

Soaring to New Heights!

Flight Program



Volume 4 Issue 1

Changes Lead to New Opportunities...

The great writer Stephen Chbosky once said “Things change...life doesn't stop for anybody.” The Flight Program is in the midst of life rolling on for our participants and staff, and that has led to lots of change. The most significant one of those changes is the change in leadership of the program. After nearly four years at the helm, Rob Kivlan stepped down from his role as Flight Manager in April 2013 and took a new role as a Development Officer with Diakon. Rob was the backbone of Flight and he will always be the foundation that formed the program through its early years and built it into what it is today. Dozens of young men were touched by his work with them and they are all better young men for it.



Rob with Jean Rony & Ricka in Jacmel, Haiti



Matt and his wife, Julie

With Rob's departure, I have taken over the role of Flight Program Manager. For those who have never met me before, my name is Matt Reichard and I have been the Flight Program Assistant since February of 2010. It has been an honor to learn from and work under Rob and I am thrilled to take over the leadership of this amazing program. I am excited to see where the program goes and what doors will be opened to continue walking alongside of young men as they strive to be honorable, contributing members of their communities.

For a little background, I am married to Julie and we have three kids, Logan (age 9), Austin (age 5) and Madison (age 4). You have likely seen them in past newsletters, especially Logan, who tags along to many of our Flight events. I have an educational background in Theology and Counseling and an extensive background in ministry. Much like Rob, I am also heavily involved in ministry in Haiti. In fact, I met Rob when he traveled with my ministry to Haiti in 2010. My wife and I, along with friends from Canada, have founded three orphanages and a pediatric clinic in Haiti.

Many Hands. One Heart.™

 **DIAKON WILDERNESS CENTER**
A LUTHERAN FAMILY & COMMUNITY MINISTRY



Contact: Matt Reichard, *Program Manager* · (717) 609-5764 · reichardm@diakon.org
www.diakon.org/youth

Continued...

During my time with Flight I have been honored to work with most of the young men who have been a part of the program. I have been blessed by not only walking with them as they made choices and decisions that helped them to become who they wanted to be, but also in the failures and struggles along the way. It sounds weird to have been blessed by struggles, but it is in those struggles and failures that each young man has had their biggest moments of growth. Get knocked down, get right back up. The true measure of a winner, of a champion, is not how many times you get knocked down, it is the ability to get right back up and keep on going. Resilience is what separates the men from the boys.



I recently took a small plane ride over Haiti. From that high, all of the chaos was gone, everything seemed okay. No poverty, no disease, no orphans; from that high up, you couldn't see any of that. From a few thousand feet it was just a bunch of beautiful mountains. As the new leader of this program, it is my goal to work with each one of our young men right where they are, right in the place in their lives that they need support the most; to not just look at them from a distance and see only the big things, but to walk alongside of them in brotherhood and see them for who they really are. As a program, we want to not just help guys get into school or get a job (the big things) but also learn to control their emotions, contribute to their community and have healthy relationships. A well-rounded man is not only one who is educated and employed, but also one who shows leadership and earns respect not just because of the big things, but because they are honorable in the little things too.

Please continue to follow us on Facebook and in newsletters. The young men in this program are some of the most intelligent, compassionate, honorable people that I have ever met. It is my hope that, as you support each one of them, their stories will inspire you and show you that, with young men like these, our futures is in good hands. It is my firm belief that, when given the right tools and the right opportunities, each one of these young men will rise to the occasion.

MATT



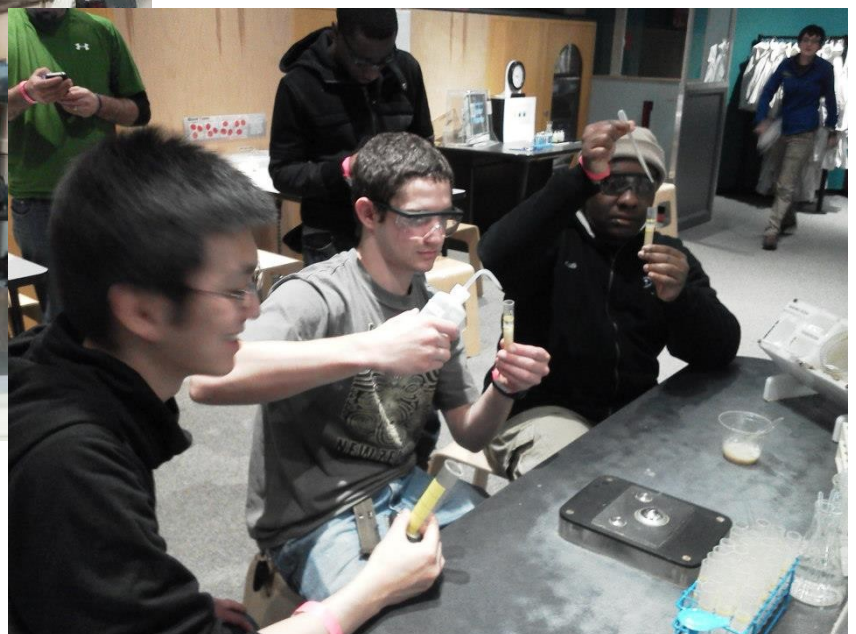
Like us on Facebook at:
www.facebook.com/flightprogram

Flight Updates

Baltimore Service Weekend

Recently the Flight Program participants spent a weekend serving in the Baltimore Area. The weekend started with a fun evening of food and catching up in Baltimore. Flight Program participants spent some time connecting after several weeks apart and talking through what has been happening in their lives. After an evening of brotherhood and a hotel stay, we spent the morning at the Science Center in Baltimore. We tried lots of experiments and even took our chances lying on a bed of nails!

The main reason for our time in Baltimore is what happened that afternoon and evening. We partnered with a wonderful charity that serves homeless mothers and their children. This housing facility offers opportunities for outside groups to come in and provide for a large, family style evening meal. We went shopping, bought our supplies and cooked them a great meal! Not only did we enjoy taking the time to serve these mothers and children, but it was also a great opportunity to sit and eat with them. Flight Program participants and staff enjoyed hearing about the struggles of some of the residents and encouraging them in making and reaching new goals for them and their children.



Contact: Matt Reichard, *Program Manager* · (717) 609-5764 · reichardm@diakon.org
www.diakon.org/youth

Flight Updates

Harrisburg Homeless Outreach



In December a group of Flight Program participants and staff worked with Bethesda Mission, a homeless mission in Harrisburg, to serve the homeless population of the city. We were honored to work with their ministry van and go out in the city, after dark, to distribute blankets, toiletries, clothing and meals on the streets. It was a cold and blustery night and Flight Program participants were humbled to be able to help give back to the community by providing these items for the people in need. A warm blanket and a cup of coffee on a cold night can make all the difference!

We have a long-standing tradition in the Flight Program of taking a trip at the end of the year for all participants who have been working hard and meeting their goals. This year we decided to rent a cabin and have a family-style trip to the Poconos. We had an amazing weekend of bonding, thinking back on the year, eating Julie's (Matt's wife) wonderful cooking and trying to learn how to snowboard and ski! As always, the best part of the weekend was the continued building of brotherhood of the Flight Program.



End-of-Year Poconos Trip



Flight Program Participant Updates

Milan in The Dominican Republic

Flight Program graduate Milan is a strong, devout Christian who recently had the opportunity to serve with his church in The Dominican Republic. Milan is an aspiring rapper who has performed at many venues including CreationFest. Here is what Milan had to say about his experience in The Dominican Republic:

“My experience on my first mission trip to the Dominican Republic was one of the most exhilarating experiences in my life. First, to be called by Christ to serve on that capacity in another country was a humbling experience because I daily wrestle with my sinful heart. That was a true display of grace. Next, to see another culture and experience it firsthand helped me to grow as person in Christ in serving and preaching the Gospel.

When we did an outreach concert in the worst part of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, it was intimidating because I simply didn't know how to understand or speak Spanish fluently. As the night went on and I was able to preach Gospel through music alongside some of the country's biggest Christian Hip-Hop artists, it was humbling and a great experience. When we visited the orphanage, it was the best time to spend time with kids and play games with them. Also, we helped the missionaries for two days in construction to build their discipleship center. We, as a team, we hosted two Vacation bible schools for the children in the D.R., teaching the bible and preaching the Gospel. We literally saw and witnessed young kids come to Christ in the Vacation bible schools. Overall, it was a great and humbling experience to serve and grow in Christ.”



Flight Program Participant Updates

Mike Lee - In his own words...



Flight has been more than just a program to me, more than just a bunch of friends and support group. It's been a second family. Flight has been there for me when I did not have anyone else. Before I met Flight, I was homeless on the streets of Philadelphia looking for a job just so I could eat. Flight rescued me from Philadelphia and gave me a new opportunity. Flight helped me get back into college, find a job and gave me a second chance at life. I don't think I could ever give back as much as the Flight Program as given to me.



The Flight Program is completely funded by benevolent gifts from donors. If you are interested in how you can help be a part of changing the lives of these young people through giving, please visit :

www.diakon.org/youth-services/services/flight-program

Contact: Matt Reichard, *Program Manager* · (717) 609-5764 · reichardm@diakon.org
www.diakon.org/youth

Who We Are:

We are the Flight Program. We are a group of young men who made poor choices when we were younger and some of us ended up getting sent to placement at the Diakon Wilderness Center. Most of us have been in and out of the system, placements, and detention centers. That was the past. Today is our future. Today we are voluntarily participating in the Flight Program, and we're taking new and challenging steps in our lives to change and become successful. We rely on one another for support. We attempt to do what is right, not what is easy. We now look towards the future and our goals instead of living "in the moment." We want the best that this world has to offer and we're now ready to go after it, the honorable way. We are separating from our old friends. They don't know what to think of us anymore. Our families don't know us anymore. They're impressed. Our old teachers, probation officers, and everyone else in our communities (who we struggled to understand) are beginning to see that we're going to make it.

We now have positive dreams and goals. We believe in helping others along the path to success: "*As Iron Sharpens Iron, So One Person Sharpens Another.*" We are discovering and using the tools and resources in our communities to achieve our goals. We are breaking free from our comfort zones and *Soaring to New Heights*.

We sacrifice our weekends to be with our brothers. We let go of the old Friday night parties, now we spend that time helping each other and the community. We're not afraid to cry in front of each other. We're not afraid to ask for help. We dropped that front. Fridays and Saturdays are now about positive people, places, and things. We're on the move, in and out of state, going to new events, helping wherever there is a need, meeting new people, hiking new trails, and always... telling our stories.

Flight Program
Diakon Wilderness Center
571 Mountain Rd.
PO Box 10
Boiling Springs, PA 17007



*Soaring
to New
Heights*