



## Life after a Stroke

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A Red-Letter Day: LIFT

Social Ministry Awards Recognize *Love in Action*

LYF Assembly Gathers in Poconos

Ten-Year-Old Helps Preserve  
Congregational History

Retired Pastors Gather Regularly for  
Breakfast and Fellowship



*David Miller was just 39 when he had a stroke, changing his life but not his strong will.*

**By Christine Weiser**

When David Miller, 39, went trick-or-treating with his daughter on October 28, 2005, he had no idea it would be his last day of life as he knew it. He and his daughter strolled through their hometown of Coopersburg, Pa., enjoying the ghouls and goblins, gathering piles of candy.

That night, David's wife, Karen, said she didn't think he looked "right," but they didn't think much of it. After all, David — a member of St. James Lutheran Church in Coopersburg — was a young, fit police officer. The last thing they considered was that David was having a stroke.

"I went to bed, and when my wife came in about 20 minutes later, she woke me up to say I was snoring. I tried to get out of bed, and hit the floor. My normal life was over."

David was paralyzed on his entire right side, and his cognitive and speech skills were severely affected. He was taken to Lehigh Valley Hospital, where he stayed for four days, and then he was released to Good Shepherd.

"I had to retrain everything," he says.

David began an intense rehabilitation schedule that included physical, speech, and occupational therapy. After about a



week of inpatient therapy, David went home and continued his therapy as an outpatient.

His hard work has paid off. He now runs three miles every other day, and hopes to return soon to his work as a street police officer in Hilltown, Bucks County. He credits a positive attitude and the support of his family for his amazing recovery.

“My wife has been a huge help,” says David. “Without her I wouldn't be here today.”

He also mentions the encouraging words of his mother, Ruth Miller, retired director of ministry resources for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

“My mother always told me to stay motivated,” David says. “She kept telling me that it will keep getting better, to keep trying.”

David still has challenges with language, but even this gets better every day. He continues to pass physical and cognitive tests every day, as well as attend the stroke support group at Good Shepherd for more encouragement. As he thinks about going back to work, he is anxious to return to his normal life.

“Since the stroke, I tried to do very little differently,” he says.

By working hard to learn these everyday things all over again, and keeping a positive attitude despite tremendous hurdles, David Miller now expects 2007 to be a great year.

**Note:** David's recovery odds were increased by treating the stroke quickly. Although certain demographics make some people more susceptible to strokes (high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, obesity, etc.), David Miller is proof that strokes can affect healthy, active people as well. About 700,000 Americans each year suffer a new or recurrent stroke. That means, on average, a stroke occurs every 45 seconds. Learn more about stroke symptoms and prevention information at [www.GoodShepherdRehab.org](http://www.GoodShepherdRehab.org).

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JANUARY 2007



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

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By Pastor Herb Gifford, member of the LIFT planning team

It's a new year and you have a new calendar. It's 2007 and it's time to mark Saturday, June 9, as a red letter day! You don't want to miss LIFT (**L**utherans in **F**aith **T**ogether) at Muhlenberg College. It's an all-day event celebrating our life in the church as the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The theme for LIFT is from the Book of Lamentations: "Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven" (3:41 NRSV). June 9 will be a day to do just that through a wide variety of exciting activities including worship, music, food, *playshops* and workshops, games, story-telling, and just being with one another as Lutherans in thanks to, and praise of, God.

LIFT is an intergenerational event. It's for everyone — old, young, families, singles — everyone! Bart Campolo will be the featured speaker of the day, bringing a dynamic message based on God's word and his experience as the founder and leader of "Mission Year." There will be a special morning program for kids K through 6 and an opportunity for teens to have lunch with Bart Campolo. Tracy Radosevic will be on hand to tell stories as only she can. There will be spirited music by "Bread for the Journey." You'll have the chance to meet and speak with Martin and Katie Luther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Johan Sebastian Bach, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, and Davey and Goliath, as well as other important Lutheran personalities.



June 9 will be a day to visit with the bishop, walk/run for World Hunger, sing, laugh, play, and just have a great time as we celebrate being God's people in this place at this time.

You'll be hearing more about LIFT as we get closer to June 9. This is a synod-wide event. It is being planned by a committee of persons from all nine mission districts of the synod. In most congregations there is a LIFT Ambassador who will share the latest information and details about the event.

In addition, ask your pastor about LIFT. Registration materials will be available soon. Watch for them and note that the modest registration fee includes lunch.

Encourage your friends and other members of your congregation to attend LIFT. Plan now to bring the whole family. Let LIFT lift you as together we lift our hearts and hands to God on June 9, 2007!





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Honorees who have made outstanding efforts in social ministry on behalf of the church received awards at the third annual Celebrate Social Ministry event, held October 22, 2006, at the Holiday Inn in Fogelsville.

Among the awards are the Love in Action awards, given to individuals, groups, or congregations who have been involved in a significant social ministry activity. Categories that were considered include—

- **Scope of Service:** World, nation, community, ecumenical partners, congregation.
- **Types of Service:** Existing programs, program expansion, innovative programs.
- **Service Provider:** Lay youth or adult, pastor, congregation, partnership, youth group, women's group, men's ministry.
- **Service Characteristics:** Personal initiative, dedication, relationship between faith and service.

This year's recipients for the Love in Action awards were—

- The Disaster Relief Team from Friedens, Oley, and Grace, Reading
- The Mission Ladies, Zion, Womelsdorf
- Intentional Involvement in Social and Outreach Ministries, St. Timothy, Allentown
- Our Weekly Bread Program, St. Paul, Reading



### **The Disaster Relief Team from Friedens, Oley, and Grace, Reading**

For over ten years the Disaster Relief Team has been responding to the devastation caused by natural disasters. Beginning with the destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, this dedicated group of people made a difference right after the hurricane and went back a year later. A big change occurred in the group with the addition of the disaster response trailer. This trailer is equipped with the tools and supplies the group needs to respond quickly to the needs of those who have lost their housing. The 40-plus people, young and old, skilled and not so skilled but willing to work, have made a substantial difference in the lives of people who have lost everything. To those so vulnerable, the Disaster Team works to bring hope.

### **The Mission Ladies, Zion, Womelsdorf**

The Mission Ladies at Zion Womelsdorf, actually have names and they are Geneva Richard and Lois "Dolly" Oberly. These two women use their considerable energy and 161 years of experience to accomplish impossible tasks. At the ages of 80 and 81, Geneva and Dolly have raised \$40,000 worth of materials for health kits, layette kits, sewing kits, quilts, and school bags for Lutheran World Relief. Around Thanksgiving and Christmas, they prepare 20 food baskets for people in need; this year they decided to do it at Easter, too! They are the spark that lights the fire of social ministry at Zion. Their inspirational work has led others to get involved so that Geneva and Dolly not only do social ministry, they teach by example.

### **Intentional Involvement in Social and Outreach Ministries, St. Timothy, Allentown**

The congregation council at St. Timothy, Allentown, recognized in 2004 the need to move in a different direction. Like many churches, St. Timothy was looking in instead of moving out. In the last two years, the congregation has developed a true sense of reaching out by working out in the community. Members of the Intentional Involvement in Social and Outreach Ministries group spend their time at Daybreak, St. Paul's Breakfast Ministry, Parish Nurse Ministry, Young Ministers Construction Outfit and Quilters. Members of this ministry live out their understanding of church by being the Body of Christ in the neighborhood. With the leadership of Pastor Gerald Rounds, the Director of Outreach, the people of St. Timothy seek new ways to make

Christ known through word and deed.

### **Our Weekly Bread Program, St. Paul, Reading**

Social ministry can be the claiming of an opportunity God has placed in our grasp. Shirley and David Baker claimed that moment when they contacted Panera Bread Company with a plan to distribute their slightly less than fresh bread. Through the generosity of Panera Bread Company and the planning and hard work of the volunteers, families who are clients of the St. Paul Food Bank receive bread and words of comfort from the pastor following the Saturday night worship service. Members of the congregation are encouraged to take the bread to people who are in need. At particularly "abundant" times, bread is shared ecumenically with the soup kitchen at Central Park United Methodist Church and Opportunity House (formerly the Reading Berks Emergency Shelter). The bread distribution efforts of Shirley and David Baker have given the members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church a new understanding of bread as the life of the world.

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More than 100 youth and adult advisors met at Trout Lake Retreats in Stroudsburg for the annual Lutheran Youth Fellowship Assembly November 17-19.

There were a few “firsts” for this assembly.

It was the first time that the assembly met at a camp instead of a hotel. Because of rising costs, the LYF board decided to look for a less expensive venue. Meeting at **Trout Lake Retreats** cut the cost of attending the assembly almost in half. On the evaluation forms for the retreat, the reactions to being at the camp were overwhelmingly positive. Aside from the lower (and more manageable cost), other pluses were having the opportunity to be outdoors to play volleyball and to worship and sing around a bonfire.

Another “first” was the introduction of topic sessions. During the registration process, youth were able to identify things they would most like to discuss. The LYF board then selected the top seven topics that would be used for discussion at the assembly. They also recruited members of the board to prepare for and lead these discussions. Youth were free to discuss these topics without the presence of adults. Topics included “Violence in Schools,” “Media and Society,” “What is Music Telling Us,” “Sex, Drugs, Rock and Roll,” “War – What Is It Good For,” “Are You Calling Me, God,” and “World Religions.”



The assembly began with the sounds of **Aimée and Joel Pakan** of “Tangled Blue.” Pastor **Michele Kaufman**, assembly chaplain, led the assembly through several devotional and worship experiences based on the theme, “Live Your Faith: Your LYF as a Disciple.”

As part of a get-acquainted activity, youth gathered in small groups to discuss their gifts of time, talent and treasure. They prepared symbols for each of these which were then placed on a banner which was displayed at the assembly. Pastor Nancy Moore helped the youth explore this topic even further on Saturday morning in a discussion on spiritual gifts.

Youth and advisors attended **workshops** on Saturday. Workshop topics ranged from learning about Dietrich Bonhoeffer to using yoga as a form of prayer, from learning about games to use with youth groups to understanding why we’re Lutheran, from focusing on the relationship between religion and media and learning about fair trade opportunities and from hearing about how past LYF-ers are living in the “real world” to hearing about a mission trip to Guatemala.

**LYF President** Becky Montes de Oca (St. Paul, Tannersville) and parliamentarian James Hampton (Christ, Dryville) led the assembly through the discussion and passage of several resolutions. The assembly voted to request that the youth ministry team and LYF board look at the present attendance policy for the assembly; to work towards making our synod a ONE certified organization; to ask the Synod Council to approve the sale of Fair Trade products at all synodical gatherings; to have Fair Trade products available at all LYF assemblies; and to request that the four synod ministry teams include an LYF-appointed youth representative to be on each team.

### **Elected at the Assembly**

Elections of **LYF officers and mission district representatives** and alternates were also held during the assembly.

These new officers were elected: Troy Marx (Jordan, Orefield) was elected LYF President; AJ Mell (Friedens, Oley) was elected Vice-President; Alex Nichols (Christ, Penn Forest) was re-elected LYF secretary; and Emily

Moore (Christ, Penn Forest) was elected treasurer. James Hampton was appointed parliamentarian. AJ Rogers was appointed multicultural representative.

The following youth were elected by their mission districts to serve as mission district representatives and alternate representatives:

**Bethlehem-Easton** Mission District: Liesl Metzger (St. Andrew, Easton) and Arielle Bazulka (St. Paul, Easton)

**East Berks** Mission District: Amanda Sherry (Christ, Dryville) and Ben Schaeffer (Friedens, Oley)

**Hazleton-Lehigh** Mission District: Nikkole Piparato (Christ, Penn Forest) and Talon Fogal (Christ, Penn Forest)

**Lehigh** Mission District: Erin Antrim (St. John, Emmaus) and Aaron Matthias-Long (St. John, Emmaus)

**Northern Lehigh** Mission District: Andrea Hetrick (Hope, Cherryville) and Corinne Schmidt (St. John, Nazareth)

**Pocono** Mission District: Kiana Ramirez (Holy Trinity, Dingmans Ferry) and Ashley Stryker (Holy Trinity, Dingmans Ferry)

**Schuylkill** Mission District: Meredith Coleman (Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven) and Alicia Hepner (Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven)

**Scranton/Wilkes-Barre** Mission District: Alex Howton (St. Paul, Mountain Top)

The term for **mission district** representatives begins immediately. The officers begin their term in June 2007 but will attend LYF meetings between now and then to assure a smooth transition in leadership.

Be sure to check out the **photo gallery** of the assembly!





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By Barbara-Anne G. Taylor, AiM, St. Peter, Bethlehem, and synod secretary

### Heritage.

It's a word that often connotes "old, dusty, and boring." Certainly it is not a word to capture the imagination of a ten-year-old boy. And yet that's exactly what has happened at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Pa.

The congregation is 143 years old and has a rich heritage, now captured in its "Heritage Room" — a room that is a lovely combination of library, meeting room, and archival storage. It's a special treat for Sunday church school classes to spend time in the room learning about the congregation's past:

- St. Peter's underground gymnasium was dug out by hand at the time of World War II by members of the congregation seeking a safe place for neighborhood youth to play basketball.
- Sunday church school classes and worship services were once conducted in German.
- For over 40 years, the members of St. Peter's have hosted visitors from all over the world on two weekends in May as they attend the Bach Festival at Lehigh University, dropping in at the congregation's Social Room for meals and a place to relax between sessions.
- And so much more!!



The idea of preserving that amazing congregational heritage fascinates Richard Robert Hawk III. He is 10 years old and in the fifth grade at Saucon Valley Elementary School in Hellertown. He plays soccer, and at St. Peter's he is a member of the Junior Choir, a Gift Bearer, an acolyte, and a member of the LYO.

Richard also loves to study, to learn, and to work on the computer. He has chosen to put those gifts to use by joining St. Peter's Heritage Committee as its youngest member. The other committee members range in age from 30 to 80. Richard attends committee meetings, helps to file papers, helps to sort and store photographs, and helps with the heritage displays that change throughout the year.

He recently helped design a "quiz" of questions about St. Peter's past and present sports teams, based on information from the Heritage Room. The quiz was distributed to members on "Sports Sunday," a day when the recreation ministries of the congregation were highlighted. The Heritage Room was open after each worship service, and sports photographs and memorabilia were on display. Each person who visited the room and returned the quiz sheet with the correct answers received a St. Peter's magnet and mug as keepsakes. It was a great time for young and old alike to share the stories of sports at St. Peter's!

Richard's work on the committee is very-much appreciated by the other committee members. His contributions to preserving the history of the congregation are important to all of the members of St. Peter's. Richard's ministry reminds us of the Communion of Saints, our connection, through Jesus Christ, with all the faithful of every time and every place. Thanks be to God!



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By Pastor Charles Charles, retired

There are a large number of retired Lutheran pastors living in the Reading/West Berks Mission District area of our synod.

One of the highlight events for these pastors and their spouses (or widows of former pastors) is the monthly gathering for breakfast and fellowship. Meeting at Dempsey's Restaurant in Shillington, they find it a pleasant way to catch up on all the news, to share what's going on in their lives, and to express concern and joy in times of significant events.

There are no programs or speeches, but the group does invite Pastor Mike Bennethum, associate of the bishop, to drop in and share the latest "scoop" from Wescosville and beyond. Mike is happy to share, but also comes to recruit help for congregations without a pastor.

The group averages between 20 and 25 in attendance at breakfast. There are no formal membership or attendance requirements. One needs simply to show up and order his/her own breakfast. Retired pastors from the East Berks District are invited to participate. The West Berks Mission District office gives secretarial support for occasional mailings. One of the spouses sends cards to individuals to note special occasions, both happy and sad.

To enhance the fellowship, the group gathers three times a



year for lunch. Couples also have opened up their homes for summer picnics. This past year the group was entertained at the summer home of Priscilla and George Kinney at the Mt. Gretna resort and at the farm home of Johanna and Carl Adams.

The group invites all retired rostered leaders and spouses or widows "just to show up" at the restaurant on the first Thursday morning of the month at 9:00 a.m. Each person orders off the menu. There are no reservations or cancellations.

Do feel free to join this group for breakfast and fellowship!!

