

# SUMMIT

SUMMER 2013

## Volunteer paid with 'love and respect'

Pete Houghton likes to say he found his niche on the mountain.

As a Diakon Youth Services volunteer, Houghton spent many hours on the mountain that serves as the backdrop for the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa. More than 10 years ago, he ventured there as part of a five-person group of Alcoholics Anonymous members who volunteered to meet weekly with youths who had addiction issues of their own.

Within six months, Houghton was the only member of the group that remained.

"My purpose was to educate them about drugs and alcohol and how to combat that," says the 64-year-old Houghton, adding that the youths regularly "tested" him. "Once you had that relationship where they knew you weren't lying to them, you could have an open conversation and trade ideas."

Houghton returned week after week, eventually expanding his visits to two times a week.

"I learned a lot from those boys, and I took a lot from them," he says, explaining that he has been in recovery for nearly 14 years. "I was there to learn things and keep straight and narrow myself. They helped me to do that wonderfully."

Over the years, the Diakon Wilderness Center programs evolved, as did Houghton's role as volunteer.

"I got to know Rob [Kivlan] and he started the Flight Program," he says of the mentoring and training program—now managed by Matt Reichard—for youths who have aged out of other services. "He invited me for dinner Friday nights with the Flight participants, and I never left."

"Flight is probably one of the best programs I've ever seen because these kids really want to be there," he says. "We have a program changing boys' lives, and I'm allowed to be part of it."

When Houghton finds himself sitting around a campfire group-counseling session with the 18-plus-year-old men in the program, he often wonders why they listen to what he has to say.



*Pete Houghton, DWC volunteer*



*Flight Program participants enjoying a hike.*

"I find it heartwarming and amazing," he says. "I really am paid with their love and respect. I get so much more than I could ever give."

## Turning Point expands with day program



*Wilderness Center youth rock climbing.*

Two years after Diakon Youth Services debuted the Turning Point Evening Reporting Center, a second component, the Turning Point Day Program, has successfully reached the end of its first school year.

An alternative academic setting for post-adjudicated males, the program was part of the original vision for Turning Point.

“It was the Lancaster County director of juvenile probation’s idea that we have both an evening and day component,” says Ron Davis, assistant administrator, Diakon Youth Services Southeast Region, of the program’s evolution. “We are an alternative and one of many steps used to keep kids from being removed from their home and put in placement.”

A year-round service, the day program operates Monday through Friday in collaboration with county juvenile probation and children and youth departments, the Lancaster/Lebanon Intermediate Unit, students, families, and community resources. Program components include academics, highly structured group activities, community service, family events, and mentoring.

When school is in session, students begin the day with academics before Diakon steps in to provide afternoon programming.

“The foundation of our service is Aggression Replacement Training,” Davis says. “The great thing about ART is that it deals with anger management, moral reasoning and skill development.”

Housed in a historic building that resembles an old schoolhouse, the program also provides students with the opportunity to develop skills such as painting, cleaning, cutting grass and trimming bushes. Students reach out to the community by participating in projects that earn community service hours.

“It was definitely an interesting year,” says Davis. “We started with one student, but right now there are eight.”

## The Wilderness Greenhouse

### *Youths thrive in positive environment*

By intentionally fostering a positive environment where hard work is rewarded, Chris Edenbo, greenhouse gardener for the Diakon Wilderness Greenhouse, has created an experience that students look forward to and a program that complements other Diakon Youth Services activities.

“In a little over a year, we’ve created something that students really enjoy,” says Edenbo. “We’ve also become a resource for staff, who can individualize the experience to gain the most benefit for students in their programs.”

The Weekend Alternative Program requires its students to spend at least one Saturday working in the greenhouse in order to graduate. The Center Point Day Program has developed an internship for students 15 years or older to develop skills appropriate to enter the workforce. Every Monday, the Turning Point Program, based in Lancaster County, sends students to work in the vegetable garden, where they participate in growing, weeding, harvesting and packaging of produce.

“I have a consistent workforce that is just magnificent,” Edenbo says. “Working with the same kids over a period of many weeks, I am able to give them increased exposure to what we do while we gradually expect more out of them.”

Throughout the growing season, students work on everything from garden care and harvesting to packaging and delivering. But the real success story lies in how the work is presented, says Edenbo.

“We really want these young men and women to have a good time, a good first exposure. With their coming back week after week, I’ve put a lot of effort into rewarding them,” he says. “We’ve worked hard to create a culture that when students go back to their group, they are bragging about what they got to do. Rewards vary from ice cream and cold drinks to taking ownership in a project and enjoying the satisfaction of a completing a job well done.”

“I have been very intentional about that so the culture is a positive one,” says Edenbo. “If they can be recognized for their hard work and receive some tangible thank-you, it goes a long, long way.”



*Chris Edenbo, Greenhouse Gardener.*

# THE WILDERNESS GREENHOUSE



An intern watering flowers in the Wilderness Greenhouse.

## Partnership leads to student internship opportunity

Thanks to a continuing partnership with Brickman Landscaping, students from Diakon Youth Services programs have the opportunity to participate in an internship with a major employer.

Brickman, which has partnered with the Diakon Wilderness Greenhouse since the program's rebirth in 2012, has developed an internship specifically for Diakon students. Every year, the company will select a student to fulfill an internship at each of their locations in Lewisberry and Lancaster.

"This is the best education possible for career-path teenagers," says Chris Edenbo, greenhouse gardener.

To prepare students interested in applying for the internships, Brickman will conduct two one-day clinics this summer at Cumberland Crossings, a Diakon Senior Living Community in Carlisle, Pa. Topics such as landscape design and interview/resume writing will serve as a stepping-stone for students in their preparation for the professional work environment employers demand, says Edenbo.

"Completing an application is the most basic and universal job skill that we can teach our students," he says. "In fact, Brickman is providing us with a great service by sending their human resources department representative to work personally with our students."

## Greenhouse Program shifts focus to vegetable garden

The Wilderness Greenhouse is off to a strong start in 2013, having already topped last year's total income with two selling seasons yet to go.

"Now we're shifting our focus to the vegetable garden at Cumberland Crossings," says Chris Edenbo, greenhouse gardener. "We're hoping to get a whole lot of production out of a very small garden that will take us through summer and into the fall."

Thanks to an agreement with Morrison Culinary Services, which oversees culinary services at Diakon senior living communities, the greenhouse program is expanding beyond flowers to offer vegetables.

"Morrison Culinary Services has agreed to purchase part of their vegetable need from the Diakon Wilderness Greenhouse," Edenbo says. "We'll be specializing in tomatoes, but as a secondary offer we'll be growing things that are more like root crops—everything from radishes to carrots."

In addition to supporting the vegetable needs of the kitchens at Diakon's Frey Village, Middletown, Pa., and Cumberland Crossings, Carlisle, Pa., senior living communities, Edenbo is operating a weekly farmers market at both locations so that residents can purchase fresh vegetables.



Produce from the vegetable garden at Cumberland Crossings

Turning Point, continued from page 2.

Our numbers definitely got more consistent toward the end of the school year."

In the months ahead, the program will focus on improving technology for students, who are accustomed to using smart phones, iPads and other high-tech devices. "Students don't sit well with pencil and paper," says Davis. "Throughout the summer we will work to make sure we are ready to start the school year."



## Upcoming opportunities to volunteer at the Diakon Wilderness Center

- July 27  
Center Point Day Treatment Program
- August 31  
Wilderness Challenge Program
- September 28  
Flight Program
- October 26  
Weekend Alternative Program
- November 30  
Bridge Program

*Volunteer activities range from working in our greenhouse and gardens planting, pruning, and weeding, to general wilderness center campus landscaping or trail maintenance.*

*Volunteers have the opportunity to work alongside our youths doing mulching, staining, and repair work, etc.*

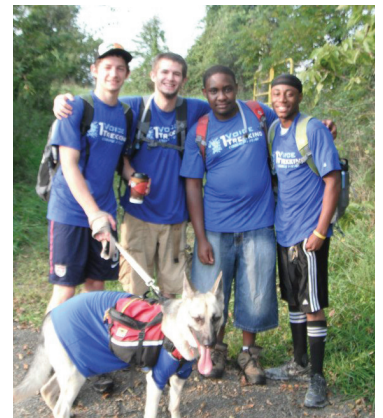
*Volunteer hours are 9 a.m. until noon.*



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