

Family CONNECTIONS

A PUBLICATION OF DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE



Dear Friends and Families,

As we head into a change of seasons, there is a lot to celebrate and reflect on. This month is National Kinship Care Month, a time to honor the incredible families who step up in times of need to care for children within their extended families or close circles. Kinship caregivers are essential in providing stability, love, and a sense of belonging for children who may otherwise be placed in foster care. Their commitment deserves recognition, not just in September but every day of the year.

September also marks the beginning of the school year, a time of transition and excitement for many children and families. For children in kinship or foster care, this time can present unique challenges. Whether adjusting to a new school or navigating a changing family structure, our staff members are here to support families in ensuring that every child is prepared for success, both in the classroom and at home.

As we celebrate kinship caregivers and support our families through the school year, let's remember the power of community, connection, and care. Together, we can make this a year of growth, learning, and opportunity for all the children and families we serve.

With gratitude,

Alyssa Snyder

Alyssa Snyder, Diakon Adoption & Foster Care Executive Director

WE'RE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE the launch of our newly updated adoption and foster care website! It's now easier than ever to access valuable resources, learn about our programs, and stay connected with our community. Whether you're a current family needing support or someone new looking for information, our website has everything you need in one convenient place. **Visit us at diakonafc.org!**



ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE

Forms | Testimonials | Newsletters | Events | Careers | Contact Us

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In-Process Families ▾

Resource Families ▾

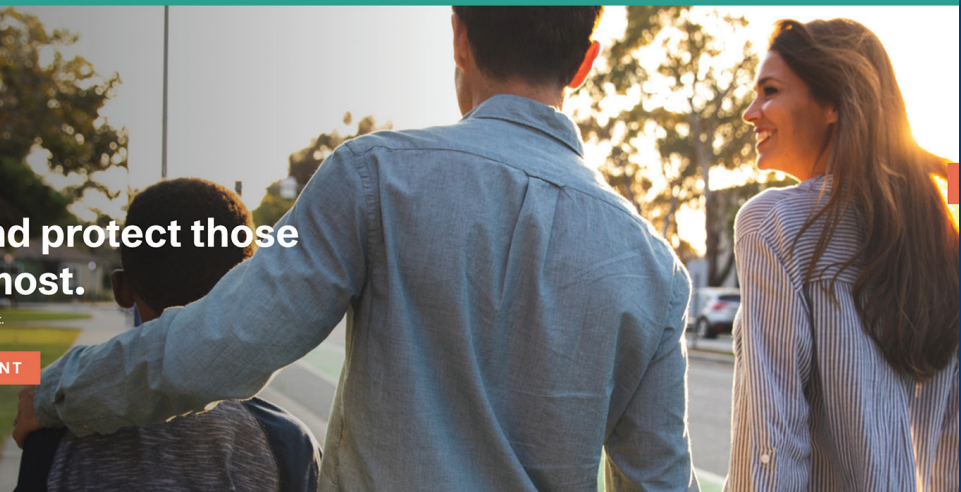


DIAKON

Help guide and protect those who need it most.

Learn more about becoming a foster parent.

BECOME A FOSTER PARENT



Compassionate Care Fund

Life can be unpredictable, and sometimes urgent needs arise that can be overwhelming. Our Compassionate Care Fund is here to provide timely support to individuals and families served by Diakon programs facing unexpected challenges. Our fund is designed to offer immediate assistance where it's needed most.

Examples of those needs could be:

- An extended family member unexpectedly becomes the caregiver for a child placed in their care due to the parent's inability to provide a safe environment. Their home may not be equipped to accommodate the child, needing items like a bed, clothes, or child-proofing supplies.
- An individual experiences a severe mental health crisis but lacks insurance or the means to pay for immediate therapy or counseling. Without prompt intervention, their situation could deteriorate rapidly.
- Unplanned emergencies, like home repairs or unexpected health crises, can add financial strain on foster families already managing tight budgets.

Your donation to the Compassionate Care Fund ensures that when life takes an unexpected turn, there is a safety net in place to catch those who are most vulnerable. Together, we can make a difference, offering hope and support during life's most challenging moments.



Embracing Change in a New Season

As the leaves change and the air turns crisp, fall brings a season of reflection and new beginnings. For foster and adoptive families, this time of year reminds us of the incredible transformations that take place in our homes and hearts.

Just as nature shows us the beauty of change, we witness the remarkable growth of the children we care for, from the smallest victories to the biggest milestones. Whether it's helping with homework, celebrating Halloween traditions, or simply creating new memories together, the fall season offers countless opportunities to strengthen the bonds within your family.



If you're thinking about fostering or adopting, fall is a great time to explore new opportunities! Just as the season brings change, you can help transform a child's or teen's life. Visit our website at diakonafc.org and complete a contact form to learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent. We offer regular online information sessions for both traditional options and our new Pasos program, which provides long-term foster care for unaccompanied minors.

As we move into this new season, we encourage you to celebrate your family's journey and look forward to the bright future ahead!

Student Fulfills Dream with Scholarship Support



Meet Alana, a bright and determined young woman who has been the recipient of Diakon's Youth Scholarship Fund. Diakon offers these academic scholarships to current and former participants of any Diakon Child, Family & Community Ministries programs, including youth services, adoption and foster care, and family life counseling services. Alana, who was part of our adoption and foster care program, is using these funds to help pay for her tuition and room and board at Howard University in the graduate program where she is studying sociology. These funds also enabled her to afford to attend Howard for her undergraduate studies, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in political science, magna cum laude, in May 2024.

Alana's career goals have changed over the last four years. She was pretty certain she wanted to be an attorney and work with children in the foster care system or be an immigration attorney. However, she's had an opportunity to apply for a fellowship in the government and hopes to be accepted into that program. Alana shares, "I know that my degree from Howard, my compassion for people, and my ability to problem solve will guide me in the correct direction for my career."

Diakon has impacted Alana's life in many ways besides receiving the scholarship funds.



The most significant impact she said that Diakon had on her life was connecting her at birth to her adopted family. She explains, "I was blessed to be part of a family that values education, puts family first, and treats me like a birth child of theirs. Diakon has also continued to support me ever since I was adopted. My adoption caseworker, Karen King, has continued to attend major milestones in my life, such as birthday parties, high school and college graduations, and also has helped me to deal with the emotions of being adopted. Karen didn't just do paperwork and hand me off. I became an extension of her family, and she has always stayed in touch with me. That relationship has meant a lot to both me and my family."

Alana was adopted as a newborn, and she's incredibly proud of how far she's come. "If the right family hadn't been so carefully chosen for me, I might not be where I am today," she says. "Without the support of our adoption worker, things could have been harder. Adoption has been an emotional roller coaster, even now, but I'm proud of what I've achieved, including working for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) in

Harrisburg the past two summers. Giving back to kids in the system has been an important part of my journey."

In addition to her academic pursuits, Alana has been successfully competing on Howard University's Swim and

Dive team. She has held two records over the last four years that she's been on the team. She plans to apply for a fellowship in the government within the next year during her second year of graduate school. "I am forever grateful for the financial assistance that Diakon has provided me while attending Howard University, especially during graduate school, as scholarships for graduate studies are very difficult to obtain," Alana shares.

If you'd like more information about this fund, please visit <https://www.diakon.org/youth-services/Scholarships/>.



FINALIZATIONS

Aaliyah and Nevaeh
January 4, 2024
Robert and Laura
Berks County

Devon
February 19, 2024
Monique
Northampton County

Siarra
March 19, 2024
Janelle
Northampton County

Aria and Ayden
March 1, 2024
Nick and Crissa
Dauphin County

De'Marcus, Alylyanna,
Kristianna, Kyree,
Isabella,
and Haven
March 26, 2024
Cameron and Kristen
York County

Mackenzie
April 3, 2024
Brandi & David
Adams County/ICPC

Makayla
April 12, 2024
Lizzette
York County

Trevor
April 22, 2024
April
York County

Imani
May 21, 2024
Milagros
Northampton County

Brantley, Adelyn and
Jeremiah
May 22, 2024
Todd and Cindy
Berks County

Naomi
May 22, 2024
Nathan and Rebecca
Berks County

Sebastian
June 7, 2024
Nicolas and Aslee
Lehigh County

Evelyn and Francis
June 7, 2024
Theresa
Lehigh County

LayInn
June 11, 2024
Dylan and Amber
Northampton County

Colin
July 2, 2024
Justine and Elise
Northampton County

Isaiah
July 3, 2024
Karen
Clarion County

Zy'Relle
July 5, 2024
Donald and Katie
Dauphin County

Paisley
August 6, 2024
Bruce and Maryanne
Northampton County

Janina and Jeremiah
August 7, 2024
Rebecca and Tijan
Northampton County

Azariah, Zechar and
Maya
August 7, 2024
Elian
Lehigh County

Arianna and Xander
August 7, 2024
Christopher and

Lindsay
Lehigh County

Jason
August 7, 2024
Diane
Lehigh County

Rocherre
August 15, 4
Beth and Maria G.
York County/ICPC

Vaida and Kailer
August 16, 2024
Shelly and Mathew
Montgomery County



Nick & Carissa adopted Aria (pink) and Ayden (black) on March 1, 2024.



Kailer and Vaida were adopted by Matt and Shelly on August 16, 2024.



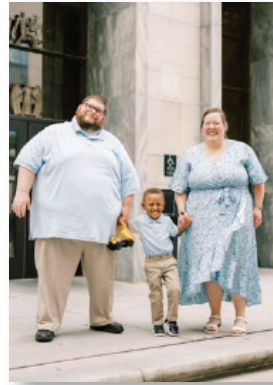
Rebecca and TJ adopted, their niece and nephew, Janina and Jeremiah on August 6, 2024.

FINALIZATIONS

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Cameron and Kristen adopted De'Marcus, Alylyanna, Kristianna, Kyree, Isabella, and Haven on March 26, 2024.



Katie and Donald adopted Zy'Relle on July 5, 2024.



Marianne and Bruce, adopted Paisley on August 6, 2024.
People in photo: Cheryl Dopp, Paisley, Marianne and Jordyn Ferrari.



Rebecca and Nate adopted Naomi on May 22, 2024. People in photo back row: Cheryl, Naomi, Rebecca and Nate. Front row: Asher and Judah.



Todd and Cindy adopted Brantley, Jeremiah and Adelyn on May 22, 2024
People in photo: Cheryl, Cindy, Adelyn, Jeremiah, Brantley and Todd.



Janelle adopted Siarra on March 19, 2024.



Elise and Justin adopted Colin on July 2, 2024.

Waiting Youths

Help us to find forever families



Jennalee is an outgoing and vibrant 17-year-old youth with a great sense of humor. She enjoys listening to music, shopping for purses and clothes, and collecting shoes. Jennalee is always up for seeing a movie or trying out a new restaurant. She also enjoys time spent at home, having a cookout or game night.

Shylynn is a creative, caring 17-year-old youth. She enjoys listening to music and singing along. She LOVES animals, especially dogs and cats. Shylynn enjoys arts and crafts projects and reading Anime. When she's not working hard in school, you can find her riding roller coasters or shopping.





Christmas in July

Our Older Child Matching Initiative (OCMI) hosted “Christmas in July” for 13 youth and 15 family workers. This reverse matching event was the first of its kind in Eastern Pennsylvania, by allowing family workers the opportunity to meet and get to know the waiting youth to share the information with their waiting families. Santa took time from his vacation to join the fun, bringing presents to the attending youth!



Mark Your Calendar!

Families interested in learning more about adoption and foster care are invited to attend Diakon Adoption & Foster Care's free informational sessions, now being held virtually.

Contact Info:

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

(610) 682-1504

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

(717) 795-0320

INFORMATION SESSIONS hosted by Diakon staff. Please register to receive the Zoom link by emailing recruitment@diakon.org

- Oct. 3, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Oct. 10, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Oct. 21, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Oct. 28, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Nov. 7, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Nov. 14, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Nov. 18, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Nov. 25, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Dec. 5, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Dec. 12, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Dec. 16, 2024, 6-7 p.m.
- Dec. 30, 2024, 6-7 p.m.

TRAINING SESSIONS hosted by Topton-based staff. Please register to receive the Zoom link by emailing April Bartholomew at BartholomewA@diakon.org

- Nov. 7, 14, 21, 2024, 6-9 p.m.
- Dec. 5, 2024, 6-9 p.m.

TRAINING SESSIONS hosted by Capital-based staff. Please register to receive the Zoom link by emailing Jason Bacon at BaconJ@diakon.org

- Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28, 2024, 6-9 p.m.
- Dec. 2, 9, 16, 19, 2024, 6-9 p.m.

KINSHIP SESSIONS hosted by Topton-based staff. Please register to receive the Zoom link by emailing April Bartholomew at BartholomewA@diakon.org

- Oct. 2 & 9, 2024, 6-9 p.m.
- Nov. 6 & 13, 2024, 6-9 p.m.
- Dec. 4 & 11, 2024, 6-9 p.m.

Please consult our website for updated lists as meeting times can change.