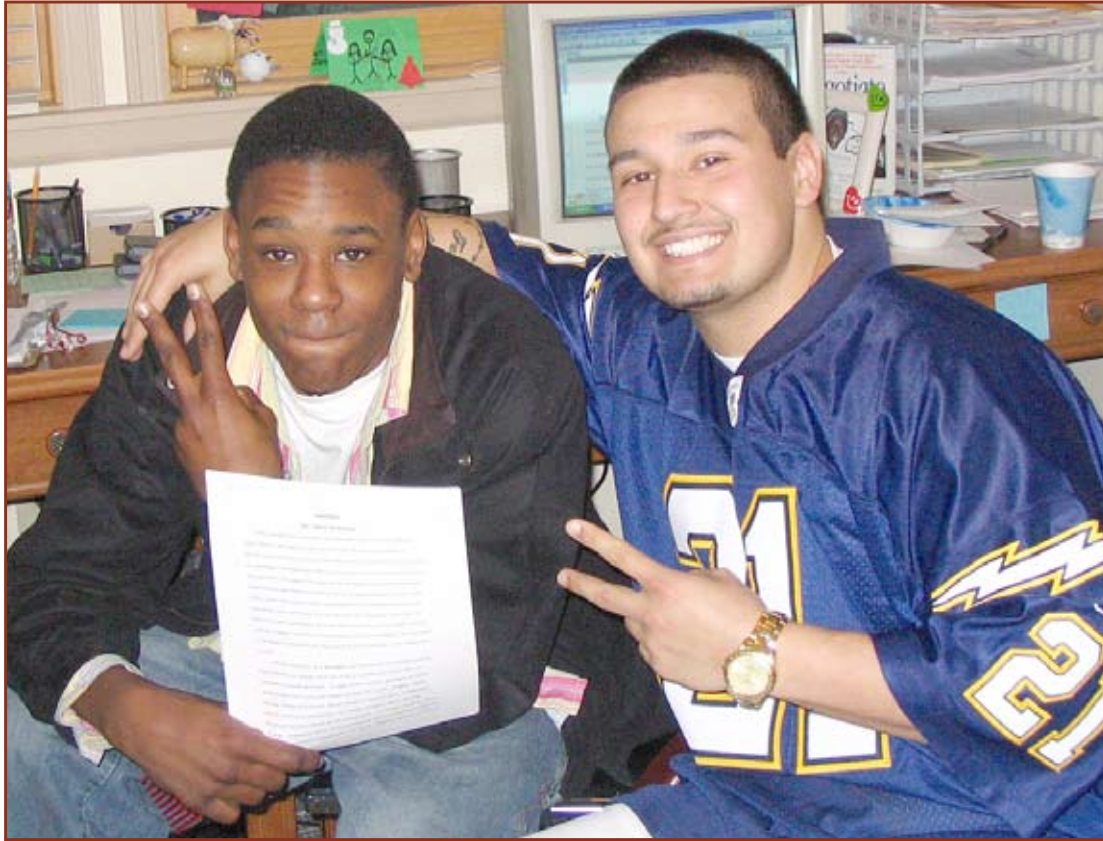


Touching Lives, Extending Peace...

Strategic Plan 2008–2013



Josh, a PLU tutor, celebrates with Alfred (with paper in hand) after working hard to finish a paper for English class. Alfred is now a freshman at Central Washington University.

Peace Community Center
June 2008

A Foundation of Community

“It is a center for the community, not just for the students. Neighborhood meetings, feeding program, forums, a place for people throughout the neighborhood to connect.”

*~ Neighborhood Member**

The Peace Community Center is located in the South Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma. The impetus for the Center came from the overwhelmingly negative impact of gangs, drugs and violence that enveloped the Hilltop in the 1980s and 1990s. The Peace Lutheran congregation—despite its small size—decided to build a community center where neighborhood children and families could gather and be safe. After a ten-year fundraising and building effort, the Center was dedicated in 2000.

Families in the South Hilltop face numerous challenges, including limited incomes and low rates of home ownership. While neighborhood revitalization has begun, there are still a number of vacant and blighted properties. Many of the young people in the neighborhood come from single-parent homes with limited incomes. Many of our teenagers do not graduate from high school. Many have experienced one or more traumatic events in their lives, such as the loss of a parent, a family member in prison, verbal or physical abuse, or neglect.

At the same time, South Hilltop is one of the most vibrantly diverse communities in the city. Our young people are resilient and care about their education and future. Most of them will be the first in their families to attend college, so they need particular guidance about high school class work relative to college entrance requirements, and the actual college application/admissions process. While 20% of the city’s population has a bachelor’s degree, only 11% of Hilltop residents do.



Marques, an elementary student, lives half a block away from the Community Center and participates in year-round tutoring and mentoring activities.

* Please note: The quotes used throughout this document are taken from the input of constituents gathered during the Strategic Planning process.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Peace Community Center has become a place that powerfully nurtures the development of neighborhood children, youth and young adults. We offer in-school and after-school academic mentoring and tutoring, summer day camps, a feeding program for those in need, and provide on-site programs that support the holistic development of those we serve. These programs have garnered the support of neighbors, individuals, churches, foundations, schools and others who come together at Peace Community Center, where each is mutually valued and built up. But there is much more for us to do.

We believe it is important to listen to what our community and those we serve have to say about the work of the Center. In the spring of 2008, the Center's board contacted over 125 individuals, including board members, staff members, individual donors, foundations, partner organizations, teachers, school administrators, Hilltop Scholar students, and parents. The result is a five-year Strategic Plan representing the collective voice and vision of those invested within our community here at the Community Center.

We are proud to have great programs at Peace Community Center, such as Hilltop Scholars, KidREACH, and Camp Peace. Over the next five years, we hope to build on these programs, allowing us to extend our reach to more children, youth and young adults in the Hilltop neighborhood, providing services to students from when they enter elementary school, through their formal education, including college or other post-secondary training, and ending in job placement. As you learn about our four new initiatives, we hope you also will be inspired by the vision we have of a community of children, youth, and families working not only to change their own lives, but the community in which they live.

Our Mission...

Peace Community Center is a place of community committed to the empowerment of children and young adults. The Center provides the skills and support needed for each to reach their God-given potential.

Our Vision...

The children and young adults we serve are confident in their ability to learn, love, and be powerful agents for positive change in our world.

Our Values...

Peace Lutheran: We value Peace Lutheran Church as our first partner in fostering spiritual vitality, expressing compassion, and empowering children and young adults to become all God intends them to be.

South 21st and Cushman: We value our diverse neighborhood and we commit ourselves and our resources to the development of community, life-giving relationships, and an attitude of service.

Partnership: We value and commit ourselves to cooperative relationships that bring gifts and opportunities to our common cause.

Holistic Health: We value every person's right to live in safety, experience true family, and acquire confidence in their ability to learn, grow, and serve.

Empowerment: We value our community's capacity to create positive change, and we commit to the development of leaders who reflect our community's diversity.



Elementary students enjoy a day at Camp Peace, our five-week summer day camp that focuses on academic support and enrichment activities.

Initiative 1

Build the Foundation for Our Success: Our Life Skills Program

“One, it is a place to go to keep me out of trouble. Two, it is a place where you can get help without feeling stupid/slow. Three, it is a place where the people you know are like family.”

~ Hilltop Scholar Student

Background

Hilltop Scholars is an academic tutoring and mentoring program for high school students from the Hilltop neighborhood. The program focuses on students who have the academic ability to go to college, but are not finding success in our public schools. Academic tutoring and mentoring throughout the year helps students recognize and achieve their academic potential.

Developed through the leadership of Laurie Ruiz, who has a Master’s Degree in teaching and eleven years of teaching experience, over the last three years Hilltop Scholars has supported 42 students to graduate from high school, of which 36 are currently in college. These students have garnered over one million dollars in scholarships to support their goal of a college education.

Our staff, tutors, parents of students and mentors have identified a clear need to provide support beyond the realm of academics. We need to provide our students with a full spectrum of support that will nourish and sustain them as they go through high school, building a foundation for success as they enter college, training programs or the workforce.

Goal

Provide students in our community with the decision-making, social, and study skills needed to become confident in their ability to learn, love and be powerful agents for positive change in our world.

Implementation

Year 1: Develop or adapt a four-year curriculum for our high school students.

Design a curriculum recognizing the evolving academic, personal and social needs of high school students that engages students in service learning.

Enable students to receive Tacoma Public Schools credit for class.

Years 2–5: Implement the curriculum as a credit course.

Initiative 2

Finish the Job: Our Alumni Support Program

"I am so profoundly grateful that Peace exists to help my students who have so much potential and simultaneously so many obstacles to overcome. Peace gets them to college and keeps them there. Thank you so much."

~ Tacoma Public School Teacher

Background

The Hilltop Scholars program has been a success since it began in 2005. Currently 36 of our 42 Hilltop Scholar graduates are enrolled in college and four others are employed. However, just as our students faced obstacles in high school, they encounter new and different challenges in college. Students are often the first member of their family to attend college. We have seen a need for increased support for these students as they move from high school to college. We also believe that it is important to widen our support for those students for whom college is not the right path, and support them through training programs or apprenticeships that result in living wage jobs. For both groups of students, it is our goal to support them in their transition to employment, after they finish their post-secondary education and or training. The key to these students' success is their ability to be prepared for and manage the changes that happen in their lives.



Hilltop Scholars graduate from Foss High School – Class of 2007! Since graduating from high school and moving on to college Shaniesa, Markeya and Donicha have all faced challenges for which they approached the Community Center for support.

Initiative 2 – cont.

Goal

Launch a new program that supports Hilltop Scholars high school graduates through their transition into college, training programs and the workforce.

Implementation

Year 1: Design a program that will support Hilltop Scholars high school graduates' entry into college, training programs and the workforce.

Survey Hilltop Scholar graduates to identify the supports needed.

Survey colleges and organizations that support high school students' transition to college or the workforce (e.g., Act 6, Palmer Foundation, etc.).

Design the program based on the findings.

Year 2: Hire a program coordinator.

Years 2–5: Implement the program.

Initiative 3

Expand Our Academic Core: New Middle School Program

"I think it is really imperative that there be some programs in middle schools to continue to help those kids that aren't getting the help that they need."

~ Parent of Program Participant

Background

Since it opened, Peace Community Center has served elementary age children and high school students through a variety of programs. To date there have been no programs oriented toward middle school students, and our Peace community clearly identified this gap.

In surveys, parents shared that they are overwhelmed by the homework needs of their middle school children and feel unable to provide adequate support. They worry that there is no safe, structured place available after school where middle school students can get help with homework within a caring, nurturing community of people who serve as good role models.

We are committed to addressing this gap by adding a new middle school program, whether through partnering with an existing program or creating a new program. This program will include academic tutoring, mentoring, and managing the transition from elementary to middle school as well as support students as they continue on to high school.

Goal

Design and establish a successful new middle school program.

Initiative 3 – cont.

Implementation

Years 1–3: Raise the needed funds.

Year 2: Identify needs of middle school students in the Hilltop Community.

Years 2–3: Assess existing programs serving middle school students in the community, and develop program model or partnership/collaboration.

Years 4–5: Implement middle school program.



Samantha and Nicole are high school students, who also participated in programs as elementary students. Through the middle school initiative and alumni initiative we will be able to provide continuous support to Hilltop children and youth such as Samantha and Nicole from elementary school until they are first employed.

Initiative 4

Make it Real: Capacity Building Initiative

“It excites me most to watch young children from our neighborhood grow up from elementary students to high school students who are applying to college. It is an awesome opportunity to walk beside a young person trying to navigate growing up from a child to a young adult.”

~ Peace Community Center Staff Member

Background

It is crucial that we dedicate the time and resources necessary for the Center to grow in a sustainable and healthy manner, empowering us to serve our community with excellence today and into the future. To realize these opportunities will require significant investment in organizational infrastructure and capacity.

Goal

Build organizational capacity to sustain existing programs and achieve the initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Implementation:

Year 1: Build on the Community Center’s strong development base.
Work with Third Sector Consulting to evaluate existing development capacity and develop strategic, targeted plan to raise the revenue needed to implement Strategic Plan.

Year 1: Develop effective programmatic evaluation systems.
Hire consultant to develop stronger evaluation tools for existing and new programs.
Use comprehensive metrics and qualitative data to evaluate program’s success and initiate improvements over the life of the Strategic Plan.

Years 1–2: Determine infrastructure needed to implement new programs.
Evaluate need for additional space for new programs.
Determine infrastructure needs such as database, tracking, reporting, grants management, etc.

Years 2–3: Improve communication strategies.
Redesign website.
Develop a communication plan that engages parents, donors, funders and the community.

Years 4–5: Document successful Hilltop Scholars model for replication.
Gather data on the Hilltop Scholars.
Develop written model.
Develop plan to disseminate model.

Partnering with Peace

This Strategic Plan captures the vision and dreams of our neighborhood and community and the commitment of our board, staff and volunteers, on behalf of the young people in our neighborhood. It is ambitious and exciting. And it stretches us to double our budget over five years, to make our vision and dreams happen. Here is how Peace Community Center—with your help—will address this challenge.

First and foremost, Peace Community Center has a strong history of responsible financial management. We will not grow faster than our resources allow. When we built the Center itself, we paid off our construction debt within two years of its completion; the Center has been debt-free since the spring of 2003. Through our active development team and board, the Center raises nearly 60% of its current budget from individual donors and churches, a far higher percentage than most non-profits our size.

Second, we are working with Jackie Ostrom and Third Sector Consulting, a local fundraising firm, to identify our strengths and areas for growth and improvement in fundraising, so that we can ramp up our private fundraising to address the financial resources needed to implement our plan and make it sustainable.

Third, we have excellent ongoing relationships with a number of local funders who appreciate and support the success that our students have achieved as Hilltop Scholars. Making Hilltop Scholars the “fulcrum” for the new initiatives in our plan means that our funders can see how their current investments serve as building blocks for the future. The chart below represents the costs associated with our current programs and each initiative during the five years of the Strategic Plan.

Five-Year Budget Projection

	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Current Programming	\$336,000	\$353,000	\$370,500	\$389,000	\$408,500
Hilltop Scholars/Life Skills	32,500	75,000	78,750	82,750	87,000
Alumni Support	-0-	40,000	42,000	71,000	75,000
Middle School Program	-0-	5,000	45,000	100,000	105,000
Capacity Building	50,000	35,250	46,750	44,000	51,000
TOTAL BUDGET	\$418,500	\$508,250	\$583,000	\$686,750	\$726,500

We invite you to join us in making new investments for the future of our Hilltop youth. Indeed, these dreams cannot be realized without additional support from individuals, the community, and foundations. This investment in our community will have dividends that pay off for years to come. There are many ways that you can support the Center as it continues to grow and reach out to more children, youth and young adults in the Hilltop community. Please consider how you can be part of these extraordinary opportunities.

Thank you!



Laurie Ruiz, Education Director, enjoys time on a hike with Hilltop Scholars high school students.



Peace Community Center

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