



Diakonia, Inc.

12747 Old Bridge Road
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MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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CHRISTMAS IN JULY?

Diakonia's Thrift Store Kicks off 15 Years with a Christmas Celebration.

Ocean City, MD (June 20, 2024) — Diakonia, a local homeless solutions provider, will celebrate 15 years of operation of its Thrift Store on Friday, July 19th from 10am-3pm. The event will kick off their annual "Christmas in July" Festival with sales on Holiday items. Refreshments will be provided with door prizes, a raffle basket, and other giveaways. Sales will include 15 clothing items for \$15 on selected racks.

In July of 2009, Diakonia opened a Thrift Store on the corner of Sunset Ave. and Stephen Decatur Hwy (611) in Ocean City, Maryland called "Used to Be Mine." With the help of the late Mary and Jack Ferry, and Marie and George Hollendersky, the Store began with the rental of two units (1200 square feet each), until Reese Cropper, Sr. donated an additional 1200 sq feet to be used for donations and furniture sales in December of 2021.

Prior to the addition of the third unit, all donations were accepted at the emergency shelter on Old Bridge Road and sorted on the outside picnic tables. Items were then transported to the Thrift store daily up until 2019 when Diakonia rented a unit near their administrative office to sort and store donations. This created much needed relief for the Emergency Shelter program to focus more on clients, and remained in use until the additional unit could be added.

Volunteers like Bill Venable and his wife Sandram, who were also integral players in opening the Thrift store, along with Jim Salembene and his wife Bernie (now long standing Thrift Store volunteers) were the main drivers, hauling donations in their own trucks and trailers until Diakonia was able to purchase a box truck in 2016.

The biggest secret to the success of the Thrift Store has always been its volunteers. Only 6% of the Thrift Store "staff" is paid.

"I am extremely grateful for the success of the thrift store which is possible due to our volunteers. We could not operate the store without them. They are truly an amazing bunch who dedicate their time with hard work, dedication, and great customer service. Secondly, the generosity from our local community of residents and

businesses who donate everything we need to sell in the store and to help those in need. We also have sincere gratitude towards our loyal customers with the many that come in weekly to support the store. Together these key components create the balance that allows us to be successful to help support our shelter and operating costs for Diakonia”

The primary function of Diakonia’s Thrift Store is to generate income for its various homeless programs and services offered in the community to US Veterans and others. Last year, Thrift Store sales were just over \$210,000 which is nearly 10% of the annual budget.

“We couldn’t do that without the support to the community,” said Ken Argot, Executive Director of Diakonia. “People in this area are very generous. Our volunteers help us keep costs down, and we’ve had a variety of new partners who donate new products, such as furniture, which is a hot commodity in our area. All of it helps!”

Beyond profits needed to cover program costs, many items are used to help clothe Diakonia’s shelter residents and homeless persons reached through their outreach team. When moving clients out of shelter and into their new units, case managers will often gather furniture and other items at the Thrift Store, that clients may need to start a home

Plans continue to be made regarding a potential new Thrift Store on 611 with expanded Food Pantry and Case Management Offices. The new facility would have a loading dock to receive large pallets of food and other donated furniture and items, which would really benefit both the organization and those they serve.

For over 50 years, Diakonia has continued to provide, “Help for Today and Hope for Tomorrow” for the Lower Shore Tri-County area.

For more information about the programs and services available at Diakonia, or to make a donation, please call 410-213-0923, or go to their website at <https://diakoniaoc.org>. The Thrift Store is located at 12507 Sunset Ave Ocean City, Maryland (at the intersection of Rt. 611 and Sunset Ave.) The store is open Wednesday – Friday 10AM – 3PM, and Saturday’s 10AM – 1PM. Call 410-213-0243 for more information on how to donate gently used items or coordinate pickup for larger donations.

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About Diakonia

Since 1972, Diakonia has been providing “help for today and hope for tomorrow,” for men, women, and families in Worcester County, MD. By providing emergency housing, food assistance, and resources to help them get back on their feet Diakonia offers help to families rebuild their lives one step at a time. Over the past 10 years, Diakonia has expanded services to the entire Lower Shore Tri-County region that includes case management, housing assistance, homeless prevention, and veteran services. Diakonia is the only comprehensive provider for homeless men, women, children, and veterans on the Tri-County Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland.