

## **Introduction to Kids at Heart**

### **Brief Description**

Kids at Heart is a not-for-profit agency that supports and recruits foster, adoptive and respite families and their children in Larimer County. We mobilize volunteers to provide direct support to all foster and adoptive families who take these children into their homes and work hard to provide the love, safety and stability these children need and deserve. We also 'plant seeds' of hope and understanding to inspire people to become foster, adoptive or respite parents. We empower other faith and community groups to take action in supporting these kids and families either through volunteering or through initiating their own similar program.

The Kids at Heart program began in 2002 when the congregation of Heart of the Rockies Christian Church shared in the experiences of one of the families going through the foster-to-adopt process and discovered the unmet needs of the adoption and foster community. Often these families have little social support while they work to heal the damage the children have experienced. This is due to both the restrictions of the foster care system and the difficulty in finding qualified care providers for their children who often have troubled backgrounds. According to an article in the *Journal of Social Service Research* that surveyed families after their adoption of high needs children, respite care is one of the needs often identified as unmet. In communities in which there were no respite services available, families tended to perceive a lower quality of relationship with their adopted child and felt that the adoption had a more negative impact on their marriage and family. A survey done by Larimer County asked foster parents what support services they found were the most beneficial to them and Fundango was the most frequently mentioned service. Without support, foster parents may not be able to continue to provide their service and adoptions may be broken. Kids at Heart offers support to all foster and adoptive families in Larimer County with the belief that they serve on behalf of the entire community.

The most visible work of Kids at Heart is Fundango, our twice-monthly non-religious program for foster and adopted children. Kids at Heart believes that we are living our faith by supporting vulnerable children and the families that are sustaining them. We encourage all people regardless of religious beliefs to volunteer with Kids at Heart and support a community and individual children in need.

### **Core Values**

Children have the right to be safe.

Children have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

The most vulnerable individuals in our society are those that need the most care.

Parents need breaks from parenting to maintain healthy relationships and improve their parenting skills.

### **Vision**

The vision of Kids at Heart is to maintain and improve Fundangos by ensuring the continuance of safe and fun events. We aspire to raise community awareness about foster and adoptive families, and expose individuals and families to fostering and adopting through volunteering. We hope to expand our services in the future.

### **Mission**

Kids at Heart is a not-for-profit program helping adoptive and foster families and their children. We mobilize volunteers to provide direct support to families and assist children through life transitions. We believe that all children are important to God and that every child deserves a safe and stable home.