



Churches, Charity and Children

How Religious Organizations Are
Reaching America's At-Risk Kids

by Joseph Loconte and
Lia Fantuzzo



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How Religious Organizations Are
Reaching America's At-Risk Kids

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This excellent piece of research makes a unique and extremely valuable contribution to the underdeveloped study of faith-based organizations. Kudos to Joe Loconte and Lia Fantuzzo, for taking the time to travel around the country and observe first-hand, some 37 different faith-based organizations. In addition to observing these community serving organizations in action, Loconte and Fantuzzo conducted in-depth interviews not only with beneficiaries of faith-based services, but with those who actually provide these services. *Churches, Charity and Children: How Religious Organizations are Rescuing America's At Risk Kids*, raises many important questions related to the sometimes contentious debate surrounding public support for social services delivered by faith-based organizations—and then answers these questions based on insightful interview data.

Do faith-based organizations lose their religious identity and mission when they partner with government or other secular providers to achieve civic goals? Do these public and private partnerships violate the First Amendment? Do faith-based organizations force religion or religious beliefs on recipients of various social services? According to Loconte and Fantuzzo, the answer is an emphatic “no.” Indeed, their basic conclusion is: “Faith-based organizations can work closely with government and still respect church-state boundaries, protect the rights of the people they serve, and preserve their own religious identity.”

Loconte and Fantuzzo’s research confirms what anyone who spends any significant amount of time observing faith-based organizations already knows, namely:

- 1) ***religious organizations serve important civic purposes.***
“we turned to religious organizations because no one else was willing to get involved” (government official).
- 2) ***religious approaches meet needs in the lives of youth by building relationships of trust and love.***
“kids don’t come to tutoring because they love reading and math, they come because they want to be loved” (program administrator).
- 3) ***many faith-based organizations consider faith to be central to their effectiveness.***
“real change in a community starts with a heart change” (Detroit faith based group).
- 4) ***religious organizations are careful to respect the beliefs of youth and their families.***
“we make it clear that there’s a fine line between mentoring out of faith commitment and prostelytizing” (development director of a teen detention center).

This important research by Joe Loconte and Lia Fantuzzo reminds us of the glaring need to provide both public and private funding to insure that we begin collecting in a systematic and rigorous fashion, verifiable and outcome-based data on the prevalence and efficacy of faith-based organizations. If indeed such funding is made available, I suspect faith-based workers and beneficiaries of faith-based services won’t be anymore surprised by future research findings, than they will be by the findings put forward in this compelling report.

BYRON R. JOHNSON

“There is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome and good for life in the future than some good memory, especially a memory of childhood, of home. People talk to you a great deal about your education, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man carries many such memories with him into life, he is safe to the end of his day, and if one has only one good memory left in one’s heart, even that may sometimes be the means of saving us.”

—Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*

Too many children in America are born into families that are too broken to provide the affection, care and guidance considered essential to a stable, healthy life. They have a father in prison or a mother on drugs. Their public school is the worst in the city. They live in poverty: in housing projects, shelters, or on the streets. Hardly any men in their neighborhoods have a job. There are plenty of young mothers around, but few are married. Hardly anyone, it seems, goes to church, mosque or synagogue.

These are America’s “high-risk” kids. No one knows how many there are for certain, but one study estimates a staggering 8.2 million nationwide.¹ They race through childhood at breakneck speed—without a map, a compass, or any real sense of the road to adulthood. Government offers them an array of social programs, including food stamps, housing subsidies, health care, and “crisis intervention” services. Yet their greatest need, their one howling desire, goes unmet: the need to be loved. What they lack is “some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood.” Without that, their futures remain deeply uncertain.

In the summer of 2001, the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society undertook a research study to learn more about community organizations serving at-risk and high-risk children.² Though we identified scores of groups trying to improve the chances for these kids, three simple criteria were applied for taking a closer look. First, helping needy children succeed must be a major objective. Second, the organization must work in partnership with federal, state or local government. And third, the program must be considered faith-based. Though there are notable secular efforts to help youth—Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is perhaps the largest—many if not most of these organizations claim a religious orientation.

Public interest in the power of religious institutions to heal social ills has skyrocketed in recent years, and no political figure has devoted more attention to their efforts than President George W. Bush. Over the last 18 months, the President has sought to mobilize these “armies of compassion” in two major ways: Boost private support with tax incentives for charitable giving, and increase public support by overturning rules that exclude these groups from federal funding. With White House backing, the U.S. House of Representatives passed faith-based legislation in July 2001. As of this writing, the Senate was still considering its own bill. Meanwhile, the No Child

Left Behind Act, signed into law in January 2002, allows religious organizations for the first time to receive federal money to help children in failing schools.³

The President's faith-based agenda has come under attack from all sides. Many on the left claim that religious belief is irrelevant to programs helping the poor. They say government aid to religious groups blurs the First Amendment boundary between church and state. They also warn that people will be stampeded into religious activities in order to receive assistance. As one critic darkly predicted last year, the President's agenda will only "release religion's fury."⁴ Many on the right, however, assume that any agreement with government is a pact with the Devil. They cannot imagine how churches and charities could tread on secular ground without sacrificing their religious identity. For them, the risks of spiritual corruption are simply too great.⁵ As one religious leader recently put it, "Is working with government to obey our biblical mandate to help the poor, the hungry and the hurting worth that exposure?" The answer for his own congregation was a definitive no.⁶

In debates over religion and public life, however, fears and hype easily harden into dogma. What's needed is a better understanding of what actually happens in the trenches of social outreach, on both sides of the church-state line.

Study Design

This study was, in fact, guided by a desire to more fully understand the specific ways that many faith-based organizations collaborate with government agencies, how they maintain their religious values and how they respect the beliefs of the children they serve. What follows next is an account of the overall approach to selecting organizations and gathering the relevant data.

Methodology for Selecting FBOs

We used several approaches to identify groups assisting at-risk youth. The internet helped us locate website data bases from the Acton Institute,⁷ World Vision,⁸ and the Center for Renewal. We attended or gathered information from public-policy conferences, including those hosted by the Hudson Institute,⁹ the Independent Sector and the Aspen Institute,¹⁰ and the Virginia Governor's Office.¹¹ We called researchers from universities such as Howard University,¹² University of Southern California,¹³ Claremont Theological Seminary,¹⁴ and Eastern Baptist Seminary.¹⁵ Several books that cited faith-based organizations and offered contact information also proved helpful.¹⁶ We also contacted magazines,¹⁷ philanthropic organizations,¹⁸ and research centers and foundations.¹⁹ The National Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) announced our research project on its listserve, where hundreds of social workers nationwide could respond.

From these sources we generated a list of about 250 groups, from which complete contact information was obtained for 82 organizations (see Appendix A for a list of the organizations). Each of these groups was contacted by telephone to determine if they met three basic screening criteria. We only included organizations in the study that: (1) identified themselves as faith-based; (2) worked with at-risk youth; and (3) had contact with government agencies (even if it was secondary contact). These criteria left considerable flexibility with regard to other factors sometimes associated with faith-based organizations. For example, we made no attempt to create a religious litmus test, or to narrowly define a "faith-based" organization. Rather, we included organizations that were comfortable with the term as a self-designation.

The screening process eliminated more than 50 groups, and we settled on 37 organizations to include in the study (see Appendix B for a complete list). Though all meet our three criteria, the final list represents a wide range of church-state partnerships helping youth.

First, all consider themselves faith-based, but to varying degrees. Some are explicitly evangelistic, many offer Bible studies, a few make little effort to introduce youth to religious concepts. Some programs are run directly by churches, others are administered by religious non-profits, and many are non-profits that aggressively tap the resources of local congregations. Second, all work with at-risk kids. We decided not to limit our search to organizations wholly devoted to assisting youth. Instead, we included organizations that support at least one major program focusing on children or adolescents. Finally, all maintain an ongoing relationship with government agencies. We included organizations that accept public support, but excluded those that are fully funded by government.²⁰

Interview Process

The bulk of our research was qualitative, based on phone interviews with ministry leaders that lasted from 30 minutes to an hour. We had fewer conversations with government officials, and they tended to last 15–30 minutes. We included data from two site visits, one representing the Amachi program in Philadelphia, Pa., the other representing Kids Hope USA in Hammond, La. In addition to our conversations with program representatives, we included material from websites, annual reports, and brochures. Most of the data was collected from June to August of 2001, with follow-up calls to update information as needed.

Study Instrument (Survey)

Since our intent was to carry out a qualitative study, we relied heavily on interviews rather than large quantitative data sets. The interview schedule was grounded in previous observation and relevant research²¹ and included structured as well as open-ended items.

To understand the nature of the church-state collaboration, we asked questions such as: What are the ground rules for religious expression in the program? Is the Bible or other religious material used in the program? What about prayer or worship services?

To understand the religious values of an organization, our questions included: What are the most important aspects (religious and non-religious) of the program? What safeguards are in place to protect the religious mission and integrity of the program? Do any staff positions require a profession of faith?

To understand how religious organizations respect the beliefs of youth under their care, our questions included: Is participation in religious activities mandatory for children in the program? Are young people invited to make a faith commitment?

Results

What emerges from the research is a snapshot of the sheer diversity of America's independent sector. There are almost as many different efforts to reach needy kids as there are kids.

They vary in methodology: Some organizations use the lure of Honda minibikes to keep boys out of trouble; others send volunteers into the streets to rescue young women from prostitution. They vary in size: A home for

unwed teen mothers in Toledo, Ohio, for example, takes in perhaps 30 girls and their children, while a church-based mentoring program reaches 2,800 kids across 27 states. They vary in target population: Many work with African-Americans in cities such as New York or Philadelphia; others help Latinos in Los Angeles or the Chicago suburbs; and some labor among migrant families in Phoenix or Hmong refugees in St. Paul. Some are run by ministers, such as the Rev. Jim Till's tutoring program in Washington, D.C. Others are led by former government officials, such as Chris Sain, a 20-year veteran of Michigan's child-welfare services.

For all the diversity, however, a few traits loom large. These partnerships represent American-style citizenship at its best. None are the result of federal or even local government initiative; nearly all grew out of the concerns of private citizens who saw problems hardly anyone else was addressing. Nevertheless, government officials are often intimately involved in the work of faith-based organizations—from publicly endorsing their programs to personally assisting their staff. Finally, there is a resolute sense of urgency about helping children and youth succeed amid extremely difficult circumstances. As one ministry warns: "If positive adult role models do not intervene, these youth will frequent detention, jail and prison and many will die." All the best data support that view.²²

Although our research sample was limited, its influence is significant: Combined, these groups are reaching more than 23,000 at-risk youth. A range of services is being offered—including tutoring, job training, and day care—but the focus most often is on establishing friendships. Some of these efforts are infrequent and very informal. Yet many kids are in mentoring relationships and most appear to be spending regular time with a caring adult. Whatever else may be said about the importance of religious organizations, without them there would be no steady, loving influence in the lives of thousands of vulnerable children.

Much of the recent political debate has neglected these realities. The unfortunate result is an obsessive focus on narrow First Amendment issues. Ironically, attention has been diverted from the positive influence of America's Good Samaritans and how it might be expanded.

The current research study partly addresses this deficiency. Our main conclusion is this: The staff and volunteers of religious organizations consider faith commitment an important if not vital aspect of their work. Nevertheless, faith-based organizations are working closely with government—while respecting church-state boundaries, protecting the rights of the people they serve, and preserving their own religious identity. Though the majority of partnerships we examined are funded privately and driven by volunteers, many involve significant amounts of government funding. Nearly all demand a high level of civic trust between church and state. When First Amendment questions come up, they are resolved at the local level.

In addition to these more general observations, our research study underscored several features of church-state partnerships that offer important lessons for policymakers, government officials and ministry leaders:

First, religious organizations are serving important civic purposes. Churches and religious groups offer a vast array of services to their local communities, programs that sometimes are not being provided elsewhere. A few years ago, Catholic Charities in New York City did a taxonomy of publicly-funded social services it provided through its network. After-school programs, refugee resettlement, homeless shelters, food banks—they stopped counting at 197.²³ A recent University of Pennsylvania study found that over 90 percent of Philadelphia's congregations have at least one social program serving needy neighbors—and virtually all assist people outside of their own houses of worship.²⁴ Most of the nation's affordable day-care programs, for example, are run by churches.

Very few congregations limit access to their own members, and nearly all financially support the centers they house. “No financial incentives or technical assistance was offered to local churches,” says Eileen Lindner, of the National Council of Churches. “The fact that child care is so prevalent in churches is evidence that congregations are highly responsive to local needs.”²⁵

The same observation applies to the problem of at-risk youth. Government clearly has an interest in keeping kids off drugs, preventing teen pregnancy, and keeping boys out of jail. These might be considered civic or “secular” objectives, but many faith-based agencies share them; they simply use religious ideas and institutions to get the job done.

Consider two organizations, both of which claim a guiding Christian vision. The Bresee Foundation works in one of the poorest and most crime-ridden communities in Los Angeles County. The foundation offers job training, literacy programs, computer classes—but all are publicly funded and aimed at juvenile offenders and other at-risk youth. By contrast, the Seattle Urban Academy takes no government money, yet only accepts students who’ve been tossed out of government schools—because of drug use, weapons possession, truancy, or other problems. Both groups are religious, yet both clearly serve public aims.

Some government officials told us they turned to religious organizations because no one else was willing to get involved. New Horizons Ministry, for example, is the only agency—secular or religious—reaching out to young prostitutes in Seattle. Nevertheless, New Horizons is not bashful about its goal of introducing kids to faith in Jesus. The same is true for a church-based mentoring program in Philadelphia. Called Amachi, it mobilizes volunteers to befriend children with a parent in prison. Part of Amachi’s aim is to get youth connected to local congregations—a goal universally applauded by prison officials. “It wasn’t an area being addressed at all,” says Pricilla Beecroft, a deputy director at the Philadelphia Prison System. “But they’ve come up with a mentoring program that can meet the needs of these children.”

Many organizations depend on active cooperation from government agencies. A circuit court judge calls a program for court-involved juveniles “a very real part of the treatment plan for many high-risk kids,” and makes regular referrals. Groups may run after-school programs or work with teachers to identify needy kids—making school officials some of their loudest cheerleaders. A school principal, for example, became so impressed with a church-based mentoring program that she sent a letter to pastors asking them to expand the effort to all needy children in her district: “My hope would be that . . . all schools in the city and the area would have these partnerships with churches.”

Although some ministries express their goals in religious, even evangelistic terms, they’ve persuaded government officials that the fruit of their efforts—better social outcomes for kids—is worthy of public support. In line with recent Supreme Court rulings, this suggests there are legitimate ways for government to accommodate the religious beliefs and activities of organizations serving important civic purposes.²⁶

Second, religious approaches meet deep emotional needs in the lives of youth by building relationships of trust and love. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, one of the most important studies of America’s youth, found that the active involvement of a caring adult is the best defense against delinquency, academic failure, substance abuse and other problems. “Time and again, the home environment emerges as central in shaping health outcomes for American youth,” researchers concluded. “Children who report feeling connected to a parent are protected against many different kinds of health risks.”²⁷

This fact is as an operating assumption for most of the organizations we examined. The special challenge they face, however, is helping kids whose parents are unavailable or unable to offer much support. Aslan Youth Ministries in Redbank, N.J., for example, tutors about 275 public school children, most living in housing projects where single-parent homes are the norm. “Kids don’t come to tutoring because they love reading and math,” says executive director Craig Bogard. “They come because they want to be loved.” At Strategies to Elevate People in Washington, D.C., Jim Till says his volunteers “are bringing the love of Christ to others, and this is their biggest asset.”

Though ministry leaders commonly cite faith commitment as the reason for their work, they emphasize the importance of love in action for children who’ve experienced many disappointments in life. “Many of the kids have been abused at the hands of those who’ve called themselves Christians,” says Mick Prandi, director of development at New Horizons Ministry in Seattle. “Our emphasis is on relationships, on loving them unconditionally.”

That’s not a flash-in-the-pan task. Government officials quietly admit that one of the great problems with many secular programs is that they’re short-lived; volunteers often lack commitment and drift in and out of the lives of vulnerable kids. One school principal describes his students as “emotional bank accounts that are completely overdrawn”—and unable to handle another broken promise. Principal Glenda O’Banion says her school, Hammond Eastside Primary, has attracted many volunteers because of its location in an extremely impoverished district in Hammond, La. But they never last long. For a while she stopped letting groups come in.

The ministry leaders with whom we spoke, however, have structured their programs to meet the problem. Kids Hope USA, based in Spring Lake, Mich., will not work with congregations that lack the resources to sustain long-term friendships with needy children. That includes hiring a staff person to manage volunteers and a pledge from the pastor to become a mentor. “I’m not interested in good intentions,” says executive director Virgil Gulker. “We put extraordinary emphasis on the commitment the church needs to make to the child.” It was enough to persuade O’Banion to allow Kids Hope USA volunteers into her school. “I’m an old lady and I’ve been in education for 30 years,” she says, “and I’ve never seen anything like this.”

Such devotion is not uncommon among faith-based organizations. Staff at CityCURE in Cincinnati make a four-year commitment to a child and his family. Their motto: “Close enough to change a life.” At Neighborhood Ministries in Phoenix, Ariz., staff and volunteers are expected to stay actively involved in the lives of immigrant families that are often on the move. Friends of the Children in Portland, which targets first-graders considered most at risk, requires staff to sustain relationships for at least 10 years. “We believe in relentless effort. We will not allow kids to fail,” says national director Doug Stamm. “This is the same commitment Christ would give.”

Whether expressed in religious or secular terms, ministry leaders describe a tough-minded devotion to children: They are realistic about the problems facing youth, but determined to be involved enough in their lives to help overcome them. Moved by their faith in God, many are willing to function as surrogate mothers or fathers. In this sense, religious approaches appear to be meeting deep emotional needs of at-risk youth by building relationships of trust and support.²⁸

Third, many religious organizations consider exposure to faith a crucial part of their effectiveness with youth.

In the debate over the President’s faith-based legislation, some assume that religious perspectives are irrelevant to effective social welfare programs.²⁹ Many are skeptical that exposure to religious beliefs and practices actually helps those in need. Claims Mark Chavez, a sociologist at the University of Arizona: “It can’t be said strongly enough how little we know about whether religion makes a difference in the effectiveness of delivering services.”³⁰

Not surprisingly, the faith-based organizations examined take a different view. The Harambee Christian Family Center runs an after-school tutoring program in high-crime neighborhoods in Pasadena, Calif. Staff and volun-

teers deliver a heavy dose of Bible instruction and tough-love mentoring. “We are living it out every day, changing lives, building disciples and modeling Christ,” says associate director Rudy Carrasco. “You need something as strong as a gang to reach these kids.” City officials who refer youth to his program evidently agree.

The Central Detroit Christian Development Corporation provides affordable housing, tutoring and other services to youth and their families living in the poorest zip code in the state of Michigan. In a public school targeted by the ministry, barely one in four students entering ninth grade every year will graduate. In other words, failure is the defining feature of life for many of these kids—a problem that youth workers say will not be cured by typical self-esteem strategies. Hence, the organization’s creed: “Real change in a community starts with a heart change through a relationship with Jesus Christ.”

That theme was echoed in numerous conversations with ministry leaders, who stressed the chaotic family conditions engulfing at-risk youth. “We can’t always change their circumstances,” says Donna Speer, director of Families in Touch, a program for unwed teen moms in Waukegan, Ill. “But we can point them to a loving God who can give them the strength and peace to sustain them on the road to responsible adulthood.” Indeed, in many cases, religious belief appears crucial for troubled kids. Youth workers commonly see enraged or depressed adolescents “acting out” because their fathers have abandoned them. How to break the grip of resentment? Faith in God, they say, which leads to forgiveness. “Ninety-nine percent of the men are angry because they don’t have a father in the home,” says the Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson, founder of Brotherhood Organization of a New Destiny in Los Angeles. “This is the only way we can ever hope to guide young people.”

Many young people might say the same thing. According to research from the Institute for Youth Development, about 94 percent of teenagers say they believe in God. Nearly nine in 10 teens consider their religious beliefs important to them. With numbers like this, the argument that religious themes should never be raised with kids is a little baffling.³¹

Just ask Ruben Austria, director of the Bronx Connection. His evangelical program works with black and Hispanic youth in New York City, most of whom either have attended churches or have family members who’ve been involved. “It’s not an alien thing for them,” he says. “It’s white liberals who worry the most about religion.” Or ask Larry Brown, director of the Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston, who has worked in youth ministry for 25 years. He recalls a teenage boy in an after-school program once admitting he had no purpose in life. When Brown asked him why, the boy began to sob: He was born out of wedlock and his father had disappeared; he thought his own life was a mistake. “How do you tell kids there is hope without faith commitment? How do you tell them there is a plan for their lives without telling them what Jesus said?” Brown asks. “Without a belief system, don’t ask me to minister to youth. What I would say to them would be useless.”³²

The President’s faith-based agenda has prompted a much-needed argument over the importance of faith commitment in social programs. Though good research exists to support the claims of religious organizations, more is needed.³³ Nevertheless, as the debate proceeds, it’s important to bear in mind the internal dynamic of many organizations serving youth: They consider exposure to religious values and beliefs a crucial part of their strategy for helping needy kids—and structure their programs accordingly.

Fourth, many religious organizations insist on staff and volunteers who share their deepest beliefs and values.

Perhaps the most contested aspect of the President’s faith-based initiative is whether charities receiving public funds may use religion as a criterion for hiring. Decades of civil rights legislation, upheld by the Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court, have given religious institutions special exemptions from anti-discrimination laws.³⁴

Nonetheless, opponents assail these hiring protections as “federally-funded discrimination.” They see no reason why religious belief should play a significant role in how services are delivered.³⁵

That’s not how ministry leaders view their own organizations. Nearly every group we examined considered the religious commitments of its employees either important or vital to their work. Most required staff to endorse a statement of faith, and many required it of volunteers.

Hope Now for Youth, in Fresno, Calif., is a pretty typical example. The organization targets young men involved with gangs. Staff and volunteers hang out with youth in malls, neighborhoods, and pool halls. The aim is to build friendships and introduce them not only to good-paying jobs (they’ve placed about 700 youth in local businesses), but to faith in Jesus. According to executive director Rev. Roger Minassian, it’s not a mission field for doubters: “We want these men to understand why we do what we do,” he says. “The passion to serve other men comes from gratefulness to God.” All staff must share the organization’s Christian values and vision.

From the standpoint of those serving at-risk youth, it’s not hard to understand why they would hire only those with similar religious values. First, it’s impossible to safeguard an organization’s mission—religious or secular—without staff and volunteers who embody it. “We want to communicate our hope, passion, and commitments to these youth,” says Ava Steaffens of Kidworks. “That needs to be shared by everyone on staff.” Second, children desperately need positive role models, and faith commitment is a reliable source of good character. “Kids are always watching,” explains Lisa Cromartie, director of Urban Youth Ministries in Holland, Mich. “You need to be living a life that is consistent with the ideas the ministry is teaching.” Finally, kids from troubled homes often require intense, sacrificial involvement—way beyond the 9 to 5 schedule of unionized social workers. Serve Our Youth, for example, targets kids from shelters, detention centers and juvenile courts. Says development director Ann Herde: “I can’t imagine anyone who is not a Christian volunteering for this kind of work.” A common refrain among youth workers: “It’s a ministry, not a job.”

Officials in secular government can appreciate the connection. They say they want youth workers who are skilled, devoted and virtuous—and if religion is the source, so be it. Norma DeJesus, of New York City’s Department of Probation, assigns court-involved youth to mentors from the Bronx Connection, an evangelical group. “These juveniles need stability,” she says. “And when they see someone that has values, that has a faith—and that’s such a key part of who these mentors are—I think that attracts these kids.” In Philadelphia, criminal justice officials applaud the quality and commitment of volunteers from Amachi, a church-based mentoring program for the children of inmates. “I’m not a person of faith, but I’m very practical,” says Alan Appel, director of inmate services at the Philadelphia Prison System. “And from a practical standpoint, what’s missing in the lives of many of these children is the development of a value system . . . So the fact that these mentors come from a faith-based values system, to me, is terrific.”

Critics of government support for religious organizations raise important civil-rights questions. But these concerns ought not to be addressed in a public policy vacuum. As noted earlier, religious groups assisting at-risk youth focus on building relationships. They depend heavily on adult mentors who model good character, and most often they are people of faith. Indeed, it appears the overwhelming majority of faith-based organizations insist on staff and volunteers who share their religious beliefs and values.³⁶

Fifth, religious organizations are careful to respect the beliefs of youth and their families. Though faith-based organizations base employment decisions at least in part on religious belief, they make no such distinctions among the children they serve. Indeed, a notable feature of the religious organizations examined is their willingness to

assist people of all faith backgrounds—or none. Ministries may target a particular demographic group because of special social needs, but otherwise cast a very wide net.³⁷

Nevertheless, a final concern about faith-based organizations is whether and how they engage in evangelistic activities. There is widespread opposition, for example, to the use of public funds for Bible instruction or proselytizing. The 1996 “charitable choice” law, while allowing faith-based groups to receive federal money, protects program recipients from unwanted religious activities.³⁸ Yet opponents of the President’s faith-based agenda claim that zealous groups will trample the freedoms of people in crisis.

Consistent with previous research, our study shows that evangelism may take many forms, depending on an organization’s sense of mission; it can range from discussions about good character to explicit invitations to conversion.³⁹ Wide diversity exists even in the small sample of groups included in this study. Even organizations with plainly evangelistic goals have learned to walk gingerly as they encourage youth to consider religious values and ideals.

The Chamblee-Doraville Ministry Center in Doraville, Ga., for example, aims to be “the living presence of Jesus” both by meeting practical needs and sharing the gospel. Ministering in an ethnically diverse section of metro Atlanta, the organization welcomes people of all faith backgrounds—including Muslims, Buddhists and agnostics. “We are respectful of where they are coming from,” says Rev. Lanny Reich. “We don’t strap people into chairs, but we don’t allow disruption either. We present Christ enveloped in everything we do.” It’s the same approach at Kidworks, a non-profit serving Mexican immigrants in Santa Ana, Calif. Through tutoring, day camps and sports programs, youth are challenged to reject gangs and drugs and “to say yes to a vital relationship with Jesus Christ.” A Protestant evangelical group, Kidworks reaches mostly Catholic youth. Children and teens often get involved with churches that support the organization, but never without permission from a parent or legal guardian.

The religious mission of Serve Our Youth, which targets teens in detention centers in Des Moines, Iowa, is equally muscular: “To see Jesus Christ transform the lives of juvenile offenders.” Yet the organization carefully instructs staff and volunteers in rules about evangelism. Staff don’t raise religious questions with youth, but may answer questions as they come up. “We make it clear that there’s a fine line between mentoring out of faith commitment and proselytizing,” explains development director Ann Heerde. “And if they cross that line, it’s all over.”

Rules about evangelism sometimes are merely understood or implicit; it isn’t always clear whether lines are ever crossed. Nevertheless, most ministry leaders appear to know the limits: Always get parental permission before contacting children or inviting them to church; let parents know if church-sponsored events involve religious activities; allow youth to ask questions about faith as a natural outgrowth of friendship; don’t spend public funds on evangelistic activities; and don’t evangelize in public classrooms.⁴⁰

Government officials with whom we spoke seem satisfied that these guidelines are being followed. Many ministry leaders express a strong concern that “faith in action”—unconditional care and support—precede invitations to religious events. Nevertheless, even organizations with strongly articulated religious beliefs or an expressly evangelistic mission have learned to respect the beliefs of the youth and families they serve.

Implications: Making Room for Faith

Whatever direction the President’s faith-based agenda takes, the national debate over the ability of religion to overcome social ills will continue. It is a necessary debate. At stake are not only important constitutional issues, but the integrity of America’s religious institutions. That makes it a passionate debate as well.

Passion, however, is no substitute for clear thinking and sound public policy. Many of the arguments against allowing religious groups a wider role in helping the poor reveal an astonishing ignorance of what these ministries actually do. Al McGeehan, mayor of Holland, Mich., puts it bluntly: “If people don’t understand the positive linkage between faith-based organizations and city hall, they’re not living in the real world.” Surely the secular assumptions of academic and political elites help fuel this confusion. Whatever the causes, the result is that religious beliefs and institutions have been pushed to the margins of social-welfare policy. More and better research could help correct the imbalance.

Most Americans, it seems, would welcome such reform: Most want to see the influence of religion expanded in public life, and a majority support the President’s faith-based initiative.⁴¹ According to a recent Gallup Poll, the vast majority of respondents (nearly 70 percent) believe that faith-based organizations do the best job of helping youth in the community.⁴² As a 25-year veteran in youth ministry in Boston explains: “If you don’t deal with the faith issue, you’re not getting at the root of the problem.”⁴³

Academic research increasingly suggests the social-science equivalent of an “amen, brother.” A recent study appearing in *Criminology* found that “individual religiosity has consistently significant [negative] effects on adolescent use of illicit drugs.”⁴⁴ Researchers at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, conducting a National Study of Youth and Religion, say existing studies suggest “we have every reason to believe that religion is an important influence in the lives of youth in many ways.”⁴⁵ Scholars at the University of Pennsylvania recently completed a review of nearly 800 studies of the relationship between religious belief and positive social outcomes. While cautioning that studies of specific faith-based programs are too meager to draw firm conclusions, the report states unequivocally that strong religious commitment is directly linked to better health and greater social well-being.⁴⁶

Deciding whether religious approaches are more effective than secular ones at solving social problems is beyond the scope of the present study. Nevertheless, the research findings raise critical questions for policy-makers: If faith-based organizations fulfill an important public good, should public support for their efforts be out of the question? If they consider evangelism a crucial part of their work, should government accommodate it as religious speech deserving First Amendment protection? If they depend on staff who share their religious values, should government uphold their hiring rights against policies that would undermine them?

The question of religion’s place in society has become so politicized that it’s easy to neglect the remarkable resources of America’s faith communities. Conversations with people on the frontlines of ministry help us to remember. “All the research I’ve done suggests that the value-added of the church relates to its willingness and capacity to love and form relationships with neighbors,” says Virgil Gulker, executive director of Kids Hope USA. “Short of that, I don’t think the church has a reason for being.”

As Dostoevsky suggests, there is nothing higher and stronger in human experience than the “good, sacred memories” that are the gift of such labor. Here is both a word of encouragement and a word of warning for church and state. Churches that ignore this truth easily become enfeebled and irrelevant. Governments that deny it become oppressive, even illegitimate. When either loses sight of it, civil society falters. But for the sake of the nation’s neediest children, we dare not stumble beyond recovery. For them, experiences of faith, hope and love will be hard to come by—and will matter supremely. “If a man carries many such memories with him into life, he is safe to the end of his day.”

Directory of FBOs Reaching Youth

3-D Mentoring Ministries

Lillian Farmer
Birmingham, AL
(205) 254-0052

Alamance Pregnancy Services

1636 North Church Street
P.O. Box 996
Burlington, NC 27216-0996
(336) 222-9195
arm@netpath.net

American Baptist Churches of Metro New York

Reverend James Stallings
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(212) 870-3195
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Arrow Project

Milton Magness (Director)
P.O. Box 682077
Houston, TX 77268-2077
1-877-92-ARROW
mmagness@arrow.org
www.arrow.org

Ayuda Community Center

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4400 North Marshall Street
Philadelphia, PA 19140
(215) 320-5777
debvasquez99@hotmail.com

Bethel New Life, Inc. (out of Bethel Church)

Mary Nelson (President)
Marcia Turner (Public Relations)
367 North Karlov
Chicago, IL 60624
(773) 826-5540
mnelson367@aol.com

Bethel Temple Community Bible Church

Reverend Joel Van Dyke
230 East Allegheny Avenue
Philadelphia, PA
(215) 423-0986

Bethlehem Baptist Church

Reverend Mary Waynes
2458 Martin Luther King Ave. SE
Washington, DC
(202) 889-1235

Boston Urban Youth Foundation (Boys and Girls Club)

Chris Sumner (Director)
530 Warren Street
Dorchester, MA
(617) 474-1055

Breakthrough Urban Ministries

Arloa Sutter (Executive Director)
First Evangelical Free Church
5251 North Ashland Street
Chicago, IL 60640
(773) 989-4382
brkthrumin@aol.com
www.firstfree.com/
breakthrough.html

Central Dallas Ministry (Urban Academy)

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409 North Haskell Street
Dallas, TX 75371
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lmjread@aol.com

Mentoring Collaboration between Young Life and Faith Holy Temple Church

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Charles Harris
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(610) 497-1300
drh12hws@aol.com
ch-life@email.msn.com

Chester's Refuge in Christ Church

3001 West 10th Street
Chester, PA
(610) 497-2557
crefugicc@aol.com

Children's Christian Learning Center and Northwest Filipino Baptist Church

Tammy Utchek
98A East Irving Street
Normal, IL 61761
(309) 451-4629
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Coalition on Urban Renewal and Education (C.U.R.E.)

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Compassion Ministries

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600 17th Street, 2305 S
Denver, CO 80202
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(720) 932-6541

Cornerstone Christian Fellowship

Irma Chon
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Hillard, OH 43026
(614) 777-5008
cornerstonecf@msn.com

East Capitol Center for Change

Curtis Watkins
5800 Blaine Street NE
Washington DC
(202) 399-6224

Eastern United Methodist Church

Reverend Constance Smith
1429 East North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21213
(410) 752-8524

Eli's Place

600 West St. Joseph Street, 1G
Lansing, MI 48933
(517) 482-1315

Emmaus Ministries

921 West Wilson Avenue
Chicago, IL 60640
(773) 334-6063
emmaus@streets.org
www.streets.org

Glory Bound Ministries

Pastor B.R. Hall
(Executive Director)
916 Waterman
Fresno, CA 93706
(209) 266-8812

Gloucester House

Al T. Henderson (Director)
2147 Mantin Street
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God's Gym

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Aurora, IL 60505
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godsgym1@aol.com

God's XGangsters

Bill Emery (Founder and Director)
453 Johnstown Road
Chesapeake, VA 23322
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Harrisburg Brethren in Christ

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Here's Life Inner City

Mitzi Norton
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HOLA (Heart of Los Angeles)

Mitch Moore
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Hope for Youth

Wendy Dewlen
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Hope Now for New York

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www.hfnny.org

Inglesia del Barrio

Reverend Rueben Ortiz
Kensington, PA
(215) 634-6000

Inner City Youth

Prince Cousinard
P.O. Box 14575
Houston, TX 77221
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International Teams

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Elgin, IL 60123
(847) 429-0900
info@items.org

Jewish Big Brothers

Marvin Savolv
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Juvenile Restoration

Council, Inc.
Reverend Dr. Dennis Grand
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Plantation, FL 33317
(954) 917-5483

KidHope

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KidsLink USA

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Lakeside Youth Services

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Lawndale Community Church

Phil Jackson (Youth Pastor)
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**Lifeway Church – Straight
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lifewaychurch.org

Logan Hope

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LOGOS Systems Associates

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**Lutheran Metropolitan
Ministry Association**

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www.missionyear.org
Leroy Barber (Atlanta Director)
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Oreon Tricky (Chicago Director)
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Josh Horner (Oakland Director)
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Northwest Community**Baptist Church**

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Otra Onda

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Pacific Baptist Church

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Peace of the City Ministries

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**Pittsburgh Youth Network
(Pittsburgh Leadership
Foundation)**

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Ted Melnyk
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Positive Force Ministries

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Empowerment**

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Riverwoods Christian Center

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Reverend Tony Danhelka
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Safe Place Initiative

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Shepherd Community, Inc.

Emilie Baillett
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emmylynn@ameritech.net

Sister Jean's Cookie Cart

Tom and Audrey Schimmel
(Directors)
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Soaring Eagles

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Sports Quest

Jim Spence
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**The Catholic Diocese
of Phoenix**

Kevin Starrs
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The Family Helpline

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1595 E. 114 Street
Los Angeles, CA
(323) 563-0062

The Hartford Peace Initiative

Carl Hardrick
Hartford, CT
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The Hollywood Urban Project

Dan Hoffman (Director)
Susan Rigsby
Amy Yang
5846 Gregory Avenue
Los Angeles, CA
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1760 N. Gower Street
Hollywood, CA 90028

**The Institute for Responsible
Fatherhood and Family**

Revitalization
Charles Ballard (Founder)
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offices in:
Cleveland, OH
Milwaukee, WI
Nashville, TN
San Diego, CA
Washington, DC
Yonkers, NY

The Potter's House

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(Development Director)
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**U.N.I.Q.U.E. (United Neighbors
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Experience) Learning Programs**

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Urban SET

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Urban Youth Leadership

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Vision Twin Cities

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Alliance for Community Peace**

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White Center Project

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and Social Enterprise
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Whiz Kids Tutoring

Meghen Duggins
(Executive Director)
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**Youth Achievement
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youth-achievement.org

**Youth Ministry
Development Project**

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www.egc.org
lbrown@egc.org

APPENDIX B .

Summary Data from the 37 Programs Studied

Number of Children Served: 23,368

Number of Volunteers Involved: 19,552

Number of Staff: 475

Number of States/Cities/Regions Represented:

States: 22

[MN, PA, NJ(2), AK, CA (6), NY, MI (4), GA (2), OH (2), TX, OK, OR, NC, WA (3), SC, IL (2), AZ (2), IN, IA, MO, DC, LA]

Cities: 34

[Atlanta, Camden, Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, Des Moines, Detroit, Doraville, Fresno, Grand Rapids, Hammond, Holland, Houston, Kansas City, Little Rock, Los Angeles (3), Murfree's Boro, New York, Pasadena, Philadelphia, Phoenix (2), Portland, Red Bank, Rock Hill, St. Paul, Santa Ana, Seattle (2), Spring Lake, South Bend, Tacoma, Toledo, Tulsa, Washington, Waukegan]

Regions:

Midwest: 13

Northeast: 5

South: 6

West: 3

Types of Government Agencies Involved:

Public Schools

Mayors' Offices

State Attorney Generals' Offices

Prison Systems/Correctional Centers

Child and Family Services

Child Protective Services

Women and Family Services

Department of Human Services

Homeless Shelters

Public Housing

State General Assemblies

City Council

Juvenile Courts

Offices of Probation

Police Departments

Mental Health Services

Employment Services

Program Descriptions of 37 FBOs Reaching Youth

ACTS of St. Paul (Asian Community Together in Service)

111 Western Ave North, St. Paul Minnesota 55102

(651) 225-9406, gaellarsen@juno.com

ACTS of St. Paul is a non-profit organization providing various social services to children and families of the Hmong Community of St. Paul.

What They Do St. Paul has the nation’s largest population of Hmong, refugees from Laos, whose cultural background creates special problems of assimilation. The Hmong, for example, are a mostly pre-literate society. ACTS devotes much of its attention to literacy: It offers seven after-school tutoring programs for public school children in grades K-8, with an emphasis on English, math and reading skills. ACTS also operates the Hmong summer school program, which offers reading, math and Hmong fine arts. The organization recently opened the HOPE Community Academy, a K-3 charter school enrolling over 400 children. Last year about 1,000 youth were involved in the organization’s programs.

Church-State Collaboration ACTS staff describes a “rocky road” with some public school officials because of resentment over the organization’s tutoring programs. ACTS established a charter school in part because of the tension. The organization works almost exclusively with public school children, running programs on school grounds, at a public housing project, and at local Baptist and Lutheran churches. The group enjoys wide support both in and outside the Hmong community: Its advisory board includes public school officials and a representative of the state’s attorney general’s office.

Core Values/Staffing The mission of ACTS is to empower Hmong-American youth and their families to succeed in America. Toward that end, their staff and volunteers are drawn from the Hmong community to offer culturally specific educational and enrichment programs. Because animism and Shamanism are popular belief systems among the Hmong, ministry leaders—most of whom are Christian—focus on demonstrating Christian character.

Though no profession of faith is required, most of the staff and volunteers belong to Christian churches and are expected to demonstrate faith commitment. Says director Gael Larsen: “We want to create a loving place and live out the gospel, and in so doing have an effect.”

Financial Support Total revenue for 2000 was \$176,364. All of it came from private sources, including about \$155,000 from local foundations and corporations. Thirteen churches contributed about \$17,000. ACTS supports a staff of 28 and over 300 volunteers.

AMACHI (Amachi Mentoring Program)

2000 Market Street, Ste. 600, Philadelphia, PA 19103

(215) 557-4437

Amachi assists children of incarcerated parents “by engaging them in transformational mentoring relationships with people of faith.” It combines one-on-one mentoring for children and youth with communal relationships of churches, synagogues and other houses of worship.

What They Do About 20,000 Philadelphia children have a parent in prison or jail. Prison officials estimate that such children are six times more likely than their peers to become an adult offender. Yet the children of inmates are

completely overlooked by government, and effective private initiatives are hard to come by. Pricilla Becroft, deputy director of inmate services at the Philadelphia Industrial Correction Center, says simply: “It wasn’t an area being addressed at all.”

Not until the city’s ministers mobilized to create the Amachi program. Amachi recruits adult volunteers from urban and suburban congregations to build one-on-one relationships with youth, ages 5-18, who have at least one parent in prison. They make a one-year commitment to spend at least an hour a week with a child, though many spend significantly more time per week. Mentoring takes place in one of three contexts: schools, community settings and churches.

As of January 2002, the number of youth recruited for the program was 2,038. So far, 537 mentors from 42 area churches have been matched with about 550 children.

Church-State Collaboration Amachi was conceived in November 2000 as a cooperative effort between city government, congregations, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (a secular mentoring organization), Public/Private Ventures (a secular research group) and the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society. The former mayor, Rev. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., took the lead in introducing the program both to correctional officials and inmates. Neither was an easy task. “Most prisons hate to have outsiders come in,” explains Alan Appel, director of the prison’s inmate services. “We’re a very paranoid social institution.”

Nevertheless, prison officials saw three potential benefits to the program. First, it would help them run a better-controlled prison by addressing some of the emotional needs and concerns of inmates. Second, it would help inmates make positive changes in their own lives. And third, it could help prevent the next generation of prisoners by reaching children early. “This has always been a weak link in the chain of prison ministry,” says Nick Barbetta, the prison’s head chaplain who helps coordinate the program.

Persuading inmates to get their children involved in the program also presented challenges. Many fathers have lost contact with their kids; others resent the idea of another man getting involved with them. Many mothers fear state intervention. If the program were viewed as an extension of the state’s Department of Social Services, for example, it would have flopped. Says Becroft: “They tend to have a fear that the DSS will take away their kids.”

Officials say that Goode’s reputation and personal story—his own father was abusive and spent time in jail—won over both camps. He eventually delivered presentations to all the women’s cell blocks in the prison system, and most of the men’s. He spoke with prison chaplains and social workers. In six months he visited nearly 50 churches to recruit volunteers. “Goode’s personal involvement and credibility was key,” says Becroft. “The response has been really phenomenal.”

The result is one of the most ambitious—and carefully crafted—church-state partnerships involving the nation’s prison population. Goode and Amachi volunteers have regular access to inmates throughout the prison’s cellblocks. Prison social workers enthusiastically refer women to the program. About 80 percent of the women prisoners with children who’ve heard an Amachi presentation have requested mentors for their kids.

Prison officials see no church-state problems, and have not received any complaints from parents. A special concern to respect the religious diversity of the families involved is surely part of the reason: No children are approached without permission from parents. Mentors get extensive training, and see the purpose of the mentoring relationship not as evangelism, but friendship. Children and their families are invited, but not pressured, to attend church events or participate in religious activities. Though most of the kids are matched with mentors from Christian churches, children of minority faiths are paired with adults representing their own faith tradition.

Core Values/Staffing Amachi is a Nigerian expression meaning “Who knows but what God has brought us through this child.” This suggests the program’s commitment to developing the God-given potential of every child.

It’s a daunting challenge. Social science data reveals that the children of inmates are among the most at-risk youth population in America. Research from Public/Private Ventures shows that 70 percent of these kids will spend time in prison. Rev. Goode puts it starkly: “With these children, unless intervention takes place, there is a likelihood that they’ll become drug dealers, robbers, and even murderers.” Yet data also show that the presence of a caring adult in the life of a needy child can significantly reduce drug use, school dropout rates, illegitimacy and other social ills. Part of the reason for partnering with Big Brothers Big Sisters was the group’s track record of effective mentoring.

Amachi also focuses on relationship building, but only as part of its religious foundation: Mentors are expected to introduce children to a larger community of faith. From the government’s point of view, commitment and professionalism are what Amachi volunteers bring to the table. “What’s important is that the mentors be committed with their heart,” Becroft says, “and learn best how to provide services to the children.” From Amachi’s standpoint, it’s the faith of the volunteers that sustains their commitment to the kids. Volunteer Jackie Johnson, from Proclamation Presbyterian Church, is a case in point: She is paired with nine-year-old Desire, whose father has spent time in jail. Johnson plans to stick with her *for life*.

“Faith is the distinct factor of this program,” Goode says. “It is impossible to go anywhere else and find volunteers like this for the kids. By developing a relationship with these children, they are able to share their values with them.” Amachi staff are not required to agree to a statement of faith, though many have experience in ministry. All volunteers are connected to local congregations, and the active support of ministers is considered crucial.

Even secular government officials view religious believers as a critical source for building character in youth who lack good role models. “I’m not a person of faith,” says Alan Appel. “But I’m very practical. And from a practical standpoint I know that what’s missing in the lives of many of these children is the development of a value system. The mentors bring with them a strong value system, regardless of which faith it’s from.” Apple emphasizes the need to offer kids an alternative to the destructive influences in their lives: “You’ve got to have something else to balance out all of the problems that most of these children have,” he says. “So the fact that these mentors come from a faith-based values system, to me, is terrific.”

Financial Support Amachi is funded privately, relying primarily on a two-year grant of \$4.5 million from the Pew Foundation. In 2001, the organization also received foundation grants of \$150,000 from the William E. Simon Foundation and \$50,000 from the Jeremiah Fund. Amachi supports 10 staff and 657 volunteers.

Aslan Youth Ministries

58 Maple Avenue, Red Bank, N.J. 07701

(732) 741-7824

Aslan Youth Ministries is a non-profit organization that reaches disadvantaged urban youth and their families through tutoring programs and other activities, with the aim of introducing them to a vibrant, living relationship with Jesus Christ.

What They Do Aslan Youth offers one-on-one tutoring for at-risk children in public schools, with a special emphasis on families living in housing projects in Red Bank, N.J. Most of the children are African-American and come from single-parent homes with no father present. As far as the organization is concerned, the needs of these kids are not merely academic or physical, but emotional and spiritual. Program tutors serve more as mentors, spending several hours a week with kids in both academic and social settings. “Kids don’t come to tutoring because they love reading

and math,” says executive director Craig Bogard. “They come because they want to be loved.” Last year about 275 children were served by ministry staff and volunteers.

Church-State Collaboration Aslan Youth has built a strong relationship with state and local officials. The program was honored in 1991 with a “Point of Light” award, and a year later was honored by the New Jersey State General Assembly for its ongoing work. The state of New Jersey has an Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, whose director promotes the program. Both the mayor of Red Bank and the superintendent of schools are very supportive.

Because the ministry receives government support, separate accounts have been established to cover costs for secular (mostly academic) and religious activities. No religious material, for example, is purchased with public funds, though a Bible-based “Right Choices” program is offered after school on school grounds. Aslan tutorial sessions are held at Red Bank Middle School and Primary School in the afternoons and evenings. Staff positions that are partially funded with public money must limit time spent on religious activities to the portion of their salaries paid for privately.

Parental permission is always obtained before Aslan staff or volunteers initiate with children. “We let them know what we are about, and 99 times out of 100 they don’t have a problem,” says Bogard. Children are invited, but not required, to participate in social activities such as bike trips and service projects where religious activities will be available or where spiritual issues will be addressed.

Core Values/Staffing Aslan Youth believes that in order for any individual to be truly changed from a negative to positive direction, the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—must be transformed. “The kids we work with have no boundaries and no one to tell them right from wrong,” Bogard says. Young people are taught to find their ultimate purpose in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

All key staff positions require a profession of faith. Volunteer tutors and mentors include Jews and Muslims, but all must agree to the ministry’s mission and methods of influencing children. “We will not compromise our basic belief system,” Bogard says. “At one time we looked at accepting lots of state money. It was attractive because we could double or triple our program. But it came with too many strings attached.”

Financial Support Total income for 2001 was about \$680,000. Most of it came from private sources, including foundations, churches, and individual donors. About \$135,000 came from state of New Jersey. Aslan Youth supports 11 staff and about 200 volunteers.

Black Community Developers, Inc.

4000 West 13th Street, Little Rock, AK 72204

501-663-7223, www.bcdinc.org

Black Community Developers in a non-profit organization serving low-income, underserved children and families in Little Rock.

What They Do BCD offers various services for at-risk children, including: a licensed day-care center that enrolls over 60 kids; an after-school intervention program for children ages 6-12; and a gang-intervention program that works with 150 youth daily. A youth activity center draws kids away from drugs and violence and into sports and arts activities. Last year about 200 youth were involved in Black Community Development programs.

Church-State Collaboration Black Community Development was launched by Rev. William Robinson in Little Rock in 1981 as part of the outreach ministries of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Most of its budget now comes from city funds through the city’s Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (PIT) program.

School counselors regularly refer kids to the organization, which operates in public schools and housing projects. Many of its volunteers come from local congregations and may invite children to church activities. Religious activities such as music and liturgical dance are made available, and most of the children who participate join the Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church.

Core Values/Staffing BCD announces a generic, secular-sounding objective: “Our mission is to improve the quality of life for low income, underserved, disadvantaged and at-risk children, youth and families.” A focus on spirituality is mentioned, though not emphasized, in BCD literature. Staff and volunteers are not required to sign a statement of faith, though most attend the host church. Says executive director Deborah Bell: “The staff makes it different from a secular program. They consider this as a ministry, not a job.”

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$1.2 million. About 80 percent came from city government, the rest from churches, foundations and individual donors. BCD supports a staff of seven and about 150 volunteers.

Brotherhood Organization of a New Destiny (B.O.N.D.)

P.O.Box 35090, Los Angeles, California 90035-0090

(323)782-1980, (800) 411-BOND, www.bondinfo.org

B.O.N.D. is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping African-American men regain control of their lives or, as its founder puts it, “rebuilding the family by rebuilding the man.”

What They Do B.O.N.D. targets boys and young men ages 13–26, most of whom do not live with their biological father. The organization works through youth meetings, where personal and family issues are discussed; a work program involving home building and remodeling; and an entrepreneur program where youth learn how to start and run their own business. Older men serve as mentors to help the younger men finish their education and enter the work force. About 100 youth are in regular contact with B.O.N.D. staff and volunteers throughout the year.

Church-State Collaboration The organization operates in public schools, but the relationship has been somewhat stormy. A group discussion that turned to issues of sexuality, for example, revealed serious differences between the values espoused by public educators and B.O.N.D. staff. “When, in the course of my discussion with the boys, it became clear that I did not support the homosexual lifestyle, the school counselor threw me out of the classroom,” recalls founder Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson. “Over the years, we’ve been thrown out of many public schools.”

Nevertheless, parents who support the program ask their local school board to invite B.O.N.D. staff into the classroom. A female principal is on the organization’s board, and has invited the group into her school. The organization also works with officials in the juvenile justice system to run a home for delinquent youth.

B.O.N.D. is upfront about its religious roots. Its founder and president is an ordained minister, and its teachings on life principles are based on the Bible. However, the program also incorporates readings from works such as Bill Bennett’s *The Book of Virtues* and Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery*. Sunday morning worship services and evening prayer meetings are made available to the youth. Participation in all events is voluntary and never without a parent’s permission.

Core Values/Staffing The organization’s leadership strenuously rejects a posture of victimization or of racism to explain family breakdown in black communities. “There’s a great deal of anger in these homes,” Peterson says. “Ninety-nine percent of the men are angry because they don’t have a father in the home. They are angry that their

fathers don't love them." Faith in God is considered crucial for youth in order to forgive their parents and become free of the anger that grips their lives.

Staff positions do not require a profession of faith, but B.O.N.D. makes clear its religious beliefs and assumptions during the interview process. A commitment to living out Christian character is considered essential. "If we didn't have the same beliefs, it would be difficult to get anything done," Peterson says. "This is the only way we can ever hope to guide young people."

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$132,690, all from private sources. B.O.N.D. supports three staff and about 30 volunteers.

The Bresee Foundation

184 S. Bimini Place, Los Angeles, CA 90004

(213) 387-2822

The Bresee Foundation is a non-profit organization that offers faith, hope and service to one of the poorest, most densely populated, and crime-ridden communities in Los Angeles County.

What They Do The organization serves mostly Latinos, but also African-Americans and Asians in the neighborhoods of Koreatown, Pico Union, Westlake and South-Central Los Angeles. Bresee staff and volunteers offer a range of services to young people and their families, including: health services, job training, literacy, and computer classes. They also provide sports and recreation activities ranging from basketball to a gospel choir. In 2000, 1079 clients were seen by Bresee's health services team, 656 young people visited their homework labs, while more than 1,400 youth participated in outreach and recreation programs through the foundation's Youth Center.

Church-State Collaboration Bresee works closely with city council members and public school counselors and teachers, who regularly refer students into its literacy program. The organization participates in a city-funded program, called LA Bridges, which supports partnerships between community non-profits and school districts with high-risk youth ages 10-14. The Bresee Youth Center has received grants from the Los Angeles Youth Advocacy Program to tutor about 50 first-time juvenile offenders referred by law enforcement officials.

Core Values/Staffing The organization is named after Phineas Franklin Bresee, a Methodist minister who founded the Church of the Nazarene, an evangelical denomination, in a store front on Skid Row in Los Angeles in 1895. The Bresee Foundation was established in 1982 by the Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene to honor his example of service to the community. Bresee staff describe the organization as having a Christian ethos and culture, though they do not evangelize or use Christian iconography.

Building relationships with kids is considered essential. "We don't just want to funnel 1,000 kids through the door," says Melanie Burzynski, development associate. "We want to funnel 1,000 kids we know through the door." No profession of faith is required for employees or volunteers, but the Christian vision of the organization is made clear during the interview process and must be endorsed by the staff.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$1.6 million. About 60 percent came from private donations and foundation and corporate support. The remainder came from government grants from the city of Los Angeles. Bresee supports 26 staff, 12 student workers, and hundreds of volunteers.

BronxConnect: Bronx Church Mentoring Outreach

A Ministry of Urban Youth Alliance

P.O. Box 617, Bronx, N.Y. 10451

(718) 681-8545

BronxConnect helps court-involved youth stay out of jail, stay in school, and become involved with local congregations. It is a ministry of the Urban Youth Alliance.

What They Do The BronxConnect functions as an alternative-to-incarceration program for youthful offenders. Mentoring is mandatory: Staff identify and help train mentors from participating churches to befriend youth already detained in juvenile facilities—and to stay involved with them once they’re released. Mentors make a 12-month commitment, often working in teams, investing two to four hours a week with each juvenile. Says director Ruben Austria: “The first thing we do is develop a relationship of trust so we can really be involved in their lives.”

A second component is educational advocacy. Court-involved youth typically cannot return to their public schools, and red tape delays their enrollment into alternative schools. Bronx Connection helps get them into other schools and develops strategic plans for each child. A third component is a life skills program, which addresses issues such as conflict resolution, job readiness and community service. Youth may get help with job training or internships at local businesses. Last year 15 juveniles were mentored by BronxConnect staff and volunteers.

Church-State Collaboration The organization initially focused on meeting at-risk kids in public schools. But the borough’s Board of Education threatened to shut the program down if youth began attending local congregations. “They weren’t comfortable with our being a faith-based organization,” says Austria. “That’s pretty much why we left the schools.”

The BronxConnect decided to target court-involved youth—serving as court advocates—and juvenile justice officials proved to be more accommodating. Program staff now work closely with the Bronx Family Court, the Department of Probation, the District Attorney’s Office and the Bronx Criminal Court and Supreme Court. “When you’re dealing with kids who are really broken, there’s more openness to the idea that they need something powerful to change their lives,” Austria says. “There’s a recognition, even a grudging one, that some of these kids are hell raisers—but if they’re involved with the church, that could calm them down a little.”

Nevertheless, church-state boundaries are carefully drawn. No mandatory aspects of the program can directly involve religious instruction. Mentors, who meet weekly with youth, cannot insist that they accompany them to church. Juveniles can be invited to church services or field trips, however, which may involve evangelistic concerts or youth rallies. “It’s clear to everyone involved that we’re faith-based,” Austria says. “We don’t hide it. But we respect that line.”

A major goal of the Bronx Connection is to bring troubled youth into a network of positive relationships—first with mentors, then with other members of local congregations. That’s just fine with juvenile justice officials. Says Norma DeJesus, Branch Chief with the city’s Department of Probation: “When they see someone that has values, that has a faith—and it’s such a key part of who these mentors are—I think that attracts the kids.” The program functions as a para-church agency, helping churches develop the resources to minister effectively to a high-risk population. All of that makes sense for most of the youth who get involved: At least 95 percent are African-American or Hispanic, who either were involved at some point in church life or whose families attended church. “It’s not an alien thing for them,” Austria says. “It’s usually white liberals from outside the community who worry the most about religion.”

Core Values/Staffing Urban Youth Alliance is an evangelical Christian youth ministry, which makes life transformation through faith commitment a core value. Says Austria: “We are evangelical. We want these kids to develop a

relationship with God through Christ.” Staff and volunteers must agree to the group’s religious mission and sign a statement of faith.

In addition, the organization puts a heavy emphasis on recruiting mentors who are prepared to invest significant time into the lives of troubled youth. All of its volunteers are drawn from local churches. At a minimum, volunteers must make a one-year commitment to a one-on-one mentoring relationship. “You have to go out and get them,” Austria says. “They won’t stay in something positive unless someone proves they care about them more than anyone else in the world.”

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$130,000. Most of the money (\$120,000) came through Public/Private Ventures, a Philadelphia research organization studying the effects of faith-based initiatives with high-risk youth. Public/Private Ventures received money to give to their sites from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and several private foundations (including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Pinkerton Foundation, and the Ford Foundation) The remainder came from churches and individual donors. BronxConnect supports three staff and about 60 volunteers.

Catholic Big Brothers

3300 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90026-4501
(213) 251-9800, www.catholicbigbrothers.org

Catholic Big Brothers, an affiliate of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, is a one-to-one mentoring program for fatherless youth, focusing on at-risk kids ages 7-14 in the Los Angeles public schools.

What They Do The core program matches youth with adult male volunteers who serve as role models and friends, meeting with their Little Brothers or Sisters for a few hours at a time, two or three times a month. Matches last at least a year and don’t officially end until the youth turns 18. CBB also runs a Triangle Mentoring Program in which adults train high school students to serve as volunteers to needy kids in their schools. Last year the organization served about 2,500 children.

Church-State Collaboration Catholic Big Brothers works cooperatively with various public educators, including the Los Angeles Unified School District, Bellflower Unified School District and the Los Angeles County Office of Education. School teachers and counselors identify at-risk youth and refer them to the program. The Los Angeles County Office of Probation also sends youth offenders to the organization, which recruits volunteers to work with them at alternative public schools.

Core Values/Staffing Founded in 1926, Catholic Big Brothers initially focused its mentoring efforts on needy Catholic youth, with a goal of introducing them to the Christian faith. Their volunteers were Catholic lay people. But in a recent program description, the organization acknowledges that it “has evolved over the years into a secular organization serving children and volunteers of all faiths and backgrounds.” Executive director Kenneth Martinet says CBB is Catholic “mostly in our name and heritage.”

No profession of faith is required to serve as a mentor, though “we look for their beliefs to align with ours,” says Martinet. That’s not easy to pin down: CBB staff is composed not only of Christians from various backgrounds, but includes a Buddhist and a Muslim. Partly as a result of pressure from United Way, with whom the organization partners, CBB has begun to accept gay mentors.

There is no overt attempt to impart religious values on the youth in the program. CBB teaches sex education, for example, from a decidedly secular perspective. Says Martinet: “We have no problem with birth control.” Conversations about faith may occur, but only if the child initiates them.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$1.5 million. About 45 percent came from private sources, while 55 percent came from government grants. Catholic Big Brothers supports 35 paid staff and over 1,300 volunteer mentors.

Central Detroit Christian Development Corporation

8801 Woodward, Detroit, MI 48202

(313) 873-2828

CDC is a non-profit organization that provides affordable housing, educational help and other services to youth and families in the poorest zip code in the state of Michigan. It is a member of the national Christian Community Development Corporation, a church-based approach to community renewal.

What They Do More than 90 percent of the children helped by CDC come from single-parent homes, with about 42 percent living below the poverty level. In one local public school targeted by the organization, only 160 of the 600 students entering ninth grade every year will graduate.

The ministry focuses on children through its Bible-based tutoring and mentoring programs, which include: an after-school learning center; comprehensive tutoring and club activities for elementary, middle school and high school kids; outreach to teen moms; and an environmental recycling effort. Its Breakaway Club and Tutoring programs, for example, operate three days a week for 26 weeks a year. Children participate in a weekly two-hour session that consists of a Bible lesson, academic tutoring, and arts and crafts. Last year about 265 children were involved in CDC programs.

Church-State Collaboration CDC works closely with various government agencies, from public housing to public schools. School principals, for example, invite the organization in for tutoring and other services. Elementary school teachers regularly refer parents to the tutoring program. The ministry is allowed to advertise on school grounds, and its after-school programs are run mostly in churches.

Core Values/Staffing CDC describes its role as an outreach arm of the local church, with a goal of involving Christian believers in grass-roots urban ministry. The organization serves children of all racial and religious backgrounds, but identifies Christian faith commitment as the most important factor in its outreach. A program brochure puts it this way: “We believe that real change in a community starts with a heart change through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Our programs integrate the gospel and Christian values while staff attempt to live out their faith daily in the community.”

Toward that end, both volunteer and paid staff must sign a statement of faith. “This is because we model our lives for the kids,” explains Lisa Johanson. “All of our programs are mentoring programs.” Thus, nearly all staff and volunteers are Christian believers, who invite children to church events and openly discuss their faith. However, occasionally Jewish volunteers have signed a separate statement pledging to support the organization’s Christian mission.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2000 was just under \$400,000. Aside from a government grant that supports housing rehabilitation, the organization’s entire budget comes from private sources such as churches and foundations. CDC supports 10 paid staff and about 100 volunteers a week.

Chamblee-Doraville Ministry Center

5935 New Peachtree Road, Doraville, GA 30340

(770) 451-1030, www.cdmc.org

CDMC is a non-profit organization dedicated to meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of international residents in metro Atlanta. It partners with numerous ethnic churches and para-church ministries to address the needs of children at risk.

What They Do Drawing volunteers from area churches and para-church groups such as Young Life, CDMC targets 20 apartment complexes in Atlanta that house international residents representing nearly 140 different countries. “We were founded to meet the needs of a vastly diverse community,” says executive director Rev. Lanny Reich. “We want to keep the kids out of the gangs, out of trouble and off the streets.” The group offers after-school tutoring programs and English as a Second Language for children and adults. Last year about 800 children were involved in CDMC programs.

Church-State Collaboration CDMC works closely with public school officials to run its tutoring programs, both on and off school grounds. The organization also runs a health ministry and pregnancy center for teens. After-school programs begin with regular devotions. Children and their families are invited to various worship services—including Cambodian, Indonesian, African—held at CDMC facilities. Says Reich: “We have no trouble with the public schools.” City officials, such as Chamblee Mayor Mary Goldberg, have publicly endorsed their work.

Core Values/Staffing The organization describes its mission this way: to be the living presence of Christ in the community by meeting real needs and sharing the gospel. People of all faith backgrounds—including Muslims, Buddhists and agnostics—are welcome in CDMC programs. “We are very respectful of where they are coming from,” Reich says. “We don’t strap people into chairs, but we do not allow disruption either. We present Christ enveloped in everything we do.”

Though staff and volunteers are not required to sign a statement of faith, they are all expected to share the organization’s Christian mission. Problems with volunteers of different religious backgrounds have not come up.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$347,000. CDMC’s entire budget came from private sources, including individuals, churches, and foundations. The organization supports eight staff and about 2,000 volunteers.

CityCURE (Christians United Reaching Everyone)

217 Goethe Street, Cincinnati, OH 45210

(513) 621-2873

CityCURE is a non-profit organization that cooperates with local churches to address the physical and spiritual needs of the poor and oppressed in inner city Cincinnati.

What They Do CityCURE targets at-risk children with programs such as business training, summer camps, and a Christian rap group. The organization’s National Youth Project, for example, uses Honda mini-bikes to hook teens into its program. “Motorcycles are the carrot for the at-risk youth,” says president Roger Howell, “and with every carrot there is a stick.” He means it: Each teenager must complete 25 hours of safety training, set and meet performance goals, monitor home and school behavior, and perform 20 hours of community service.

“Teenagers who would otherwise never step foot in a church building build relationships with caring Christians,” Howell says. Establishing significant relationships between staff, volunteers and the kids is considered

essential. Flash-in-the-pan friendships will not do the job: Staff commit to work with a child and his or her family for at least four years. Last year about 725 youth were involved in CityCURE programs.

Church-State Collaboration CityCURE works with public school officials to recruit children into its programs or hold events in public schools. The group has a long and healthy partnership with the city’s juvenile court system, which regularly refers youth into its programs. CityCURE is negotiating with the Hamilton County Department of Human Services to offer services at a men’s homeless shelter.

The organization serves youth of all religious backgrounds and is candid about its religious mission. “We are upfront that we are going to talk about Jesus,” says Howell. “If you have a problem with that, you can leave.” No evangelism occurs on school grounds, but it’s understood that youth will be invited to participate in Bible-based programs and religious activities.

Core Values/Staffing CityCURE describes its mission this way: To cooperate with the local church in reaching urban youth and families with the love of Jesus Christ and his message of salvation. In other words, the organization places a high value on both demonstrating Christian character to youth—who mostly lack good role models—and introducing them to faith commitment considered vital to character development. “You are not going to change anybody without a heart change,” says Howell. “We believe Jesus changes lives.” Consequently, virtually all staff and volunteers must sign the CityCURE mission statement and nine-point statement of faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2000 was about \$589,000. The organization’s entire budget came from private sources, including individual donations, churches, foundations and trusts. CityCURE supports 40 paid staff and about 140 volunteers.

The Family Assistance Center

P.O. Box 35522, Houston, TX 77235-3522

(713) 524-7801

The Family Assistance Center in a non-profit organization that promotes independent family life and stronger communities through education, counseling, spiritual support and service programs. Founded by Texas Black Americans for Life, the center focuses on delinquent boys and teenage girls who are pregnant or at risk of out-of-wedlock births.

What They Do The center offers delinquent boys a place to perform court-ordered community service. Typically they’ve been sent to alternative public schools because of truancy, fighting and disrespect toward teachers. The youth, ages 10-18, participate in weekly discussion groups where they are mentored by responsible adults. They set goals, learn money management, acquire computer skills, and take field trips. Women get help through Project Gabriel, a maternal assistance program sponsored by the Galveston-Houston Diocese that supplies everything from baby clothes to information on prenatal development. The center’s abstinence education program uses 10-week sessions to teach youth the benefits of abstaining from sex until marriage. Last year about 75 youth were involved in the center’s programs.

Church-State Collaboration Adolescents are referred for community service to the Family Assistance Center by Harris County officials and Houston’s Juvenile Probation Department. According to its literature, the center addresses issues “from a common sense and biblical perspective.” In addition to practical goal-setting, youth read from the gospel of John and write a paragraph about each chapter. Group discussions begin and end in prayer, and issues

raised are related back to stories or teachings in the Bible. Eventually, participants are invited to make a faith commitment to Jesus Christ.

There are no surprises about the religious content of the program. “We let the children know up front that we will be discussing the Bible,” says center director Cynthia Batiste. “If the courts said we could not do that, we would stop our partnership.”

Core Values/Staffing The Family Assistance Center was launched by community leaders concerned about the disproportionate number of abortions performed in the African-American community. It is part of CareNet, a national network of crisis-pregnancy centers that emphasize sexual abstinence, marriage, and faith. Its Gabriel Project is sponsored by the Galveston-Houston Diocese. Thus, its programs are deeply church-based and reflect orthodox Christian views of sexuality and marriage. Cynthia Batiste says it is “very important” that staff and volunteers share a common Christian commitment, though they are not required to sign a statement of faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2000 was \$145,257. The center received a Texas Department of Health grant of \$85,300, and the remainder of its budget came from private sources. The Family Assistance Center supports a staff of two people, with one volunteer.

Family Talk

736 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507

(616) 245-5795

Family Talk is a non-profit organization aimed at strengthening families through mentoring, education and prevention programs, serving mostly African-American and Latino youth.

What They Do Family Talk uses in-school workshops and one-on-one counseling to help court-involved juveniles learn how to resolve conflict and control their anger. The agency also runs a diversion program for girls facing detention or incarceration, and a 10-week parenting skills program. Frank discussions about the real issues in young people’s lives—based on tough-love friendships between Family Talk staff and the kids—are considered crucial to the program’s success. Last year the organization provided services to 327 youth and their families.

Church-State Collaboration Various government agencies either refer youth to the program or invite Family Talk to work on-site with delinquent teens. Agencies include: the Kent County Juvenile Court, the Grand Rapids Public Schools, Kentwood Public Schools and Godwin Heights Public Schools. Agency staff track down youth at home or in school, and often appear in court to report on a child’s progress. “I see many delinquent youth from Kent County,” says Patricia Gardner, a judge in the Family Division of the Circuit Court. “Family Talk is a very real part of the treatment plan for many high-risk kids, especially those from the inner city.”

Founder Chris Sain views Family Talk as a ministry in which he, his staff and volunteers strive to demonstrate God’s love to children who’ve experienced many disappointments in life. Sain calls prayer “the centerpiece” of the program. “With prayer, our program doesn’t say ‘treatment’ or ‘therapy.’ It says Christ.” Pastors often stop by to interact with the youth, and relationships between the kids and local churches are strongly encouraged. Nevertheless, Sain says, participation in religious activities is strictly voluntary.

Core Values/Staffing Family Talk seems less concerned with “God talk” than with teaching youth to take responsibility for their actions—for young men to face their anger at their fathers, for example, and for young women to stop getting involved sexually with men to mask other issues in their lives. Staff are not required to make a profession of faith, but must be people of demonstrated integrity, able to guide youth into better decision-making.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was about \$200,000. Most came from government sources: about \$143,000 from federal, state and county grants. The remainder came from private sources. Family Talk supports six staff and eight volunteers.

Families in Touch

401 N. Benesee, Waukegan, IL 60079
(847) 244-8306

Families in Touch is a non-profit organization that supports unwed teen mothers and their families, serving mostly African-American and Latino communities of Waukegan, North Chicago and Zion.

What They Do Operating mostly out of the First Baptist Church in Waukegan, Families in Touch considers parenting skills, life skills, and spiritual development the bedrock of its program. The organization offers parenting classes, high-school diploma equivalency, child care, Bible studies and one-on-one mentoring. Women stay about four years in the program, and are allowed to remain until they turn 23. Last year 180 teen mothers and children were involved in their programs.

Church-State Collaboration Families in Touch was launched when director Donna Speer, involved in another Christian agency, saw the escalating problems of teen pregnancy in her community. With support from her home church, she spearheaded city-wide teen pregnancy councils to address the issue. Today her agency gets referrals from the county health department, the courts, schools, and the state's Department of Child and Family Services. Weekly Bible studies are part of the program, and women learn about the importance of prayer and attending church.

Core Values/Staffing The organization tries to address the factors in a young girl's life that caused her pregnancy in the first place. That makes the program "faith-based and also hands-on," says Donna Speer, meaning that staff and volunteers get very involved in the lives of young mothers. Addressing spiritual issues is seen as inseparable from that work. "We cannot always change their circumstances," Speer says, "but we can point them to a loving God who can give them the strength and peace to sustain them on the road to responsible adulthood." That requires staff who take their Christian faith seriously, and staff and volunteers must sign a statement of faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2000 was \$75,000. All came from private sources, mostly from churches and individual donors. The organization receives no government support. Families in Touch supports three staff and 50 weekly volunteers.

First United Methodist Church

Adopt-A-School Program, 1115 South Boulder, Tulsa, OK 74119
(918) 587-9481

First United Methodist Church offers mentoring and tutoring programs to public school children in the highest poverty neighborhoods of Tulsa.

What They Do In the organization's mentoring program, church volunteers agree to actively encourage a needy child; they must call, write, e-mail, fax or visit their student at least once a month. Many mentors bring a lunch to school for their student and meet with him or her over the lunch hour weekly. Most of the kids come from single-parent homes, and the objective is to be the child's friend and role model. In the tutoring program, students are enrolled

in a Christian-based curriculum an hour each day, five days a week. Last year about 350 children participated in the organization's Adopt-A-School programs.

Church-State Collaboration First United Methodist Church focuses its outreach on Eugene Field Elementary School, in which 96 percent of all students qualify for the free-lunch program. School principal Bettybell Clapp has given the organization wide access to her students.

Parental permission is required before any interaction with children; mentors are trained to exercise care in raising religious issues. "We are not in the schools to proselytize," says director Connie Cole. If children ask their mentors why they're committed to them, they may be honest about their faith. Kids often ask if they can attend church with their mentors, which happens with a parent's permission.

Core Values/Staffing Mentors help children set academic and character goals, the latter of which reflects Christian virtues. The program emphasizes the God-given worth of every person, regardless of his circumstances. Volunteers must share these values, and virtually all espouse a Christian faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was about \$5,000, all of which came from private sources. The program supports one staff person and about 165 volunteers.

Friends of the Children

44 NE Morris, Portland, OR 97212-3015
(503) 281-6633, www.friendsofthechildren.com

Friends of the Children is a non-profit organization that offers severely at-risk children a loving and long-term relationship with an adult role model. Based in Portland, Friends of the Children has 11 chapters nationwide, only some of which are explicitly faith-based.

What They Do The organization targets first-graders in each public school who are considered most at risk of school failure, abuse, juvenile delinquency, gang and drug involvement and teenage pregnancy. Full-time, paid staff serve as "Friends"—professional adult mentors—to no more than eight students at a time. Adult men are paired with boys, and women with girls. These are intensive, one-on-one relationships that must be sustained for at least 10 years. Says national director Doug Stamm: "One person, over time, can turn a life around."

Staff keep a journal of daily activities with children and develop 90-day plans, in which they map out academic, social and spiritual activities with the kids. They meet several times a week with each child. They make sure that children cultivate an outside interest, a special skill or hobby. "We believe in relentless effort. We will not allow kids to fail," Stamm says. "This is the same commitment Christ would give." Last year 272 youth were involved in the Portland program, while about 576 children are involved nationwide.

Church-State Collaboration Friends of the Children works closely with local public schools to do lengthy assessments identifying the most at-risk children in the system. Some activities with the kids occur on school grounds. But every program also makes use of a "Friend's House," such as a community center or church facility, for various activities.

Parental permission is required for all activities with children, whether secular or religious. Faith-based chapters of Friends of the Children typically involve Bible instruction and exposure to church events. "We don't ask when we select the children what their religious beliefs are," says Stamm. "We take them as they are."

Core Values/Staffing The organization has identified 10 guiding principles that are considered non-negotiable in any collaboration with government:

- the program must be based on the commitment to one-on-one relationships which are built on care and concern for the child
- these one-on-one relationships must be sustained over time, 10 years or more
- the Friends begin working with six- or seven-year-old children and, in a few exceptional circumstances, somewhat older children
- the Friends are responsible for only a small number of children, no more than eight and no less than four children at a time
- the Friends are with their children frequently, at least several times a week and under no circumstances less than twice a week
- the children in the program are seriously at risk as determined by the community in which they live
- each child needs to develop a specific interest and/or talent
- each child needs to participate in meaningful and quality experiences and activities
- the program continues to serve children as they move from place to place
- the program and its staff must have the ability to develop a working relationship with the children's parents and guardians

The organization was launched by multimillionaire Duncan Campbell—himself neglected as a child who grew up mostly on his own—to answer the question: How would Jesus treat these children? No statement of religious faith is required by staff. But at the organization's faith-based chapters, staff are made aware that they are joining a Christian agency and discuss faith commitment during the interview process. Stamm estimates that about 75 percent of all Friends are committed Christian believers.

Financial Support Total income for 2001 was \$2.2 million About 90 percent came from private sources, including foundations, businesses and individuals. The remainder came from government sources. The Portland chapter supports 37 staff, while nationally the organization supports 75 staff.

Harambee Christian Family Center

1581 Navarro Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91103

626-791-7439, www.harambee.org

Harambee Christian Family Center is a non-profit organization that offers mentoring programs to children and teenagers in impoverished African-American and Latino neighborhoods in Pasadena.

What They Do In 1983 John and Vera Mae Perkins launched the Harambee Center in a city neighborhood with the highest daytime crime rate in Southern California. "Residents were held captive in their own homes," according to the agency website. "We believed the only legitimate way to become change-agents in this community was to become part of it." Others joined the Perkins to focus on a 12-block target area adjacent the center.

Harambee operates a year-round after-school tutoring program, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Youth do homework, get moral and spiritual training, and play in a safe environment. There are weekly

“discipleship” evenings, sleepovers, camping and fishing trips and visits to cultural sites. Teens are put to work around the center and get college preparation, computer instruction and visits to universities. A summer day camp functions as an extension of the after-school program. Last year about 150 youth were involved in the center’s programs.

Church-State Collaboration Harambee is well known and widely endorsed by city officials, having formed strong partnerships with public schools and the juvenile courts. Center staff are unambiguous about their Christian mission, making Bible instruction an integral part of their program. “We are living it out every day, changing lives, building disciples and modeling Christ,” says associate director Rudy Carrasco. “Families are aware and they’ll pull kids out if they don’t agree with what we’re teaching.” But, he adds, the vast majority of the families they serve welcome their emphasis on faith commitment.

Core Values/Staffing Harambee begins with a belief that every child has God-given dignity and potential. Staff vigorously reject what they see as a “bigotry of low expectations” for African-Americans and Latinos. That means a curriculum of moral instruction that goes way beyond typical “self-esteem” approaches. “That is our strength,” Carrasco says. “We hold people to a high Christian standard.”

The center identifies a child’s need to belong as especially powerful, and staff members consciously work to offer alternatives to gang life. Like a soccer team, they shift around as needed. Staff and volunteers must endorse the center’s Christian mission, and all are required to sign a statement of faith. “You need something as strong as a gang to reach these kids,” Carrasco says. “We have guys hanging around doing what’s right.”

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$400,000. All of it came from private sources, including individual donors, churches, businesses, civic groups, and foundations. The center supports a staff 15 and about 300 volunteers.

Hope House

P.O. Box 748, Murfreesboro, NC 27885
(252) 396-0884

Hope House is a non-profit organization that uses reading programs and summer camps to keep incarcerated fathers involved with their children. With chapters in Ohio, New Mexico, North Carolina and the District of Columbia, it may be the only program of its kind devoted to fathers in prison.

What They Do Faced with a congressional mandate to close its troubled Lorton Correctional Complex in Fairfax by December 2001, the District of Columbia began sending its prisoners—over 10,000—to a medium-security prison in Youngstown, Ohio and elsewhere. Most of the inmates have children, and the displacement strains family relations. The problem recurs in jurisdictions nationwide.

As Hope House puts it in its literature: “Just because a father is in prison, doesn’t mean he has to stop being a dad.” The organization offers several programs to reconnect kids with their fathers. Children go to D.C. churches to see and talk to their fathers using Internet technology. A reading program gets inmates to read children’s books into an audio recorder for their child; the book, recording and a photo of the inmate are then mailed to the child. A summer camp program brings kids to a church camp in Youngstown to spend a week with their fathers. Children spend each morning, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., with their dads in prison—with teachers guiding them through various activities—and spend afternoons in church-sponsored activities. Last year, about 645 children were involved in Hope House programs.

Church-State Collaboration Hope House works closely with officials at state and federal correctional facilities, who must approve any contact with inmates. Hope House also offers limited stays, job referrals and other assistance to inmates and ex-inmates. The organization draws on local churches to help with video-conferencing and the summer-camp program. Most activities with the children occur at church facilities. Children often begin attending one of the local congregations connected to the program and are invited, not required, to participate in religious activities.

Core Values/Staffing Hope House begins with the assumption that children need the affection and guidance of their fathers. Moreover, studies show that inmates who participate in visitation programs with their children have lower rates of parole violation and recidivism. But finding people willing to work with inmates and their families is not an easy task, which is why Hope House looks to churches for manpower. The organization's staff, and most of its volunteers, are people of faith. "The philosophy behind the mission statement is Christian," says director Carol Fennley, "even though the mission doesn't mention Christ." Neither staff nor volunteers, however, are asked to sign a statement of faith.

Financial Support Total 2001 revenue was \$130,000. All of it came from private sources, including individual donors, churches and foundations. Hope House supports seven staff and about 20 volunteers.

Hope Now for Youth

PO Box 5294, Fresno, CA 93755-5294

(559) 434-8125, www.hopenow.org

Hope Now for Youth is a non-profit organization that takes youth out of gangs and brings them into the American mainstream. It offers youth not only employment, but also caring and committed relationships with responsible adults.

What They Do The organization recruits and employs minority college students to serve as role models and vocational placement counselors for young men, ages 16 to 24, involved in gang activity. Building relationships between youth and staff is considered crucial: They meet with kids in the neighborhoods, playgrounds, pool halls and malls. As the agency says on its website: "As a Christian organization, we believe that spiritual hope offered through caring relationships is essential to long term personal change."

Finding jobs for these young men is an indispensable part of the package. "Part of the problem here is simple economics," explains executive director Rev. Roger Minassian. "The gang is an economic unit as well as a tightly-knit social unit." Part of the remedy, then, is meaningful employment. The organization emphasizes job preparation, and uses its ties to the Fresno Business Council and city employers to help the men find good-paying jobs.

Founded in 1993, Hope Now for Youth has placed about 750 young people in jobs with 225 Fresno and Sanger businesses. The City of Fresno and the City of Sanger also hire Hope Now youth.

Church-State Collaboration Almost all of the young men in the program have criminal records, and more than 65 percent are public school dropouts. That allows Hope Now for Youth to work closely with the justice system and public educators. Fresno police chief Jerry Dyer, for example, and Peter Mehas, superintendent of the Fresno County Office of Education, both sit on the agency's advisory council. Parole and probation officers regularly refer youth into the program.

As part of its life skills and employment training, Hope Now runs weekly Bible studies. The men are required to attend only two studies, but many continue to actively participate. Staff share their own faith commitment with youth, introduce them to basic Christian teaching, and may invite them to attend church. "Whether you believe or

not is your affair,” Minassian says. “But we want these men to understand why we do what we do...and never to forget that they were helped by the Church.”

Hope Now is explicit about its commitment to helping youth regardless of their interest in exploring religious questions. As the agency explains on its website: “Like our Lord, however, we will not allow fulfillment of our spiritual hopes for these men to become a condition of our help...God helping us, we will not fail to always offer life.” Neither, it seems, will they fail to invite men to consider Christianity: Agency staff say they’ll walk away from any partnership with government that restricts their ability to be vocal about issues of faith. Says Minassian: “We will accept no funds that tell us we cannot tell people about Christ.”

Core Values/Staffing Hope Now for Youth describes itself as “a Christian emergency rescue team” for needy young men. That often means youth will make a Christian faith commitment—considered the surest road out of the desperation of gang life. An agency motto is: “Hope for a better future comes from faith in a loving God who holds the future in his hands.”

The agency also emphasizes, however, that staff members must demonstrate Judeo-Christian values and a strong work ethic in order to inspire productive citizenship. Practically speaking, they are on call 24-7. “We are motivated by our Lord Jesus Christ’s concern for the poor, the fatherless, and those oppressed by violence,” according to the website. “Through deed and word, we strive to present Jesus Christ as the hope for life and life eternal, Almighty God as the heavenly Father who cares far more than we do, and the Church as the loving family which will never abandon you.”

That’s not a mission for doubters. As Minassian puts it: “The passion to serve other men comes from gratefulness to God.” All staff must share the organization’s Christian purpose and values, and staff and board members must sign the group’s statement of faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$491,000. Most of it came from private sources, including individual donors, foundations and churches. The organization got a \$30,000 grant from the City of Fresno and a \$10,000 grant from the City of Sanger. Hope Now for Youth supports a staff of 12.

Kids Corps

P.O. Box 36698, Rock Hill, SC 29732

(803) 327-6077

Kids Corps is a division of the York County Christian Women’s Job Corps (YCCWJC), a non-profit organization helping impoverished families become self sufficient and acquire strong parenting and life skills. Kids Corps focuses on prevention and intervention in the lives of needy children.

What They Do In addition to assisting young women on welfare with education and employment, the parent organization also helps mothers care for and give spiritual guidance to their children. “The moms are living from crisis to crisis,” says executive director A. Elizabeth Ford, “and don’t have the time to give to their children.” Assistance means getting help confronting and overcoming anger. Or it may involve learning how to have daily devotions with their kids and read with them regularly. Certificates are awarded, for example, when mothers read at least 20 books with their children.

Kids Corps specifically targets youth. School-age kids are assigned a mentor who spends at least two hours a week with the child, serving as a “positive Christian role model.” Mentors are expected to help out in various ways,

from providing transportation to leading a weekly Bible study with youth. Children also can join an after-school program, in which tutors offer academic help, Bible lessons and lessons in life skills. Summer camp opportunities are also made available. Last year about 70 kids were involved in Kids Corps programs.

Church-State Collaboration The Christian Women’s Job Corps networks with nearly all the human-service agencies in York County. Several county officials sit on the organization’s board, and various offices—from employment to mental health services—refer families to them. Kids Corps works closely with several public schools, which regularly invite tutors in to work with needy children.

The organization insists it will not abandon its religious values to partner with government. Life-skills courses, for example, are taught with the Bible. Women in the program must attend weekly Bible studies. Mentors pray regularly for the children. “We look at the total person. That’s what’s missing in secular programs,” Ford says. “We are definitely faith-based, and we would not compromise that in any way.” According to Ford, the organization has never had a problem observing church-state boundaries.

Core Values/Staffing The Christian Women’s Job Corps describes its purpose this way: to provide a Christian context in which women in need are equipped for life and employment, and to offer a missions context in which women help women. For many of the women, that means breaking a cycle of dependence and addiction they inherited from their own mothers. Faith commitment is seen as the key: Staff, volunteers and board members are obligated to sign the agency’s statement of faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$4,000, all of which came from private sources. The agency supports two paid staff and about 50 volunteers.

Kids Hope USA

17011 Hickory, Spring Lake, MI 49456
(616) 846-7490

Kids Hope USA is a non-profit organization that recruits adult volunteers from local churches to tutor and befriend children in public elementary schools.

What They Do Kids Hope USA is the brainchild of Virgil Gulker, who has devoted over two decades to church-based work with poor families. After numerous interviews with school officials, police, and community leaders, he concluded that churches must invest more energy in reaching school children early—before they are overwhelmed by the problems afflicting them and their families. “Any sane culture,” he says, “is going to move heaven and earth to get to our children early in life, before they are permanently damaged.”

Kids Hope USA is determined to mobilize entire congregations to help accomplish that task. Churches—most of them evangelical—target a public elementary school, preferably in their own neighborhood. An adult volunteer is paired with one at-risk child, with whom he meets for an hour each week, for at least a year. Participating churches must hire a part-time program director, find at least one other church member to pray regularly behind the scenes for the child, and have a pastor who serves as a Kids Hope USA mentor. Volunteers can help with reading, math, play games, or just talk—but the aim is to become the child’s friend, a steady source of encouragement and love.

Volunteers typically invite children into the life of their congregations, who often reach out to the entire family. Sharon, for example, has mentored Sam for three years. Though Sam has no father figure in his life, his mother and sister have begun attending events at Sharon’s church in Holland, Michigan. Sharon’s husband has helped

Sam's mom get a job with his employer, and the two now ride to work together. The congregation, Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church, has helped the family move into a rental home owned by the church. Meanwhile, several men in a ministry group have taken Sam under their wing. Sam says he wants to be a Kids Hope USA mentor when he grows up, and his mother is getting ready to purchase her first home. Begun in 1994, Kids Hope USA now mobilizes 180 churches to mentor 2,800 children across 27 states.

Church-State Collaboration Resistance to Kids Hope USA initially came from two sources: public school officials, who worry about any religious influence in the classroom, and church leaders, many of whom have no interest in public education. “God didn’t leave the schools,” Gulker likes to remind his evangelical Christian brethren. “He roams the halls wondering where we are.”

Nevertheless, Kids Hope USA now ranks as one of the nation’s largest and most successful partnerships between churches and public schools. The key is a sound church-state philosophy and good training and supervision to implement it. Church volunteers not only get training in mentoring skills, but are drilled in the ground rules for sharing their faith. First, parental authority is supreme: Volunteers must get a parent’s permission to initiate any contact with children. Second, no proselytizing is allowed at school. Children may be invited to church-sponsored events, but parents are always told the content. “They have very clear guidelines,” says Nancy Johnson, assistant principal of Ben Franklin Elementary School in Rochester, Minn. “The volunteers understand that it is not evangelistic; it’s love in action.”¹

Gulker has good reasons to make sure there are no surprises with his volunteers. A breach in the rules could mean the program would be suspended, causing yet another disruption in the life of a child. Moreover, it would only hinder the spiritual work of the church. “I want to protect the churches’ opportunity to evangelize off campus,” he says. “But part of protecting that right means protecting the policy of no evangelism at schools.”

The policy has been working exceptionally well—and winning the support of principals, teachers and other public officials nationwide. Char Firlik, principal at Kentwood Public Schools in Kentwood, Mich., recently launched a campaign to get Kids Hope USA churches involved in every elementary school in her district. She sent a letter to 38 pastors asking for help, attached a note of support from the mayor, and recruited parents to make follow-up phone calls to the ministers. “My hope would be that...all schools in the city and the area would have these partnerships with churches,” Firlik wrote.

That’s not a far-fetched notion: Twenty-five percent of all requests for Kids Hope USA volunteers now come from principals and teachers. The principal of an impoverished school in Hammond, La., wants no less than 300 tutors for her 412 students. Church-based volunteers are entering new schools on a regular basis. Meanwhile, it’s been recognized as a model program by the Virginia Attorney General’s Faith Summit, the Iowa Governor’s Summit on the Family, and the Arkansas Governor’s Conference on the Family.

Core Values/Staffing Two basic ideas undergird the Kids Hope USA philosophy. One has to do with how children learn. Simply put, emotionally insecure kids don’t do very well in school. Research shows that children in unstable environments are left with two physiological responses: fight or flight. Only emotional stability allows brain function to improve and learning to take place. That’s why the organization’s volunteers must be stable, reliable, and nurturing.

The second idea centers on the church. Kids Hope USA volunteers target young children who are among the most insecure in the public schools. Many come from impoverished, single-parent homes. Some live with grandparents, others are homeless, many have been abused. Their greatest need, Gulker says, is to experience unconditional love—

up close and personal. “All the research I’ve done suggests that the value-added of the church relates to its willingness and capacity to love and form relationships with neighbors,” he says. “Not to give stuff away, but to form relationships. Short of that, I don’t think the church has a reason for being.”

Kids Hope USA helps a church determine if it possesses the capacity and commitment to develop and sustain long-term relationships with at-risk children. Some churches are turned away. “I’m not interested in good intentions,” Gulker says. “We put extraordinary emphasis on the commitment the church needs to make to the child.” It is no accident that school personnel consistently applaud the organization’s mentors for two traits: love and faithfulness.

“My children face abandonment issues constantly, and they’ve been abandoned by people who said ‘we care,’” explains Glenda O’Banion, principal of Hammond Eastside Primary in Hammond, Louisiana. “I’m an old lady and I’ve been in education for 30 years. This is the first program I’ve seen carry through on all the principles they first stated they would do. I’ve never seen anything like this.”

Financial Support Total revenue for 2002 was \$831,000. The organization is privately funded, relying primarily on corporate giving and family foundations. Kids Hope USA supports five staff and over 5,000 volunteers nationwide.

KidReach

P.O. Box 5352, Tacoma, WA 98415
(253) 383-1528, www.worldvision.org

KidReach is an after-school tutoring and mentoring program of World Vision, an international Christian relief organization. It operates chapters in Washington and Southern California.

What They Do KidReach recruits tutors from churches, high schools, colleges and community groups to offer academic help to public school children in grades K-6. Tutoring sessions last about two hours at a time and occur once or twice a week. Last year about 600 children were helped by KidReach.

Church-State Collaboration Public schools in Pierce and South King Counties in Seattle welcome the KidReach program, and at least one principal has served on the organization’s board. Teachers recommend children for tutoring assistance, and parents must sign a permission slip for kids to participate. No proselytizing occurs on program time, but Bible studies may be held before or after tutoring sessions.

Most of the tutoring sessions are held in local churches, which are not required to alter their religious appearance in any way. Says director Joyce Lowery: “The program is held in churches and we won’t pretend they’re anything else.”

Core Values/Staffing KidReach says it seeks to “demonstrate God’s love and concern” to children at risk. That appears to demand a high level of commitment from staff and volunteers. Says Lowery: “Our volunteers view this as their mission and as their ministry.” All staff positions require agreement with the agency’s Christian statement of faith, though churches may decide not to require it for their volunteers.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 at both sites was \$304,000. Nearly all came from private sources, including churches and individual donors. The remainder came from city grants (about \$13,000) and a county grant (about \$6,000). KidReach chapters together support five staff and about 700 volunteers.

KIDWORKS

2002-A South Grand Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92705

(714) 554-7500, www.hmconline.org

KIDWORKS is a non-profit urban ministry committed to reclaiming the lives of Hispanic youth in Santa Ana. Its parent organization, the Hispanic Ministry Center, partners with local churches nationwide to restore faith, hope and love to the barrios of America.

What They Do Santa Ana plays host to many Mexican immigrants and their families that are struggling economically. Parents, working multiple jobs to make ends meet, have limited time with their children. “The parents do not have the education to help their children,” says director Ava Steaffens. “Kids get discouraged and drop out.” And what they typically drop into is a world of gangs, drugs and sex.

KIDWORKS has converted neighborhood apartments into after-school learning centers, where children get academic tutoring, computer training, and enrichment programs. Staff and volunteers are drawn mostly from local churches, who bring with them a determination to build relationships with the kids. College interns are recruited to operate the Teen Leadership Academy, a summer day camp for youth, grades K-12. The interns move into a target neighborhood for the summer, where they build friendships with the youth in their neighborhood and serve as mentors. Teens help run the academy, which offers tutoring, teen clubs and sports programs. Last year about 200 youth were involved in the agency’s after-school programs.

Church-State Collaboration The agency has strong ties to several public schools, and a school outreach counselor refers kids to its programs. The city’s parks and recreation commissioner helps coordinate summer-camp and other activities. Juvenile justice officials regularly invite agency staff to speak to youth in Juvenile Hall. Bible studies are made available to teens, but no religious activities occur during the after-school program. Children and teens often get involved with churches connected to the organization, but not without permission from parents or a legal guardian. Though KIDWORKS is a Protestant organization, it works mostly with Catholic youth; kids are never turned away because of their religious beliefs.

Core Values/Staffing KIDWORKS uses recreation, crafts, field trips, and tutoring to challenge youth to “think bigger than the barrio.” That involves more than staying in school and staying off drugs. KIDWORKS staff say it also means introducing youth to “a vital relationship with Jesus Christ.”

The organization places a strong emphasis on engaging local congregations in its mission. “Everything we do serves to strengthen the local church,” says a ministry brochure. “We believe God has instituted the church to reach the world and that we exist to support local church leadership and ministries.” According to ministry leaders, that can’t happen if staff don’t share the group’s mission and values. “We want to communicate our real hope, passion, values and commitments to these youth,” Steaffens says. “That needs to be shared by everyone on staff.” Staff and volunteers must agree to the organization’s Christian statement of faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$209,000. Most came from private sources, such as churches, businesses, foundations, and individual donors. About \$59,000 came from government grants. The organization supports 10 staff and about 200 regular volunteers.

Leslie's Place

1014 North Hamlin, Chicago, IL 60651

(773) 342-8384

Leslie's Place offers a safe, drug-free halfway house for women recently released from prison and their families. It is one of the few programs in Chicago providing housing for women parolees with children.

What They Do About 80 percent of all women in prison have children at home, and inmate Leslie Brown fit the profile: During her nearly seven years in a maximum security prison, she was mostly separated from her six young children. But after being released, she joined with others at her church, First Baptist Congregational, to visit inmates and to reconnect them with their kids. Soon she began bringing women parolees into her own home, now a state-approved halfway house.

Leslie's Place begins its outreach to families while the women are still in prison. A transportation program brings kids to visit their mothers, and children may live at the house while the women are on parole or in transition. On-site childcare is provided for residents, and children attend Bible studies with their moms. Program staff help resolve child-custody issues.

Leslie's Place describes its program as "highly structured": Women must save 70 percent of their income, work or attend school, obey the house curfew and attend at least four Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings per week (most of the women come with a substance abuse problem). Women get parenting classes, group and individual counseling, help with clothing, job referrals and job-interviewing techniques, and help in finding permanent affordable housing. Last year more than 200 children were involved in one of the organization's programs.

Church-State Collaboration The Women and Family Services division of the Illinois Department of Corrections contracts for 15 beds with Leslie's place, and regularly refers inmates to the program. Women join the program as part of their parole agreement. "The woman are not ordered into the program. They have a choice," says Donna Klein-Acosta, assistant deputy director at Woman and Family Services. "Leslie puts together what program is necessary to turn the women around."

Brown—who credits her Christian faith for her own journey out of prison—makes faith commitment a significant aspect of the program. "People are not changed because of me," she says, "but because of Jesus." Weekly prayer meetings and Bible studies are mandatory, and residents are invited to attend local churches. The program's motivational material is Bible-based. Brown also leads religious services for women at the Dwight Correctional Center and a minimum-security prison in Kankakee.

"If they told me we couldn't have prayer or Bible study, we would not accept government funds," Brown says. "I was very upfront and told government officials what we're all about."

Core Values/Staffing Leslie's Place views a restored, healthy relationship between mother and child as vital to helping women and their families escape poverty, addiction and homelessness. And faith is considered the catalyst: "If there is a change on the inside, then there is a change on the outside." Consequently, staff must share the organization's vision and Christian commitment.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$295,000. About 80 percent came from government sources, including the Illinois Department of Corrections. The remainder came from private sources. Leslie's Place supports a staff of eight and 10 volunteers.

Mom's House

718 Noble Street, Toledo, OH 43608

(419) 241-5554

Mom's House offers a safe and structured home environment for poor, unwed teenage mothers and their children in transition. The Toledo chapter is one of 14 state-licensed facilities in a national network.

What They Do When an unwed mother arrives at Mom's House, she gets free housing and child care as long as she needs it—but only if she takes steps to get her life on a track toward independence. She must commit to staying in school, getting passing grades, and earning a degree. She must perform at least two hours of work per week around Mom's House and attend regular parenting classes. Last year more than 30 teen moms and their children were helped by the organization.

Church-State Collaboration Mom's House appears to be welcome in local public schools. The organization holds fundraisers, talks to students about abstinence, and gets referrals from school counselors. A local Catholic church launched the Toledo chapter of Mom's House, and the program draws support and involvement from area churches. Children typically are invited to pray before meals at the house, but there are no other religious activities or programs on site.

Core Values/Staffing The organization holds a decidedly religious view of personhood and the sanctity of life: It maintains a pro-life position and emphasizes sexual abstinence for its residents. As the group's website describes it: "Mom's House gives honor and glory to God by treating each person, born and pre-born, as a unique and priceless gift of a loving Creator." No staff positions require a profession of faith, but staff must endorse the pro-life values of the organization.

It's not hard to see why that would be important at Mom's House. Administrator Barbara Tartalia recalls a young mother at the house who became pregnant and decided to seek an abortion. Churches that support Mom's House helped organize prayer groups to ask God to bring about a better solution for mother and child. The girl's car broke down on the way to her abortion, and she changed her mind. "The child is a year old," Tartalia says, "and the mother doesn't know how she would ever live without her."

Financial Support Total income in 2001 for the Toledo chapter was \$21,000. All of it came from private sources, including individual donors, businesses and foundation grants. Mom's House supports a staff of 13 and three volunteers.

Neighborhood Ministries

1929 W. Filmore, Phoenix, AZ 85009

(602) 252-5225, www.neighborhoodministries.org

Neighborhood Ministries is a non-profit organization that offers support to young mothers and their families in some of the poorest neighborhoods of Phoenix.

What They Do Twenty years ago Kit Danley moved her two toddlers into a house with 36 broken windows and started a food bank for the poor in her neighborhood. "If you want to make a long-term difference," she told the *Arizona Republic*, "you better move in." Today she runs Neighborhood Ministries, an outreach program that includes a medical clinic, clothing bank, teen mother support group and about a dozen programs for children.

Urban kids are at special risk: Migrant families are common, moving an average of three times a year. Many children drop out of school by the fourth or fifth grade. To stem the tide, Neighborhood Ministries uses an aggressive approach of intervention and prevention. Kids Life, for example, targets the most academically needy kids in grades K-6 and enrolls them in a weekly evening program that mixes Bible time with crafts, drama, and academics. Partners in Learning recruits responsible adults as one-on-one mentors for kids who are failing academically. A Neighborhood Kids Club taps teens and high school students to help run a two-week summer camp for needy youth. Another mentoring program, Mom's Place, offers teenage mothers various kinds of support, from parenting classes to help with groceries. Last year about 500 children, youth and teens were involved in its programs.

Church-State Collaboration City officials know Kit Danley as the "Mother Teresa of Phoenix." Public school principals and teachers refer children into her programs, and program staff regularly meet with kids on school grounds. "The program has made an immense difference to our students and their families," says Ruth Ann Martson, principal of Kenilworth School. "We look forward to a long extension of the partnership."

There is no evangelism on school grounds, but children typically are matched with volunteers drawn from various local congregations and participate in church events. "We view ourselves as an extension of the local church," according to the organization's website, "giving tangible expression to the church's call to serve the poor and lost."

Though no conflicts have arisen between public officials and Neighborhood Ministries, the organization seems ready to walk away from any agreement that might undercut its religious mission. Says Danley: "We have a strong commitment not to dilute the gospel for funding or for the sake of a partnership."

Core Values/Staffing Neighborhood Ministries describes its mission this way: "To be the presence of Jesus Christ, sharing life-transforming hope and power among distressed families...to ignite their passion for God and his kingdom." The organization lists several distinctives that help it fulfill that mission, including:

- A call to invest in long-term relationships. Staff and volunteers "remain in people's lives as long as they permit us" and will "tenaciously track" families on the move.
- A call to holistic ministry. "As Jesus did, we address the needs of the whole person: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual."
- A call to community-based ministry.
- A call to affirm the vital role of the local church. The organization helped start a Spanish-speaking church, Nueva Esperanza, and partners with at least 14 other churches and religious groups in the city.

Though Neighborhood Ministries considers itself evangelical, staff and volunteers put a strong emphasis on building committed relationships with children and youth. Prayer is also cited as an essential component. Says Danley: "Prayer is a second language here because of the vast needs of the community." All staff must agree to the organization's statement of faith. Most of the volunteers are Christian believers, though they need not sign the faith statement.

Financial Support Total income for 2001 was \$1,428,547. All of it came from private sources, including individual donors, churches and foundations. Neighborhood Ministries supports eight staff and about 150 volunteers throughout the year.

New Horizons Ministries

P.O. Box 2801, 2709 3rd Avenue, Seattle, WA 98111

(206) 374-0866, www.nhmin.org

New Horizons Ministries is a non-profit organization providing emergency and long-term services—in “an environment of God’s love and friendship”—to empower youth to escape life on the streets.

What They Do Staff and volunteers walk the streets of downtown Seattle, targeting known areas of prostitution, five or six nights a week looking for street kids. “The youth are nomadic and unstable,” explains an organization brochure. “They flee to central urban areas where drugs, crime and sexual exploitation are the norm.” New Horizons staff introduce themselves, and let the kids know about services available to help them leave the streets.

A drop-in center offers clothing, a hot meal, showers, and counseling. A recreation program organizes games, special events and wilderness activities to teach teamwork, communication and how to manage anger. A ministry brochure warns: “If positive adult role models do not intervene, these youth will frequent detention, jail and prison and many will die.” Outreach staff focus on establishing relationships of commitment and love. Some staff and volunteers may work for months or years to build trust. Last year nearly 1,600 youth were involved with the organization’s staff and volunteers.

Church-State Collaboration Founded in 1978, New Horizons Ministry has established solid working relationships with numerous city and county officials. Many of the youth—who often need a range of health or educational services beyond what’s offered at New Horizons—are referred to other agencies.

The city’s juvenile justice officials regularly call the organization for help, especially for reaching out to teen prostitutes. Staff might visit youth in prison or serve as court advocates. A district attorney helps teach a New Horizons training session about street culture. The organization explicitly states that it serves youth “without regard to religious beliefs, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or handicap.”

New Horizons offers a voluntary discipleship program, a one-on-one mentoring relationship that uses prayer, Scripture study, and the arts to “stir up” an awareness of God. An evening Bible study and a Friday night chapel service on site are also made available, but attendance is not required. Staff say they are especially mindful of negative attitudes toward religion held by many of the youth they serve. “Many of the kids have been abused at the hands of those who’ve called themselves Christians,” says Mick Prandi, director of development. “Our emphasis is on relationships, on loving them unconditionally.”

Core Values/Staffing Though New Horizons Ministries tries to meet immediate physical needs, the objective is to address the needs of the whole person—physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. The end goal is to introduce youth to the love of God, and relationship building is considered essential. As the website describes it: “Each interaction provides our staff the opportunity to represent Christ to the kids, and can serve as a step in establishing relationships with them.”

According to ministry leaders, that objective cannot be accomplished without staff who share the organization’s faith commitments. All staff pray together daily, and regularly discuss the emotional and spiritual progress of kids under their care. Says Prandi: “It’s impossible to separate what we do here from our faith.” Or as a program brochure puts it, staff and volunteers must be people who are “personally committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and their lives must readily demonstrate such a commitment.”

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$875,600. All of it came from private sources, mostly from individual donors. New Horizons Ministries supports a staff of 21 and about 86 volunteers.

Phoenix MatchPoint

2730 W. Oranewood Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85051
(602) 841-9007, www.phoenixmatchpoint.org

Phoenix MatchPoint is a non-profit organization that matches caring adults with at-risk children, especially those who have an incarcerated parent. It operates as an affiliate of Prison Fellowship Ministries, an international Christian outreach effort to prisoners and their families.

What They Do MatchPoint works closely with local churches to identify and hire case managers, who then recruit and guide volunteer mentors for needy youth, ages 8 to 18. Kids must demonstrate at least two of seven risk factors, such as having a parent in prison, living in a single-parent home, or showing evidence of substance abuse.

Adult volunteers are expected to invest two to three hours a week “to love a child that desperately needs an adult friend,” as the MatchPoint website puts it. Such friendships involve sharing a variety of activities, such as climbing expeditions, sporting events and picnics. Or just hanging out and talking about life. There’s also an equestrian program that teaches kids to ride bareback. Says executive director Bill Brittain: “We want kids to experience success, as they have experienced lots of failure.” Last year about 150 children were mentored by MatchPoint volunteers from over 20 area churches.

Church-State Issues MatchPoint works closely with Juvenile Probation, Child Protective Services, public school counselors, churches and parents to identify especially needy children. A state senator serves on the organization’s board of directors. Juvenile courts are the most eager for help, Brittain says. “The more desperate the situation becomes, the more willingness there is among public institutions to give us a try.” The Arizona Department of Corrections, in fact, recently hired a statewide coordinator for religious programs.

The involvement of church-based volunteers, drawn from various Protestant and Catholic congregations, supplies the heart of the MatchPoint program. All mentors must be involved in local congregations. “We want to get kids, and ultimately families, connected with a church,” Brittain says. “We realize it’s too big a job for one person. The church is a support system to a needy family.” Prayer occurs at the start of most church-related events. Youth are not required to participate in any religious activities and can be of any faith background. Volunteers are trained to “expose faith without imposing faith.”

Joseph Taylor, assistant director of Secure Care Schools for the Department of Juvenile Corrections, says religious programs—from Bible studies to youth choirs—are already a part of state efforts to help court-involved youth. “We’ve found that moral and spiritual development has been a real good mesh with what we do with our kids.” Nevertheless, Taylor says appropriate church-state lines are still being negotiated as MatchPoint expands its outreach.

Core Values/Staffing MatchPoint volunteers are asked to do more than just befriend kids. It is hoped that they’ll help instigate life change among the youth. Faith commitment from volunteers and, ultimately, from the kids they’re helping—is seen as crucial to the process. Staff and volunteers work in an environment where prayer and religious devotions are regular events. All must sign the organization’s statement of faith and a code of conduct which, for example, forbids sex outside of marriage or participation in homosexual behavior.

Financial Support Total revenue last year was \$700,000, all from private sources. A \$250,000 grant came from the National Catholic Community Foundation. MatchPoint supports seven staff and over 100 volunteers.

Ray Bird Ministries

25765 West Edison Road, South Bend, IN 46628

(219) 232-8523, www.raybird.org

Ray Bird Ministries uses community and summer-camp activities to build relationships with at-risk children and teens of the Michiana area and introduce them to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What They Do The ministry makes extensive use of its 65-acre facility on Bass Lake, near South Bend, Ind. During the summer, hundreds of children from at-risk neighborhoods interact with college students who are devoted “to serving and loving these children.” The youth, ages 7 to 18, spend a week in various activities, including canoeing, archery, horseback riding and swimming. Along the way, they participate in Bible studies, spiritual discussions and other activities. Says a program brochure: “If we can bring them to the safe environment of our camp, God can impact their lives in as little as a week.”

A teen discipleship program operates year-round, connecting teenagers with adult role models in their neighborhoods. Together they meet for weekly Bible studies and fellowship. Work projects, trips and special events are planned throughout the year. Last year about 500 youth were involved in Ray Bird Ministries.

Church-State Collaboration The at-risk population targeted by Ray Bird Ministries puts the organization in regular contact with government agencies. “There is massive deterioration of the family structure of the kids we work with,” says executive director Sam Dodd. “They go back into an intensely dysfunctional setting.” Juvenile courts refer youth to the program, and staff often work with officials from child protective services.

Ray Bird Ministries is upfront about its religious mission with government officials and parents, who receive an eight-page application explaining in detail the organization’s philosophy and its programs.

Core Values/Staffing Introducing youth to Christianity is considered the most important aspect of the ministry. “The goal of this program,” says Dodd, “is not to try to get kids out of trouble, but to point them toward life change.” Staff and volunteers must endorse the organization’s evangelistic mission.

Financial Support Total income for 2000 was \$338,700. Virtually all of it came from private sources, including individual donors, churches and foundations. About \$15,000 came from a government-funded food program. Ray Bird Ministries supports five staff and about 500 volunteers.

SafeHouse

89 Ellis Street, Atlanta, GA 30303

(404) 523-2221

SafeHouse functions as “a full-service outreach ministry,” offering job placement, a substance-abuse center for youth, a pregnancy care center, after-school programs, character education, and other services to African-American youth and their families in Atlanta’s inner city.

What They Do SafeHouse was launched in 1982 to minister to young prostitutes working some of Atlanta’s meanest streets. Its Urban Center now provides food, clothing and referrals to a wide population of needy people, but the organization maintains a major emphasis on youth. Says YouthReach director John Holloway: “Their neighborhoods are in great need, drugs are still a huge problem, and most youth lack adult role models.”

The organization’s main outreach to children and teens relies on after-school tutoring programs, character-

education programs, and community youth centers. In the after-school activities, students get academic help but also learn life and leadership skills in “a fun, Christ-centered environment.” In character-education programs, teens learn practical lessons in goal-setting, drug prevention, teen sexuality, and wise decision-making. Last year about 160 children were involved in after school and character-education programs.

Church-State Collaboration SafeHouse works actively with city officials, as it serves students from nine public schools and runs some of its after-school programs from community centers attached to public housing. These activities may be openly religious: Along with their snacks, children get a devotional reading in which they might learn, for example, what Jesus taught about anger. “Most kids do believe in God,” Holloway says. “We help them see that faith can be relevant to their lives.”

The organization also runs an eight-week character-education course at local middle schools. That effort was launched when a public school identified 25 of its neediest children and asked SafeHouse to design a curriculum for them that would respect church-state boundaries. SafeHouse staff and volunteers meet with students twice a week for an hour. The curriculum is not linked to religious material, though instructors are free to explain the source of their own value system as questions come up.

Core Values/Staffing Given the emotional needs of the children involved, there’s a strong emphasis on building relationship building, mentoring, and introducing them to communities of faith. “In most cases we don’t even have to speak,” says Holloway, “because they see what we believe by how we live our lives.” Staff and volunteers are not required to sign a statement of faith, but are made aware of the organization’s Christian beliefs and values.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was about \$1,036,000. All of the organization’s budget came from private sources, mostly from individual contributions. SafeHouse supports a staff of 20 and about 10 volunteers.

Seattle Urban Academy

3800 S. Othello Street, Seattle, WA 98118
(206) 723-0333, www.urbanacademies.org

Seattle Urban Academy offers an alternative high school education for youth who have dropped out—or been kicked out—of traditional public schools. The academy is a ministry of CRISTA, a non-profit Christian organization providing various community services regardless of religious affiliation.

What They Do Seattle Urban Academy (SUA) is a private Christian school that accepts only students who’ve left public schools because of truancy, substance abuse, weapons possession, academic failure or other problems. About 85 percent come from single-parent homes, with 65 percent African-American, 10 percent Hispanic and 10 percent American Indian.

Kids spend most of their time mastering academic subjects, while volunteers from a local Arts Corps and Business Computer Training Institute offer additional skills. Students pay only about one percent of their tuition bill; the school picks up the remainder of the costs. Last year, 33 students were enrolled in the school.

Church-State Collaboration Seattle Urban Academy works closely with public schools, law enforcement officials and youth agencies to identify children who could be helped by a Christian-based education. Says principal Sharon Okamoto: “The public schools know exactly what they are referring kids to when they send them SUA.”

For 15 minutes a day, four days a week, students get into small groups to study the Bible. Chapel service is held weekly and attendance is mandatory. The school also offers an elective course in “Bible life skills,” which explores

what it means to become a Christian and to follow Jesus throughout life. All youth eventually are invited to make a faith commitment.

Core Values/Staffing Most of the students have experienced a broken relationship with at least one of their parents; relationships with other adults typically are adversarial. “I had given up on everything,” says Amber Breitzman, who was expelled from four other schools. “SUA teachers made me want to be better. They wouldn’t let me quit.” Breitzman graduated Valedictorian, class of 2000. Because of the student population they serve, SUA staff put special emphasis on the need to model Christian faith and character. Says Okamoto: “It takes a while for kids to realize that the teacher is on their side and truly wants them to learn.” All staff must sign the school’s statement of faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$400,000. All of the funding came from private sources, including individual donors, churches and community groups. Seattle Urban Academy supports six staff (including four teachers) and about 25 volunteers.

Serve Our Youth

5128 Meredith Drive, Des Moines, IA 50310
(515) 280-1723, www.serveouryouth.org

Serve Our Youth draws on urban and suburban congregations to provide adult mentors to at-risk children, with a focus on court-involved youth.

What They Do Serve Our Youth targets children and youth, drawn from shelters, detention centers and juvenile courts. The organization cites four major services: A visitation program pairs volunteers with court-involved youth to help with tutoring, life skills, and job training. An after-care program matches youth with mentors and support teams in a long-term relationship, offering special help to teenage fathers. A chaplaincy program offers spiritual guidance to incarcerated youth. A restorative justice program trains volunteers to mentor youthful offenders and bring them together with their victims. Last year, about 300 youth were helped by staff and volunteers from over 40 congregations.

Church-State Issues By 1998, about 9,000 youth were being held in Iowa’s detention centers or housed in youth shelters—with few support systems to help them adapt to community life once they hit 18 years of age (traditional mentoring programs do not help incarcerated youth, and most stop at age 14). Deb Thielen, administrator of Polk County Youth Services, invited Rev. Koopman and his organization to create a network of congregations to reach out to these kids. Juvenile judges, juvenile courts and the state’s Department of Human Services became eager members of the partnership, and now regularly refer youth to the organization.

Though Serve Our Youth maintains an explicitly religious mission—to see Jesus Christ transform the lives of juvenile offenders—the organization carefully trains its staff and volunteers to avoid proselytizing. Staff never raise religious issues with youth, for example, but are allowed to answer questions when they come up. One question that often gets asked: Why do you come here when nobody else does? “We make it clear that there’s a fine line between mentoring out of faith commitment and proselytizing,” says development director Ann Heerde. “And if they cross that line, it’s all over.”

Core Values/Staffing Serve Our Youth is not bashful about its religious goals: to give every youthful offender the opportunity “to hear and respond to the gospel.” The organization intends to train every Christian called to

juvenile offender ministry. It wants every believing juvenile offender offered discipleship. Says Heerde: “I cannot imagine anyone who is not a Christian volunteering for this kind of work.” Staff and volunteers are asked about their Christian commitment. To date, only believers—all drawn from local churches—have applied.

Financial Support Total income for 2001 was about \$270,000. About 60 percent came from federal juvenile-justice grants. The rest came from individual donations. Serve Our Youth supports four staff about 500 volunteers.

Springboard

510 West 28th Street, Kansas City, MO 64109
(816) 525-7060

Springboard is a non-profit organization that offers child care to unwed teen mothers to help them finish high school and pursue employment or further education.

What They Do Springboard provides free day care for up to three years for school-age mothers. But moms must agree to several conditions: attend school (high school or GED equivalent), be prepared for class, call if they will be absent, and be honest with program staff. Girls who ignore the rules are thrown out of the program. “We don’t expect them to be a saint,” says director Bev Beard. “But we are asking them to own their mistakes when they make them.” Springboard staff build relationships with the girls through parenting classes, career counseling, and other activities. Last year about 250 women were involved in Springboard programs.

Church-State Issues Springboard was launched in 1997 when members of a Sunday school class at Country Club Congregational United Church of Christ saw an increasing number of young, unwed mothers. It now functions as a state-licensed child-care facility. School districts provide transportation and host community discussions with program staff.

The organization also runs a Bible-based abstinence and family-education program in local public schools. Concepts of empowerment and accountability, however, are taught without explicit references to Scripture. Staff and volunteers may pray with the girls, but not on program time.

Core Values/Staffing Springboard staff explain that the organization has always been interested in doing much more than giving out material aid. “We look at their spiritual needs and encourage them on all levels,” Beard says. “We are developing teen mothers, not giving hand outs.” Staff and volunteers are not required to sign a statement of faith, though the organization so far has attracted only Christian believers.

Financial Support Total income for 2001 was about \$135,000. About \$84,000 came from government funds, the rest from private donations. Springboard supports five staff and 25 volunteers.

Strategies to Elevate People (STEP)

P.O. Box 55464, Washington, D.C. 20040-5464
(202) 829-8989

STEP is a non-profit organization that mobilizes church volunteers to tutor and befriend at-risk children in public schools.

What They Do The children at Parkview Elementary and McFarland Middle School are poor: at least 95 percent qualify for free breakfast and lunch. “They’ve got lots of needs,” says STEP executive director Rev. Jim Till. Trained volunteers from half a dozen churches spend one evening a week tutoring and befriending the students. Most of

the time is spent on academics, such as reading and math. But each tutoring session closes with a 30-minute Bible story illustrating a character lesson.

STEP also runs a Pals Program, in which groups of six to 12 people, drawn from churches and businesses, “adopt” a classroom. They plan at least one activity a month on Saturdays with the children. Last year about 100 children were involved in STEP programs.

Church-State Issues STEP, a broadly supported Christian organization, has established good relationships with public school officials. As an assistant principal at Parkview puts it: “We have 531 kids at Parkview, mostly from public assistance families. If we had 531 mentors, that would be fantastic.” Tutoring sessions and Bible lessons occur on school grounds, but always after hours. All programs are voluntary and require parental permission.

Nevertheless, a few years ago the program encountered criticism for its religious content and switched to secular character-education material. Staff says the 2001 Supreme Court decision in *Good News Club v. Milford* suggests they’d be on firm ground to reinstate the weekly Bible lessons. “I’m a minister, and I believe that we can help educate a child,” says Till. “But if we don’t change what’s inside of them, they will not really change their behavior.”

Core Values/Staffing Because of the many needs of the children, STEP volunteers understand their mission as much more than tutoring. While not trying to replace parents, they are helping children see how parents ought to treat their children. Says Till: “They are bringing the love of Christ to others, and this is their biggest asset.” Staff and volunteers must agree to the organization’s Christian mission and values. Till puts it bluntly: “We can’t run a Christian organization if we don’t have Christians working for us.”

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$80,000, all from private sources. STEP supports two staff and about 60 volunteers.

Urban Concern

1478 Cleveland Avenue, Columbus, OH 43211
(614) 291-0885, www.xenos.org

Urban Concern is a non-profit organization that introduces children and young adults to character development, the work ethic, and faith. It is supported by the Xenos Church, a mostly white congregation, and Rhema Christian Center, an African-American congregation.

What They Do Urban Concern offers tutoring and mentoring for children and youth through after-school programs, a summer camp, field trips, and a Christian charter school. The organization targets South Linden, where 60 percent of the residents live in poverty, and focuses special attention on the Rosewind housing project. Over 90 percent of the children they reach are African-American. Last year about 500 children were involved in their programs.

Church-State Collaboration Urban Concern works with public school officials to enroll 12 and 13-year-olds in a Job Club, which meets two hours a day, five days a week. The children learn the values of hard work and savings. The kids make \$4 an hour working as interns at local businesses. They are taught to put half their paychecks in a savings account until they reach 18. UC offers a weekly class in business administration taught in the public schools.

Staff and volunteers run various after-school programs, usually on school grounds. They teach Bible-based character education. They offer tutoring in reading and math. They run a one-on-one mentoring program for children in grades K-4. Volunteers include a federal judge who was paired with a high-risk child (now going to

college and planning on marriage). They enjoy support from the county commissioner, Mayor Michael Coleman, and public school leader Hannah Dillard.

Core Values/Staffing The organization has its own version of the three R's: redistribution (teaching financial responsibility), relocation (living in the community in which you are ministering) and reconciliation (breaking down racial barriers). "Success is the American dream," says executive director Jim Swearingen. "This is not God's dream. Worldly success is living up and out. Success in God's eyes is living down and in." That means the church must be involved with the poor and vulnerable.

Urban Concern's ultimate hope is to lead children to faith in Jesus Christ. A peer group with Christian values is considered one of the best ways to keep kids clear of drugs and gangs. Bible studies, made available to children of all ages, are a major tool of their work. The group welcomes children of all faiths or of no faith into its programs. Says Swearingen: "We are here to reach the drug dealer, not the Christian."

Many staff positions require a profession of faith. All require a commitment to live a lifestyle consistent with Biblical teaching, since both staff and volunteers teach and model various life skills and character qualities for the children.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$957,515. Most of it came from private sources, including foundations (about \$400,000) and individual donors. State and city grants made up \$99,000. Urban Concern supports 22 staff and about 420 volunteers.

Urban Promise

3700 Rudderow Avenue, Camden, NJ 08105
(856) 661-1700, www.urbanpromiseusa.org

Urban Promise is a non-profit organization that teaches children and young adults the skills necessary for academic achievement, life management, spiritual growth, and Christian leadership.

What They Do Urban Promise operates several programs: an after-school program—held in local churches—in which kids get help with homework, snacks, Bible lessons, and field trips; a charter school serving pre-kindergarten to fourth grade; a home-school academy, which offers everything from Latin to computer labs; and a "street leaders" ministry, in which teens are trained to serve in summer-camp and after-school programs. Last year about 700 children and youth were involved in their programs.

Church-State Collaboration Often children having trouble in traditional public schools seek out Urban Promise programs. Referrals may come from public school officials, and the organization partners with local community groups, businesses, foundations, and local congregations. The Christian philosophy of Urban Promise "is incorporated into everything we do," says director of operations Judy Carter. The organization serves children regardless of their religious backgrounds. Parental permission is required for all activities.

Core Values/Staffing Urban Promise staff emphasize the importance of stable, responsible adults in the lives of the children they are serving. Program directors, for example, pick up kids from school, and often bring them to church. All staff and most volunteer positions require a profession of faith.

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was just over \$2 million, all from private sources. Urban Promise supports 25 staff, about 35 interns and roughly 125 volunteers.

Urban Youth Ministries

179 East 19th Street, Holland, MI 49423

(616) 395-2508

Urban Youth Ministries builds relationships with kids and their families and introduces them to faith, while offering vocational and life skills training.

What They Do Urban Youth taps volunteers from local churches with skills in small-engine repair, welding, carpentry, art and other fields to offer vocational training to low-income youth. “They don’t have a work ethic,” says director Lisa Cromartie. “And they don’t have much respect for authority figures.” Working closely with adult teachers/mentors, kids learn the importance of work and personal responsibility. There’s also an after-school program for help with homework, and opportunities for sports activities. Last year about 300 children and youth were involved in Urban Youth programs.

Church-State Collaboration Urban Youth interacts regularly with police and juvenile detention centers; some children arrive in the program because of a court order. Local schools allow the group to advertise its after-school activities. Police officer Ken DeKline may bring fellow officers to come and cook breakfast for the kids, while Mayor Al McGeehan sometimes gets recruited to read them a book. “If people don’t understand the positive linkage between faith-based organizations and city hall, they’re not living in the real world,” McGeehan says. “I can hire more police and the city council can pass more laws, but it’s not going to make nearly as much difference as the faith-based programming going on in churches, because those programs deal with issues of the heart.”

Every program begins with a time of prayer, and weekly Bible studies are made available to the kids. Cromartie, an ex-gang member and drug dealer who came to faith, is adamant about the organization’s evangelistic purpose. Its mission statement—”to lead people to Jesus by building relationships with kids and their families”—is plainly stated on ministry literature. Participation in religious events is voluntary, and youth are eventually invited to make a faith commitment. As Cromartie puts it: “You never know when a kid is looking for hope.”

Core Values/Staffing Urban Youth Ministries targets children in serious need of moral guidance, and the organization puts a premium on finding staff and volunteers who can provide it. Volunteers have been let go, for example, for not living a “Christ-centered life.” The organization has no official policy of hiring only Christians, but a “ministry covenant” for volunteers makes clear the organization’s religious values. “Kids are always watching,” Cromartie says, “and you need to be living a life that is consistent with the ideas the ministry is teaching.”

Financial Support Total revenue for 2001 was \$102,900, all from private sources. Urban Youth Ministries supports two staff and about 20 volunteers.

NOTES

- ¹ See “Children At Risk: State Trends 1990-2000,” a PRB/KIDS COUNT Special Report published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The report uses a family risk index based on four risk factors: 1) child lives in a family with income below the poverty line 2) child lives in a single-parent family 3) child lives in a family where no parent has full-time, year-round employment and 4) child lives with a household head who is a high school dropout. High-risk children live in families with three or more of the risk factors.
- ² Nearly all the organizations featured in the report focus attention on children and youth with at least one of the risk factors cited above. Several groups target kids either involved in the juvenile justice system, or those with a parent in prison.
- ³ As of this writing, the Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment Act of 2002, S.1924, was still being considered by the U.S. Senate. A House version of the President’s faith initiative, the Community Solutions Act, H.R.7, passed in July 2001.
- ⁴ Wendy Kaminer, “The Joy of Sects,” *The American Prospect*, February 2001.
- ⁵ Joseph Loconte, “Faith-Based Skepticism,” *the Weekly Standard*, March 26, 2001.
- ⁶ Richard Land, “Constitutionally Safe, Religiously Dangerous?” Column from beliefnet.com, posted in January 2001.
- ⁷ We looked under “children.” The website was last updated 1995-1996 so some entries had expired. After first screening the programs for relevance based on their paragraph description, we called the groups to see if they were still active.
- ⁸ The data base is titled “Churches at work.”
- ⁹ “Hudson Faith in Communities Working Consultation: Capacity-Building in the Faith Sector” June 5, 2001, hosted by Amy Sherman.
- ¹⁰ “Summit on Government Funding of Social Services Provided by Religious Congregations” Independent Sector and the Aspen Institute July 28, 2001.
- ¹¹ “Right Choices for Youth Conference”: we did not attend this conference but had information sent to us by Richard Parker from the Virginia Governor’s office.
- ¹² Dr. Sulayman Nyang, Professor of African Studies and Director of Muslims in the American Public Square Project at Howard University. He directed us to his student Ms. Fatoumata Thiam.
- ¹³ Center for Religion and Civic Culture at USC with Dr. Grace Dryness and Dr. Don Miller.
- ¹⁴ Dr. Michael Mata from Claremont Theological Seminary in Los Angeles, California.
- ¹⁵ See Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, “Evangelism and Church-State Partnerships,” *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 43, Spring 2001.
- ¹⁶ Among those books were *The Guide to Effective Compassion*. Edited and published by the Acton Institute with intro by Marvin Olasky (1998) and *The Welfare of my Neighbor* by Deanna Carlson, published by the Family Research Council (1999).
- ¹⁷ *Sojourners Magazine* (Call to Renewal) and Christianity Today.
- ¹⁸ Phone Interview with Tim Ries of the Lynn and Foster Friess Family Foundation.
- ¹⁹ National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (Bob Woodson), The Search Institute, Texas Public Policy Foundation, Center for the Study of Compassionate Conservatism (Mike Barkey), Capital Research Center (Christopher Yablonsky), DeVos Foundation (Ginny Vanderhart).
- ²⁰ It’s important to note that in organizations accepting government funding, we did not attempt to trace the flow of public money to specific aspects of faith-based programs. Thus, we can’t say for certain in these cases that no public funds are used for explicitly religious activities. We relied instead on the understanding of government officials and ministry leaders about the religious and secular aspects of the programs.
- ²¹ Amy L. Sherman, “The Growing Impact of Charitable Choice: A Catalogue of new collaborations between Government and FBOs in 9 States,” Center for Public Justice, March 2000; Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, “Evangelism and Church-State partnerships,” *Journal of Church and State*, Vol.43, Spring 2001; Charles Glenn, *The Ambiguous Embrace: Government and Faith Based Schools* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press: 2000; Stephen Monsma, *When Sacred and Secular Mix: Religious Non-Profit Organizations and Public Dollars*. Lanham, MD, Roman and Littlefield: 1996.

- ²² See David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 9-48. See Robert Wm. Blum, M.D. and Peggy Mann Rinehart, "Reducing the Risk: Connections That Make A Difference in the Lives of Youth," Division of General Pediatrics & Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota. Also see Michael Resnick, Ph.D., "Protective Factors, Resiliency, and Healthy Youth Development," *Adolescent Medicine*, Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2000.
- ²³ Joseph Loconte, "The Anxious Samaritan: Charitable Choice and the Mission of Catholic Charities," the Center for Public Justice, May 2000.
- ²⁴ See Ram Cnaan, "Keeping Faith in the City: How 401 Urban Religious Congregations Serve Their Neediest Neighbors," University of Pennsylvania Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, 2000-1.
- ²⁵ E.J. Dionne Jr. and Ming Hsu Chen, eds., *Sacred Places, Civic Purposes* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2001), 254.
- ²⁶ See the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Mitchell v. Helms* (2000). In a 6-3 decision, the majority ruled that government may fund faith-based organizations—in this case a Catholic parochial school—if the purpose is to achieve a legitimate secular purpose.
- ²⁷ Robert Wm. Blum and Peggy Mann Rinehart, "Reducing the Risk: Connections That Make A Difference in the Lives of Youth," Division of General Pediatrics & Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota. Based on data first published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. September 10, 1997.
- ²⁸ This is consistent with research conducted of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America mentoring program by Public/Private Ventures. That study found that youth with mentors were less likely to start using alcohol or other drugs, improved their school attendance and performance. See J. Tierney, J. Grossman and N. Resch, "Making A Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters," Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1995.
- ²⁹ Benjamin Soskis, "Act of Faith: What Religion Cannot Do," *The New Republic*, February 26, 2001.
- ³⁰ Eyal Press, "Leas Us Not Into Temptation," *The American Prospect*, April 9, 2001.
- ³¹ See *America's Youth: Measuring the Risk* (Washington, D.C.: The Institute for Youth Development, 2002), 20.
- ³² Phone interview in Spring 2001.
- ³³ See Byron Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, David Larson and Spencer De Li, "Does Adolescent Religious Commitment Matter? A Reexamination of the Effects of Religiosity on Delinquency," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 38, No.1, February 2001. The report's authors conclude: "Although in this study we found the direct effects of religiosity on delinquency to be significant...the present data do not allow us to directly examine *how* the adolescent's religious commitment reduces his or her delinquent acts." See also Byron Johnson, "The Role of African-American Churches in Reducing Crime Among Black Youth," University of Pennsylvania Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, 2001-2.
- ³⁴ While banning acts of discrimination in employment based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion or national origin, the 1964 Civil Rights Act contains an exemption under Title VII for religious institutions. It states: "This subchapter shall not apply to...a religious corporation, association, educational institution, or society with respect to the employment of individuals of a particular religion to perform work connected with the carrying on by such corporation, association, educational institution, or society of its activities." The exemption was upheld by the Supreme Court in *Corporation of Presiding Bishop v. Amos*, 483 US 327, 342-343 (1987).
- ³⁵ See Nathan Diament, "A Slander Against Our Sacred Institutions," *The Washington Post*, May 28, 2001. See also Eyal Press, "Faith-Based Discrimination: The Case of Alicia Pedreira," *The New York Times Magazine*, April 1, 2001.
- ³⁶ Historically speaking, character-building organizations nearly always have been led by people drawn from religious communities. As author David Blankenhorn puts it: "The YMCA did not improve the lives of millions of young people and place its stamp upon the American character because its leaders believed in the ideal of guys playing basketball. It did into even achieve its remarkable (if historically short-lived) success because its leaders upheld a secular or purely civic ideal of character formation." See Don Eberly, ed., *The Faith Factor in Fatherhood: Renewing the Sacred Vocation of Fathering* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 1999), xiii.
- ³⁷ See Ram Cnaan, "Keeping Faith in the City: How 401 Urban Religious Congregations Serve Their Neediest Neighbors," University of Pennsylvania Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, 2000-1.

- ³⁸ See the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, H.R. 3734, 104th Congress, 2d Session, P.L. 104-193. Sec. 104 (g) prohibits an organization from discriminating against beneficiaries “on the basis of religion, a religious belief, or refusal to actively participate in a religious activity.” Subsection (j) of the law also prohibits federal funds from be expended “for sectarian worship, instruction, or proselytization.”
- ³⁹ Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, *ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ The Supreme Court ruling in the *Good News Club v. Milford* (2001), by allowing a Bible club to offer religious activities in a public elementary school, apparently makes evangelistic activities permissible in public classrooms—provided they are voluntary, receive no state support, and are approved by parents.
- ⁴¹ See “Americans Struggle With Religion’s Role At Home and Abroad,” the Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Washington, D.C., March 20, 2002.
- ⁴² “Americans Say Youth Should Be Top Priority,” America’s Promise news release, April 3, 2001.
- ⁴³ Interview with Larry Brown, director of the Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston, conducted in spring 2001.
- ⁴⁴ See Sung Joon Jang and Byron Johnson, “Neighborhood Disorder, Individual Religiosity, and Adolescent use of Illicit Drugs: A Test of Multilevel Hypotheses,” *Criminology*, Vol.39, Number 1, February 2001.
- ⁴⁵ See National Study of Youth and Religion at www.youthandreligion.org.
- ⁴⁶ See Byron Johnson, Ralph Tompkins and Derek Webb, “Objective Hope: Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations: A Review of the Literature,” March 2002, CRRUCS, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.

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