



# **Diakonia Strategic Plan**

**(June 27, 2011)**

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## ***Introduction***

Diakonia is a faith based, tax exempt, Colorado nonprofit corporation formed in April 2010 to act as the missional arm of Wilson United Methodist Church. Diakonia conducts programs to serve those in need locally, nationally and internationally.

## ***Diakonia Mission Statement***

Diakonia (Greek for service) was founded to address the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of low income individuals and families in our local community and beyond. Currently our mission is to address these needs in three very important ways.

- ✓ To provide the highest quality educational preschool experience to children in low income households specifically addressing the 3 to 5 Year age group.
- ✓ To provide both financial and volunteer support to the Westside CARES community support programs. We will serve to provide food, financial and medical aid, education and counseling to both individuals and families that will serve to support their achieving self sufficiency in the community.
- ✓ We will be directly involved in one or more international programs that seek to provide support to those in most need.

## ***Background***

The years before a child reaches kindergarten are among the most critical in his or her life to influence learning. We strongly believe that, to be of high quality, an early childhood program must include a developmentally appropriate educational component. Unfortunately many studies have shown that from 35 to 45 percent of American children are poorly prepared to succeed in school at kindergarten entry. These same studies have also shown that the average effect on cognitive development is substantial, large enough to move a child from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests (of IQ, reading, mathematics, etc.) at kindergarten entry.

Westside CARES is a faith-based organization called together in a shared mission to serve by providing emergency assistance to those in need within the west side of Colorado Springs, CO. In the Westside CARES' core service area, just west of I-25 in Old Colorado City and the surrounding neighborhoods and west of Nevada to the south, poverty rates range upwards to nearly 20%. Nine census tracts in west-side neighborhoods have poverty rates for children under 18 higher than the county rate of 10% and in five of these 20% or more of the children live in poverty. All nine elementary schools in Westside CARES' core service area report high

numbers of students who qualify for free and reduced-lunch with 5 schools ranging from 72% to 92%, three schools from 52% to 57% and one at 29%. Almost 18% of the population is over the age of 65, 36.4% of adults have the equivalent of a high school diploma or less, and 45% of the families have at least one child living at home. Over half of the west-side residents work, most in low paying jobs. These are the working poor for whom resources are often strained and little public assistance is available.

## ***Goals and Objectives***

### **Early Childhood Education**

Diakonia currently operates three licensed, subsidized, preschools that provide a safe and nurturing environment, striving to enrich each child's cognitive and social development with caring, experienced teachers. Two of these are in very low income areas where average annual income is well below the poverty level. Our goal is to become the premier preschool provider to low income families in our local area.

For the 2011-2012 timeframe Diakonia has the following goals for this program:

1. Achieve at least 90% of maximum allowed enrollment in each of our preschools
2. Turn no child away due to lack of financial ability
3. Develop and offer programs and training for the parents of our students in a wide variety of areas. These might include financial management, parenting, nutrition, marriage enhancement, etc.
4. Achieve NAEYC licensing for Wilson Christian Preschool.
5. Start one new community center based preschool at Meadows Park Community Center

### **Westside CARES**

Diakonia's financial and volunteer support, including our education and counseling programs to be offered through Westside CARES, is designed to address critical individual and family issues. We believe that focusing in the areas of financial management, parenting, nutrition and reducing or eliminating barriers to self-sufficiency, improving daily functioning and interpersonal relationships that affect social, family, school and work success will benefit everyone.

For the 2011-2012 timeframe we have the following goals for this program:

1. Increase volunteer support by at least 50% over 2010.
2. Continue to provide support in grant proposal writing.
3. Increase financial support by at least 25% over 2010.
4. Develop and offer programs for Westside CARES clients in a wide variety of areas. These might include financial management, parenting, nutrition, marriage enhancement, etc.

### **International Programs**

Diakonia's international support program is currently focused on assisting the United Methodist Church in Costa Rica in the areas of educational programs for children and construction of needed facilities.

For the 2011-2012 timeframe Diakonia has the following goals for this program:

1. Continue to build on our relationship with the Costa Rica United Methodist Church by determining other areas in which we can be of most service.

### **Other Programs**

For the 2011-2012 timeframe Diakonia has the following goals in this area:

1. Identify at least one new service program and develop implementation plan.

### **Other**

For the 2011-2012 timeframe Diakonia has the following additional goals:

1. Receive at least \$50,000 in grant funding for our community center based preschools.
2. Publish an annual report starting with the 2011 calendar year.
3. Publish a quarterly newsletter for donors beginning with the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2011.