150-year tradition of hospitality and care for people of all faiths.

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### Carolyn L. Doerr

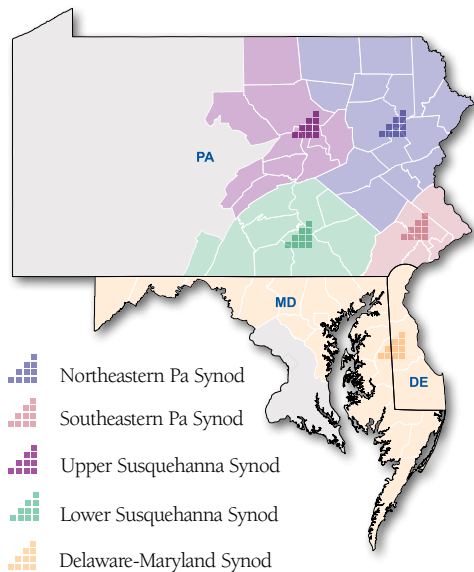
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# THE PRESIDENT'S DIALOG



Mark T. Pile, MSHA, MSW  
 Diakon President/CEO

In the midst of dealing with the potential ramifications of whatever shape health-care reform eventually takes, ever-increasing regulations, and decreasing or stagnant funding streams, one of the issues with which we occasionally wrestle, you might be surprised to learn, is—how to describe Diakon.

Unlike universities, health-care systems, or even the two orphanages from which our heritage of service arose, Diakon is not a single-service or single-site institution. To make matters even more complicated, we offer one service "here," but not "there," another service "there" but not "here."

Take, for example, our child-care program. We have one located in the state-of-the-art Diakon Place in Baltimore, but nowhere else. Or adoption and foster care—those are services we offer in Pennsylvania, but not Maryland.

The Brandywine intensive outpatient treatment program designed to reduce the psychiatric institutionalization of young people is offered only in Delaware. Our hospice services are provided throughout much of eastern Pennsylvania and a small region in central Pennsylvania, but not elsewhere. Counseling services are offered in central and eastern Pennsylvania, but their funding streams are much different.

And we have an amazing range of community-based services for seniors, including meals on wheels, community resource centers, and health-related and educational services—in Schuylkill County, Pa.

Some of this inconsistency—perhaps diversity is a better word—arises from our history and the fact Diakon was formed in 2000 by the affiliation and later merger of two organizations with distinct traditions and services.

However, there is another way of looking at this range of services, a view more consistent with our heritage of service and our mission to meet specific needs. Many of our services have arisen directly in response to local need. And local needs vary by community.

Just as our neighbors are unique individuals, serving our neighbor may mean very different things in different neighborhoods.

This wonderful mix of services, however, creates some challenges for us when we're asked, "What is Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries?"

Beyond often saying that we're a non-profit senior living, health care, and social service organization, we typically will say, "We offer adoption and foster care services, programs for at-risk youths, counseling, retirement communities, hospice services . . ." and so on.

But we usually then have to qualify our statement: "Well, we offer these three services here, but we don't provide that particular program here."

The Rev. John Richter, who oversees our church relations, describes Diakon as "a collection of ministries." I like that phrase, but for some people who do not understand the Lutheran church's historic tradition of social services reaching out to help people of all faiths or even no faith, the term ministries can be confusing.

In the era of Twitter and brief Facebook updates, in which people demand short and immediate responses to questions, you can imagine that describing Diakon's complexity can sometimes be challenging.

In 2006, we developed our tagline "Many Hands. One Heart." and while we continue to refine the way in which we describe Diakon, I believe Many Hands. One Heart. remains a powerful descriptor.

Essentially, it means all of these diverse programs and staff members—our Many Hands—are guided by One Heart, our charitable mission, to change the lives of children, families, and older adults.

Whether you add that we're one of the nation's larger social ministry organizations, that we date to 1868, or that we serve our neighbor regardless of faith, those few words nevertheless sum us up quite well.

Many Hands, guided by One Heart, changing the lives of children, families, and older adults.

Maybe describing Diakon is not as difficult as we imagine.

## Troubled youths offered 'turning point' in life

■ Turning Point is well-named.

At-risk male youths from Lancaster County, Pa., have a chance to turn their lives around, thanks to the Diakon Youth Services program that provides an alternative to detention.

"This program is a second chance for them. We are looking for the students to embrace that. Whatever they did, they need to take responsibility for it; in the meantime, we are looking to teach them important skills," says Ron Davis, director of southeast Pennsylvania programs of Diakon Youth Services.

Pre-adjudicated and adjudicated delinquent adolescent males, ages 12 to 18, can remain in their homes and attend school while receiving meaningful community-based programming at the Turning Point evening reporting center.

Located at St. Paul United Methodist Church in Lancaster, Turning Point serves up to 10 electronically monitored youths from 3 to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday. Referral periods last from 30 to 40 days.

Helping the students reach individualized goals, Turning Point staff members teach skills related to academic, social, and community issues; moral reasoning; workforce development; anger management, vocation,

and independent living.

"The staff guide and mentor them so they are better equipped to become productive members of society," says Tanisha Negron-Bailey, Turning Point supervisor. "We develop a relationship and hope what they learn will influence their future."

Turning Point works closely with the juvenile probation department, schools, and family members to ensure community safety.

"It is important for them to have positive contact within that community," says Davis. "We promote the value of volunteerism and civic engagement."

Turning Point also places significance on family involvement. Weekly interaction is encouraged and each month family dinners are held. "Everyone works together to prepare the meal. It helps students and their families develop positive, constructive relationships."

Students are exposed to recreational activities, creative arts, and Diakon Wilderness Center activities such as ropes courses, rock walls, the 50-foot Alpine Tower, to discover hidden talents and unleash inner strengths derived from motivation, teamwork, and overcoming fears.

Made possible by a grant administered



*Counselor Darrio Parham facilitates an Aggression Replacement Training group.*

through Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and obtained by the Lancaster County Office of Juvenile Probation in August 2010, Turning Point follows the growing trend of providing alternatives to detention centers, a trend many believe increases youth reform rates.

"So far, our program has been successful," says Davis, noting that in the first three months of Turning Point, no participants received new criminal charges, school attendance was at 99 percent, and family involvement came in at 80 percent. Overall, 81 percent of students were discharged successfully and Negron-Bailey says that former students have visited Turning Point to thank staff for the opportunity that they have provided them.

"It just goes to show you that we are having an impact on those we serve." ■

## From Kloset to our community

■ In 2010, approximately \$5.4 million worth of new and unused goods were donated via Diakon Kathryn's Kloset and its partners.

"Partnerships are the essence of Diakon Kathryn's Kloset," says Wade Brown, executive director. "We find corporate partners who donate goods and then we seek out non-profit partners that distribute the items to those in need."

As a Baltimore warehouse-based program, Diakon Kathryn's Kloset secures and stores corporate donations of new and unused personal-care products, educational materials, and other items and provides them free of charge to regional, national, and international non-profit groups that, in turn, distribute the goods without cost to people in need in their local communities.

Typically, the items have minor cosmetic defects and might have otherwise been destroyed.

"We've received detergent and fabric softener, personal care items, and children's books," says the Rev. Karl-John Stone, assistant to the bishop of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, who helped to form a partnership with Diakon Kathryn's Kloset by designating four distribution hubs within the synod. Since the partnership was formed, about \$123,000 worth of goods has been distributed through Agape Ministry, Bloomsburg; St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Shamokin Dam; Juniata County Food Pantry, Mifflintown; and Messiah Lutheran Church, South Williamsport. A designated hub rents a truck to pick up and distribute the items. Each hub then allocates the goods through their respective congregations, pantries, or other local social service agencies.

"It is an exciting ministry and we believe we are making a difference," says Stone.

Partners, like those in the Upper Susquehanna Synod, are working with a common goal in mind—to serve others.

"There is no prescribed way to make Diakon Kathryn's Kloset work," says the Rev. John Richter, Diakon's vice president for church relations. "So each partner finds a way that works best for them."

In Allentown, Diakon Kathryn's Kloset has partnered with Lutheran Congregational Services and Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network.

To date, Lutheran Congregational Services has used its resources to pick up approximately seven tractor-trailer loads of products—totaling \$278,400—from Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. The items are then stored in a warehouse donated by Good Shepherd; the property serves as a pick-up point for non-profit agencies that deliver products in their relevant ministries or service areas.

In Reading, the West Berks Mission District, a coalition of 45 Lutheran congregations in the western portion of Berks County, has distributed more than \$52,000 worth of goods.

And across Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, other partners—consisting of congregations and other non-profit groups—have distributed \$4.9 million of donated goods. Some of these partners serve national and international organizations, making Diakon Kathryn's Kloset's impact far-reaching.

"You can do more together than you can do alone," says Richter. "These partnerships allow Diakon Kathryn's Kloset to reach those who need help the most." ■

💡 *No money is ever exchanged for items distributed through Diakon Kathryn's Kloset. It is the generous support of donors who make this program possible.*



# Putz takes alumni back to life in orphanage

■ This year marks the 115th anniversary of The Lutheran Orphans Home in Topton, Pa., the first real “home” to the alumni who will gather there in August to celebrate this special occasion.

Even though the orphanage campus is now occupied by The Lutheran Home at Topton/A Diakon Senior Living Community and several Diakon programs for children and families, memories of the orphanage linger in the minds of the men and women who were reared there.

Donald Gum and Ginny Baer Ebersole spent their youth—from infancy to graduation—at the orphanage. They both have good memories of the home and are thankful they were raised there: Gum says that a day doesn’t go by that he doesn’t think about growing up in Topton; Ebersole says she had a good upbringing that stressed the importance of respect, responsibility, and work.

The Christmas putz, a decorative, miniature-scale village that covers 560 square feet, is one of their favorite memories. Among the display’s scenes are a representation of the Holy birth, a replica of Radio City Music Hall complete with an organ and an orchestra in the pit, a circus, and a large church with tiny hymnals, baptismal font, and a pipe organ. The name comes from the German verb “putzen,” meaning to brighten or display.

Each year between Christmas and New Year’s Eve, the orphans sat before the putz, watching trains go round as a little toy monkey climbed a tree and miniature skaters glided across a pond.

“Everyone had their favorite part of the putz,” says Ebersole. “The angels hanging from the clouds were just beautiful. But the story of Christmas—the birth of Christ—is what stayed with me.”

The putz, which some believe to be the oldest in the United States, was the brainchild of Mrs. Ida Henry, matron of The Lutheran Orphans Home at the time.

She decided to construct the village as a gift to the children. Each year, Mrs. Henry, wife of the Rev. Dr. J.O. Henry, home superintendent, invited children to help as she added something new and different to the display.

Today, the putz is displayed in its original location inside the Brandywine Community Library in the Old Main building on the Topton senior living campus.

When the home celebrates its anniversary in August, Gum and Ebersole will be there remembering what life was like 70 years ago as they sat before the Christmas putz, watching the amazing gift that was given to them by a woman who provided them with a sense of security.

And they’ll feel as if they are home again. ■



*The Christmas story, as told by The Lutheran Orphans Home putz.*

## Dialog Digest

### Diakon Wilderness Center to construct new poles course

A new poles course will soon be constructed at the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa., financed in part by a grant from the state Department of Community and Economic Development. The high-ropes course is a therapeutic tool used by the center’s trained staff members to help teens experience achievement, face fears, and learn teamwork and the importance of trust and responsibility. To learn how you can help complete the funding needed for construction of this life-changing course, please contact Christopher Gow at (717) 795-0422.

### Luther Crest’s Bridgegate opens

The Bridgegate apartment complex at Luther Crest, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Allentown, Pa., is now open. Residents have been moving into the new building, which offers five unique, one-

and two-bedroom apartment styles, with apartments connected by climate-controlled hallways and lounge areas to the amenities of Luther Crest’s Community Center. The building represents another phase in the expansion and comprehensive renovation of the senior living community; earlier stages included Southgate homes and a wellness center complete with indoor pool.

### Orphan reunions take place

In August, people who as children called The Lutheran Orphans Home in Topton, Pa., their home will come together to reminisce with old friends as part of the 115th anniversary celebration of the children’s home; the site now serves as The Lutheran Home at Topton, a Diakon Senior Living Community. The heritage of the former home’s service to children is carried on by such Diakon programs as adoption and foster care. From 1897 until children were transferred into

community-based services in the 1970s and 1980s, the Topton site offered care to more than 1,600 children.

Their gathering is not unique. Last summer, former residents of the Tressler Orphans Home, Loysville, Pa., returned to the Perry County site of the children’s home, which opened in 1868 and served as many as 330 children in a single year, for their periodic reunion. The large campus, which closed in 1962, is now used as a state youth development center. Its heritage also is continued by such Diakon programs as adoption, foster care, and youth services.



Complete this short survey to be entered into a drawing for one of four \$50 Visa gift cards!

# Diakon Dialog Survey

Using a scale of 1 (least important) to 5 (most important), please *circle* the importance of the following *Dialog* articles:

Stories about children and youth	1	2	3	4	5
Stories about community-based services	1	2	3	4	5
Stories about counseling	1	2	3	4	5
Stories about older adults and senior living services	1	2	3	4	5
Articles about Diakon's direction	1	2	3	4	5
Articles about Diakon's history	1	2	3	4	5
The President's Dialog	1	2	3	4	5
Articles about donors	1	2	3	4	5

I currently read \_\_\_\_\_ percentage of the articles in *Dialog* (please check)

- 0%     
  Between 1% and 24%     
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  50% to 74%     
  75% to 100%

If you answered 0%, why do you not read *Dialog*? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 (not very effective) to 5 (very effective), how effective are the articles in *Dialog* ...

In keeping you informed of Diakon developments and directions	1	2	3	4	5
In helping you to understand the various programs of Diakon	1	2	3	4	5
In helping you to understand the importance of support for Diakon	1	2	3	4	5

Do you read the *Donor Blessings* newsletter found inside *Dialog*? Yes No

Do you review the annual donor report found inside *Dialog*? Yes No

As a publication, I believe *Dialog* is:

- Much too long     
  A little too long     
  About right in length     
  A little too short     
  Much too short

Below, please make any comments or suggestions you may have on *Dialog* content, length, delivery, number of issues, and/or items that you would like to see in future issues. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Deadline for survey forms eligible for the gift-card drawing is May 15, 2011. Survey forms will continue to be accepted after that date, but will not be eligible for the drawing. The random drawing for the gift cards will take place as soon as possible after May 15; only returned forms including name, address, and contact information will be eligible for the drawing. Winners will be contacted by mail, telephone, or e-mail. Applicable taxes are the responsibility of the card recipient. While survey forms are welcomed from members of the staff of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, affiliated organizations, and contractors, those individuals are not eligible for the gift-card drawing.

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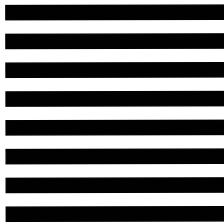
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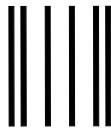
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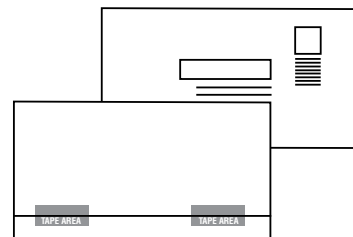
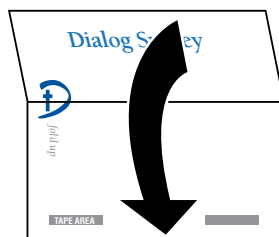
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Complete the short survey on the reverse to be entered into a drawing for one of four \$50 Visa gift cards!

### Mailing Instructions

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# Four-legged friends visit Frey Village

Ilean Agresta looks forward to the days when her friend comes to visit at Frey Village, a Diakon Lutheran Senior Living Community in Middletown, Pa.

Agresta's friend is eager to see her and always makes her smile. Even when her friend starts napping in the middle of the visit, it's no big deal—Agresta's "friend" is a 7-year-old domestic, short-haired cat named Boots.

"I used to have a lot of cats," says Agresta, formerly of Lebanon. "I love cats. They're friends of mine."

Boots belongs to Kathy Laverty, a certified animal therapist and volunteer coordinator with the American Red Cross of the Susquehanna Valley. Each week, Laverty loads Boots into his pet stroller and pushes him through Frey Village, as he makes his rounds to the cat lovers who live there.

"The residents really look forward to the pet visits," says Heidi Murray, personal care activities coordinator. Murray says

*The residents really look forward to the pet visits... we've become one big family.*

four pets, including Laverty's, visit the senior living community each week.

Boots is just one of Laverty's certified therapy animals. She also has a dog, Fiona, as well as horses, alpacas, and goats. Frey Village residents are offered field trips to Laverty's Londonderry Township farm to interact with the horses and goats. "Many of the residents have grown up on farms and it's nice for them to be able to be back on one," Laverty says.

There are 180 volunteer pet therapists in the Susquehanna Valley Red Cross chapter and about 200 certified pets. All volunteers must pass a criminal background check and have good command over their pets. All pets must be at least one year old to become certified and must pass evaluations for personality and training.

"We want to make sure each pet has a good temperament with children, people, sliding doors, walkers, and so on," Laverty explains. "We want to make sure this is an activity the pets enjoy."

Boots is a popular pet. He also is a "reading cat" at Seven Sorrows BVM School where second and third graders read to him; he assists in an autism class at Lower Dauphin High School; he helps out at Hilltop Academy in Mechanicsburg; and he visits regularly at the Ronald McDonald House in Hershey.



Ilean Agresta and Boots at Frey Village.

"He's just a love bug," Laverty says. "He'll go on group visits with dogs. He doesn't care."

The pet therapy program is free to pet owners who become certified, as well as to Frey Village and its residents. "More and more, people are realizing the benefits of pet therapy," Laverty says. Residents benefit from a calming effect by petting the animals and staff enjoy the visits as well. "We have a long history here at Frey," Laverty says. "We've become one big family."

For Agresta, spending a half-hour with a contented big gray cat is just a little slice of heaven. "Look at the good kitty. He just lies here on my lap. What could be nicer than that?" ■



## Your generosity is appreciated

♥ In 2011, Diakon will provide approximately \$14 million in benevolent care to the people we serve. We need your continued support to provide that level of care to people in your community with limited financial resources.

Most of the Diakon services depicted in *Dialog* provide benevolent care in a variety of ways. Diakon depends now more than ever on generous donations from corporations, synods, congregations, and individuals to enable it to serve so many people.

You can join us in making a difference in the lives of people in need. Simply use the blue envelope in this issue of *Dialog* or log onto our web site's convenient and secure donation form to make your gift.

For further information on how you can support one or more of Diakon's ministries, please call the Office of Advancement at 1-877- DIAKON-7, option 2, extension 21219, or visit [www.diakon.org](http://www.diakon.org). Thank you.

• FROM STORAGE TO TREASURE •

## Flight program sends furniture to help children in Haiti orphanages

■ John Foulds isn't a big fan of cold weather, but that didn't stop him from giving up a free weekend to pitch in to help others.

Foulds, 19, of Phoenixville, volunteered his time to help a group of friends in the Flight Program at the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa., dismantle furniture and prepare it for shipment to Haiti.

Foulds, who attended the center's Weekend Alternative Program, and five young men involved in the Flight Program worked on and off for a week to disassemble beds, dressers, desks, and chairs, wrap the items in packaging, and load them on a truck.

The winter weather didn't make their job easy, as they lugged items through the wilderness center woods to a box truck. "The cold bothers me, but I don't care," Foulds says, as he rubbed his gloved hands together in an attempt to keep them warm.

The mission the youths were on, however, made the cold only a momentary inconvenience. After all, the furniture was being sent to earthquake-ravaged Haiti to be reassembled and used at two orphanages.

"Since the disaster, they have had an increase in the number of kids in orphanages," explains Rob Kivlan, Flight Program supervisor. "Some kids are sleeping on the floor."

The furniture had been used as part of the center's Foundations Residential Program. Because of funding issues and a lack of referrals for long-term placement of youths by counties, Diakon phased out Foundations in the fall. The center, however, continues to offer the 30-Day Wilderness Challenge, Weekend Alternative, Flight, and Center Point Day Treatment programs.

Kivlan and Flight member Tom Kemper, 18, who had both recently been to Haiti, quickly realized the stored furniture could be put to good use.

"We've all been given second chances so we're trying to give back

because we got that second chance," Kivlan says.

Last year, Kemper taught Bible School in Haiti and hopes to return this year. "We teach kids about Jesus, play games with them, and feed them. We try to help out as best we can," he says. "It's really hard to see kids sleep on the ground. It's really awesome to think we can send materials from here and have them be used in Haiti."

Kivlan and Diakon staff member Matt Reichard are working with the program, Awaken Haiti, to get the furniture to the orphanages.

"It makes me feel better knowing I'm helping them," says Flight participant Chris Skates. "This is something that can bring happiness to 40 kids. That's pretty amazing."

Kivlan says he's grateful that Diakon was willing to donate the furniture to a good cause. "Diakon has been really supportive of the whole project. We're blessed."

His dream, he says, is to be able to take all seven current Flight participants to Haiti. "It would change their whole lives." ■■

💡 *The Diakon Wilderness Center Flight Program depends on generous giving to continue making a remarkable difference in the lives of at-risk young men. Please use the enclosed envelope to support Flight!*



*Flight participants, staff, and friends load beds en route to Haiti onto a truck. From left are John Foulds; Matt Reichard, flight counselor; Chris Chilton; Tom Kemper; and Chris Skates.*