FIGHTING CRIME BY FAITH

Article

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Introduction

When George W. Bush ran as a candidate for President of the United States, he based his political agenda on the usual conservative theme of less government and fewer taxes. Additionally, Republicans wanted to improve their public and social image in what Mr. Bush described as a new philosophy of Compassionate Conservatism. To that end, Mr. Bush requests that believers of all faiths support his faith-based initiative that would create a mechanism that allows faith-based community groups to compete for federal funds. There are already many local programs including law enforcement agencies that rely on federal grants to keep their programs viable.[1] This article focuses on the implications that faith-based organizations will have on crime prevention issues in law enforcement agencies.

Because of the controversy surrounding this bill and its relevancy to the issue statement, this article will examine several components of President Bush's Faith-Based Initiative and explore some of the surrounding topics that may influence how faith-based organizations will address crime prevention issues. The article will also investigate a number of faith-based organizations, some of which operate without government funding and/or intervention and serve as examples of the type of crime prevention programs currently used in communities across the nation.

By definition a faith-based organization is any religious organization that provides public social services such as treating addiction, curbing crime, overcoming poverty, aiding the homeless, feeding the poor, and strengthening families and neighborhoods.

The concept of crime prevention is based upon the strategies employed by law enforcement and citizen participation to reduce both the fear of crime and the incidence of

crime. It requires that law enforcement agencies be involved in the preplanning of any community activity where their services may later be required. For purposes of this article the author made use of the community policing model as defined by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Community Policing is a philosophy designed to reduce crime and disorder in communities by fostering trust, respect, and collaboration between police officers and citizens.[2] This definition is supported by a number of identifiable characteristics aimed at securing a common understanding of the meaning of community policing:

- Partnership building among the police, citizens, and other institutions
- Problem-solving approaches to crime and disorder
- Emphasis on proactive crime control, including crime prevention
- Developing police organizations responsive to community concerns
- Recognizing that public concerns other than crime may be important for promoting trust, such as the public's fear of crime and nuisance abatement

These key components of community policing suggest that more than local sensitivity is required. What is needed is an active, collaborative effort between the public and the police to challenge crime and other community problems.[3]

Faith-Based Initiative

President George W. Bush ran on the platform that it was one of the primary goals of his administration to revitalize the spirit of active participation and citizenship in America. In his first executive order he created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Another name for the initiative is the Charitable Choice Act of 2001 or the Community Solutions Act of 2001. The President said, "We will encourage faith-based and community programs without changing their mission. We will help all in their work to

change hearts while keeping a commitment to pluralism."[4] In his second related order, President Bush relieved regulations within the Departments of Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, and Labor and Education, allegedly making it easier for private organizations to seek federal funding.[5] The President also proposed new legislation that will allow all taxpayers to deduct donations to charitable organizations. Under the current law, some 80 million taxpayers who claim the standard deduction, rather than filing itemized deductions, are prevented from deducting charitable donations. The Bush administration believes that allowing taxpayers to claim charitable contributions will result in the donation of billions of dollars to local public service and faith-based organizations. Also included in this legislative package is a tax credit for charities and private businesses that directly address poverty issues.[6] This could have a significant impact on crime prevention issues in those areas that participate in these programs.

In July 2001, the House of Representatives passed the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Act. However, the Senate will not even consider this legislation until the summer of 2002 at its earliest, where it is expected to encounter considerable resistance from the Democratic majority.

At the state level, Governor Gray Davis announced the availability of $3.75 million in grants for non-profit community and faith-based organizations to assist Californians with job skills training, career planning, job placement, and other related services. The Governor said he wanted to reach the most difficult to serve and the hardest to employ individuals including homeless men and women, substance abusers, disadvantaged youth, limited English-speaking individuals, and non-custodial parents.[7]

A Summary of the Pros and Cons of the Faith-Based Initiative

Arguments in Favor of the Faith-Based Initiative

1. In many troubled communities across the nation churches, and mosques represent our strongest social institutions.[8] Providing funding for churches will increase the effectiveness of social service programs. Additionally, people who are part of the community are more knowledgeable about the needs of their constituents and are better suited to meet those needs.[9]
2. The government already funds similar activities for medical care provided at Adventist, Catholic, Baptist, and other denominational hospitals. Churches can participate in a wide variety of government social services contracts if they form a separate non-profit corporation that is somewhat distanced from the church itself.[10]

Arguments Against the Faith-Based Initiative

1. Directly funding churches violates the Establishment Clause of the Constitution. It can be argued that federal money will be used to fund proselization and religious activities, which is unconstitutional. For example, faith-based drug rehabilitation programs teach that through faith in the power of God the addict can break their addiction. It would be virtually impossible to stop church workers from witnessing to participants, even when ordered not to do so.[11]
2. While it may be acceptable for mainstream religious groups to receive funding, there are certain religious organizations whose practices are so antisocial or alien that they should not get funding. Funding would bestow a sort of legitimacy on these groups

and may allow them to expand their operations and their influence at taxpayer expense.[12]

The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Community

Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship have always made a difference in the lives of children and families. Traditionally, many have offered youth community choirs, church sports teams, hiking and camping youth groups, as well as parent support groups. But increasingly, these institutions are doing more. They are creating marriage maintenance classes and parent-teen dialogues on money, curfews, sexuality, dating, drug abuse, and becoming a young parent.[13]

Some are reaching well beyond their own membership. Across the country, churches, synagogues, and mosques are buying drug houses and evacuating criminal tenants, renovating run-down neighborhoods, offering low-income mortgages to families unable to get loans through banks, teaming up with suburban and inner-city congregations and child advocacy organizations to sponsor programs for abused and runaway children, the homeless, and other families in need.[14]

Some of the nation's most successful churches and synagogues envision the church or synagogue as a hub of a wider network of support for families, creating supportive family networks. Coast Hills Community Church, in Aliso Viejo, California attracted many new members in recent years by offering several parent-support groups and parenting classes, including one called "Parenting Before and After Work." Coast Hills, which is an interdenominational church, also launched MOPS, a program for mothers of preschool children; the moms meet every Thursday for 12 weeks to discuss topics from discipline to “sex after children.” Mommy and Me play groups are also sponsored by the church.[15]

At Ohr Kodesh Congregation in Chevy Chase, Maryland, parent networking is part of the synagogues theological mission. "A key concept for our congregation is the Hebrew word 'chesed,' translated as 'loving care," says Rabbi Lyle A. Fishman. "Visiting the sick, comforting the mourner; these are examples of chesed. These acts of loving care tie people together over time and generations."[16]

At the heart of this movement is an old idea: community - not only the community within the place of worship, but the community beyond. "Many of us grew up in neighborhoods and towns where the church is part of the community, and support for families came naturally," says Maurice Graham, associate pastor of Bon Air Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. "Today with daily life spread out and so many of us leading hectic lives, we have got to make a conscious effort to re-create community. The church can help with that."[17]

Not every church or synagogue has the financial resources to serve as the community center or to offer elaborate programs for parents and children, but that does not mean parent connections cannot be made.

"My church, Trinity Presbyterian, with about 200 members, has the typical financial struggles of a medium-sized church," says Renee Connell, 38, the mother of two young children in Oroville, California. "We don't have a lot of money. But in a way, that helps us build community." Members of Trinity help teach weekday classes for children. Parents gather before and after the classes, to socialize. Parents also get together to clean the church, pull weeds, wash windows, and paint. "When I had toddlers, the church encouraged me to start a play group," says Connell. "They could not afford to finance the program, but they did provide a room." "Several of the children and parents who attended were not members of the

church." That, she says, is important. "It's a way to support parents and help children in the wider community."[18]

The rising popularity of alternative giving, reported widely by news organizations in 1999, suggests that many faith-based institutions may be moving toward more social action. Certainly many churches have engaged the public on the abortion issue, but direct community action, by conservative and liberal congregations alike, is increasing.[19]

Places of worship house a third of all child-care programs in the United States today. [20] In some communities, churches, and synagogues are important members of public-private consortiums that open new child-care centers and create loan and investment funds for child care. In Miami County, Indiana, for example, the Child Care Action Campaign of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration sponsored a partnership between the church, a hospital, three businesses, and the state. The state provides some funding; the church offers space; the hospital supplies cribs, equipment, and training for teachers, and the businesses have pitched in to build a playground.[21]

Among other large scale community outreach efforts:

- In Norcross, Georgia, the Hopewell Baptist Church started a tutoring program to help prepare children for the school system's tough new testing program.[22]
- Faith-based organizations are important partners, sometimes the sole operators, of food banks for homeless and other financially pressed families.
- Especially during difficult economic times, a church or synagogue can help parents connect with potential employers within the congregation. For example, The Job Seekers Network is sponsored by the Foothills United Methodist Church in La Mesa, California.

In the network's newsletter, job seekers advertise for free and the newsletter is sent to the 1500 members of the church.[23]

- Some faith-based organizations are directly involved in community economic development. For example, in Columbus, Ohio, churches and nonprofit community organizations formed partnerships with Huntington National Bank to promote homeownership in poor neighborhoods.[24]
- Faith-based organizations are important supporters of teen centers and other after school programs. In Atlanta, the Roswell United Methodist Church recently created the $3.5 million Dodson Youth Center.[25]
- In Dallas, 60 churches from a racially and economically diverse array of neighborhoods formed the Dallas Area Interfaith Council, a citizens action group that has set up after-school programs in six Dallas public schools and drawn commitments from businesses to create more than 200 jobs in low-income neighborhoods.[26]
- The Pennsylvania Council of Churches, along with the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, the Pennsylvania Headstart Association, and other civic groups help guide the Pennsylvania School Reform Network. Their purpose: to educate rural Pennsylvanians about school funding and to work toward solutions.[27]
- In Boston's South End, the city opened the Education Resource Center. The center's mission is to "to help parents and their children who want to go to college, but need help sorting out applications, financial aid, Scholastic Assessment Tests and networking."[28]

Crime Prevention

Crime prevention programs that are being carefully scrutinized are producing some rather interesting results as to what really works. Changing attitudes toward preventing crime could reduce crime-related problems dramatically.

According to the Department of Justice, street crime in America dropped to historically low levels by the end of the 1990s. No one is certain why the drop occurred, but the debate over the decline has prompted wide-reaching efforts to search for answers. Some credit the decrease to more police officers on the streets and tougher sentencing laws. Others believe that community initiatives and crime-prevention programs are responsible for the success. Finding the answers to these tough questions will be critical to the public's safety in the 21st century.[29]

The author's research found that the best explanation for the decrease in crime lies in the success of the weed and seed movement of the 1960's by the criminologist James Q. Wilson. In his *Public Interest* article "Broken Windows," Wilson stated that declining neighborhoods were the direct result of residents losing hope and pride in the areas where they lived. The police seldom patrolled these neighborhoods except to make arrests and offenders often committed crimes without regard for authority. Wilson's formula for change was to weed out the immediate problem, e.g., drug dealers, drug addicts, public drunks, thieves, street hustlers, and thugs, by cracking down and making arrests for even minor offenses such as loitering, vagrancy, spitting on the sidewalk, jaywalking, etc., to keep the streets clean of this unwanted element. After completing the weeding, the government must seed the community with resources that will help residents to keep their communities free from crime. Such programs might include partnerships with private industry to bring in jobs,

daycare, health clinics, drug rehabilitation centers, after-school centers, tutors, mentors, and many other activities.[30]

Unfortunately, congressional strings required more weeding than seeding. The "get tough" legislature at federal and state levels supported longer, mandatory sentences for law violators and built more prisons and jails to hold them. Courts were also encouraged to hand out adult sentences to juveniles as a deterrent.[31]

Drug addicts were singled out in particular for harsh treatment. In 1999, more than two-thirds of federal prison inmates and twenty–five percent of all state prisoners were serving time for drug charges. Drug-prevention efforts were little more than the well known just say no motto.[32]

Finally, after an alarming increase in street violence in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the idea of seeding started received more attention, primarily because of the Community Oriented Policing and Problem Policing Solving (COPPS) movement. As the Justice Department began releasing federal funding, success stories cropped up in communities that developed programs to prevent crime rather than just react to it and suppress it. Soon the Justice Department got on the COPPS bandwagon and praised community partnerships involving the government. They also circulated model programs and increased funding for crime prevention efforts throughout the nation.[33]

What Works

In 1998, the National Institute of Justice reviewed the findings of a team of researchers from the University of Maryland. Their research is the culmination of a congressionally mandated, two-year study that scientifically inspected over 500 crime prevention programs. The study provides direction and guidance for communities that are encountering crime and

crime-related problems, with the explanation that the evaluations are based on "minimally adequate evidence."[34]

Unfortunately, what worked to prevent crime was the shortest list produced by the study. When nurses and other staff frequently visited at-risk families, infant health improved and child abuse was reduced. For children five years and younger, attending preschool or weekly home visits by a teacher decreased their chances of being arrested later in life at least through their teen years. Parent training and family counseling helped to deal with delinquent and at-risk pre-adolescents. Early professional intervention for hyperactivity and aggressive behavior lessened the risk factors for later delinquency.[35]

Anti-bullying campaigns and other school-wide programs reduced crime and delinquency on campuses. Administrators, who clearly communicated the rules and reinforced positive behavior, noticed significant reductions in criminal behavior. Other successful curriculums included life skills training such as problem solving, nonviolent conflict resolution, and stress management.[36]

Another form of crime prevention occurs when our youth are involved in programs such as America Corps, Job Corps, and the Peace Corps. These agencies provide young people with a chance to learn the joy of giving to others. At the same time, it gives them a stake in society by developing skills and learning discipline. Many communities and even some states are developing youth-oriented community service programs of their own.[37]

There are also faith-based organizations and programs that offer ex-offender job training for older males that helps to reduce repeat offenses. Nuisance abatement suits against landlords for failing to address drug problems on their premises helped to reduce drug dealing and crime in privately owned rental housing.[38] Proactive police patrols that incorporate a zero

tolerance approach for any offense(s) in high-crime areas such as nightclubs, bars, and hangouts curtailed the amount of reported crime in those areas. Conducting continuous surveillance on high-risk repeat offenders lessened their time on the street by returning them to prison earlier and reduced their opportunities to commit more crimes.[39] Crime prevention efforts involving hard-core serious offenders mean longer prison sentences, therefore preventing crimes offenders would have committed while out on the streets.

Efforts at rehabilitation worked if they were "appropriate to their risk factors." Both adults and juveniles who received such treatments were less likely to re-offend. Even in-prison drug treatment and therapeutic community programs minimized the number of repeat offenses after prisoners had completed their sentence. [40]

Mentoring is the cornerstone of any at-risk youth project. A stable father figure is important to both male and female children, but particularly to young boys. At-risk youth, who do not have a positive male role model to help them establish their own identity often are raised by single parent mothers or other female relatives. Some have no family and must be relocated from foster home to foster home and other juvenile institutions as problems arise.[41] Successful mentors must have a thorough understanding of the program and be willing to spend a considerable amount of time with youngsters, listening and advising them concerning every aspect of life. Mentoring means encouraging and assisting children in their social, moral, and intellectual development. It means simply being there and appreciating the important times and events in their lives. In return, mentors are rewarded by seeing troubled youth, grow and mature into healthy and prosperous young adults.[42]

Leaders in Kansas City, Missouri, are so convinced about the effect of positive role models that they are on a quest to recruit, train, and assign 30,000 mentors - one for every at-

risk child in the city. The role of Big Brothers and Big Sisters has greatly expanded existing mentoring programs in other communities as well.[43]

More examples of successful crime prevention partnerships involving at-risk youth include:

- In Missouri, 6,000 volunteers keep 675 schools open for extra hours
- In New York City, Safe Haven programs provide secure environments and positive after-school tutoring and enrichment programs
- In December 1998, eight cities: Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco/Oakland, and Seattle (Los Angeles, Brooklyn and Indianapolis were added as sites in early 2000) were selected for participation in a national demonstration project targeting high-risk youth. Although the faith-based organizations varied in size, religious orientation, program strategy, and geographic location, they were each focused on working with the most difficult to reach youth in their communities. What they discovered is that character building in educational institutions revolves around universally accepted values, e.g., love, truthfulness, fairness, tolerance, and responsibility. These values should be taught at every grade level at every school. There was little opposition to these values based on differing political, social, and religious beliefs. Schools with large numbers of at-risk youth have reported a decline in pregnancy and dropout rates, along with reduced fights and suspensions, after character education became part of the accepted norms for behavior.[44]

In a published article entitled Community Policing, Community Justice, and Restorative Justice: Exploring the Links for the Delivery of a Balanced Approach to Public

Safety, Caroline G. Nicholl, a Metropolitan Police Department Commander in Washington D.C., addresses the interconnections and relationships among community policing and other relevant criminal justice reform movements, specifically, community justice and restorative justice.[45]

For example, in Milton Keyes, England, where Commander Nicholl previously served as Police Chief, she grew tired of watching juveniles committing thefts with impunity despite the continued response by police. Her idea was to implement a more far-reaching community offender program. If a juvenile committed a crime of petty theft and at the time the suspect was arrested he/she answered police questions freely, fully and was remorseful, then the criminal charges would be dropped. From these interviews, Commander Nicholl identified numerous problems including alcoholism, bullying, and children with too much free time on their hands. The community came together to solve these problems and the shoplifting rate was reduced to almost nothing.

Restorative justice has emerged from a few community mediation-arbitration programs to the growing use of community service and restitution as alternatives to incarceration. Restorative justice gives citizens and communities opportunities to understand their role in controlling and reducing the incidence of crime. Restorative justice is also a means of promoting a fair balance between formal and informal measures to address the causes and consequences of crime. The overall aim is to produce an effective program that restores both victims and offenders to the community by healing the injury and preventing further harm in the future.[46] Commander Nicholl warns of an over reliance on the criminal justice system that is "adversarial, alienating, and demoralizing." Of her own innovation, she reasoned, "If the problem isn't getting solved, why continue the same approach?"[47]

True community-oriented policing and problem solving is the heart of the restorative justice peace model. To be effective the process must include a holistic evaluation of the community's needs with citizens leading the discussions and being integrally involved in the consensus building, decision-making, action planning, and implementation process.[48]

In reviewing the crime prevention efforts with the most positive results, programs that provided positive role models, committed mentors, clearly communicated rules and expectations, and training in the areas of life skills, problem solving, and conflict resolution, experienced a significant amount of positive changed behavior.

Faith Based Crime Prevention Programs

The Peace Model of Community Policing operates on the following basic principles:

Prevention: The first and best line of defense against crime is to keep it from occurring. Thus, the focus of policing efforts must be to prevent crime.

Crime Causation: There are many causes for crime including mental illness, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and even bored teenagers. Problem solving occurs when law enforcement works together with the community.

Partnerships: Law enforcement, citizens, community organizations, and a wide range of public and private agencies such as faith-based organizations, health care providers, educational institutions, housing organizations, vocational training centers, child care organizations, counseling centers, and recreational organizations must become partners to develop and execute a coordinated effort to stop situations that help cause crime and the results of crime-related problems.[49]

There are emerging philosophies and programs that can have a significant impact on crime. Citizens and law enforcement must be willing to accept the responsibility of

incorporating these innovative strategies into new crime prevention efforts. It is imperative that communities be involved in this process from start to finish. Faith-based organizations and faith communities can play a significant role in most of these crime prevention efforts.

Faith-based organizations can provide a powerful framework to change the current model of the criminal justice system. Some of the key areas recommended for change include:

- Moving from a prosecutorial model to a less adversarial approach
- Moving from an punitive model to a model that helps people change
- Moving from a short term compliance model to a system that sustains positive change
- Moving from an incidence and crisis driven model to a system that focuses on long term support for those at-risk

For example, Mark Scott is the director of the Ella Baker House in Dorchester Massachusetts. He and the Rev. Eugene Rivers have an outreach program that gives youth a chance of making it. "It's not unlike the plan in Scripture, explains Scott, "where in Proverbs there is a plan laid out for a young man contrasting wisdom and folly. And, depending upon which you chose, both determine where you end up in life – in a ditch or obtaining prosperity."[50]

Eight years ago, the Boston neighborhood hit rock bottom. The crack epidemic had produced hundreds of addicts and had spawned a wave of violence, in particular among young people. The extent of the problem was driven home when at a funeral for the victim of a drive-by shooting, rival gang members entered the church and began shooting and stabbing each other in front of the entire congregation.

Out of this tragedy was born a model for reclaiming neighborhoods across the nation. It became known as the "Ten Point Coalition," and one of the founding members was the Pastor of the Azusa Christian Community Church, Eugene Rivers. Along with Pastor Rivers, other area pastors made it their mission to be there. The plan became multi-faceted and included: summer recreation and literacy programs, mentoring programs, one-on-one drug treatment programs, and Christians mobilized to staff neighborhood patrols.

This commitment to kids reflects a Christian understanding of human nature. Rivers won't hesitate to recommend locking up a dangerous juvenile. He knows that Christian love of neighbor includes telling the truth about their condition. The results the pastors achieved in Boston were astounding. The crime rate dropped seventy-seven percent in less than a decade. And, the city that averaged nearly twenty juvenile homicides in the preceding years went nearly five years without a single juvenile murder.[51]

Under the goal of advancing and supporting community policing, the Federal Office of Community Oriented Policing Services provides grant funding to police agencies to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve, with an emphasis on partnering with the faith community. The Value Based Initiative (VBI) strives to improve the health of communities by building meaningful partnerships with faith-based organizations that aid in crime prevention efforts and provide social services in the community.

In Chicago, Illinois, the police department has forged an alliance with the Police Executive Research Forum that puts VBI funding to work in minority neighborhoods. Chicago's action plan includes the implementation of a series of workshops designed to get to

the root causes of racial issues causing division in minority communities, with the faith community being a key part of those efforts.[52]

In Boston, Massachusetts the VBI brings together five faith-based organizations to partner with the Boston Police Department, mentoring and monitoring the most high-risk offenders before returning them to their neighborhoods. The VBI creates an integrated support network across neighborhoods to assist these men and women in the reintegration process.[53]

In Fort Wayne, Indiana, a minister's training academy has been instrumental in working with law enforcement in the city's "Stop the Madness" program. This youth development agency utilized VBI funding to create an alliance to curb anti-social trends. This pairing of community policing and juvenile delinquency experts promotes programs focusing on crisis intervention, mentoring activities, interview skills, job referral assistance, and open discussions from the youth perspective.[54]

The Redlands Police Department in California has focused on introducing the faith community to existing youth development programs through the local collaborative "Building a Generation." The VBI has collaborated with several agencies in the establishment of a teen cyber café that provides Redlands' youth with a safe place to enjoy positive social activities in the critical after school hours. At the café, teens have access to high-end computer technology, homework assistance, and job training.[55]

In St. Paul, Minnesota, the Young Women's Christian Association and the St. Paul Police Department focuses on ways citizens, police, and city officials can work together through VBI to develop effective crime prevention strategies.[56]

In North Carolina, the Governor's Crime Commission established a crime prevention effort entitled "Church Watch." Church Watch helps to reduce or eliminate the opportunity for crime – including arson – involving houses of worship. The Crime Prevention Unit offers technical assistance and training to any congregation that wishes to start a Church Watch program. Church leaders and members of their congregations will learn how to employ the principles of Community Watch and other basic crime prevention techniques, and how to apply the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design to make churches and church property less attractive targets for crime.[57]

The Church of the Messiah serves the neighborhoods of southeast Detroit, Michigan by providing tutoring and youth development programs, health and healthy life styles education, and mobile nurse practitioner services.[58]

The InnerChange program is a Christian-based immersion-style rehabilitation program operated within participating correctional facilities in the State of Texas. The InnerChange program was developed in response to a request for proposal by the State of Texas for a values-based, faith-neutral, prerelease program designed to reduce recidivism.[59]

The following Faith-Based Organizations represent a small fraction of the national trend whereby faith communities play an increasing role in solving social ills, participate in crime prevention efforts, and build sustainable communities:

- Asset-Based Community Development Religious Network of Ft. Collins, CO
- Direct Action & Research Training Center of Miami, FL
- Gamaliel Foundation of Chicago, IL
- Organizing and Leadership Training Center of Dorchester, MA
- Pacific Institute for Community Organization of Oakland, CA

- Congress of National Black Churches of Washington, DC
- Faith Center for Community Development Inc. of New York, NY
- ORGANIZE Training Center of Pacifica, CA
- Regional Council of Neighborhood Organizations of Philadelphia, PA [60]

Although Community Policing efforts have made tremendous strides in building relationships at the block, neighborhood, and community levels, law enforcement has only begun to scratch the surface of the resources that faith-based organizations can provide.

Faith-Based Vision Statement

Any new program, especially a faith-based program that will have a profound impact on an organization for years to come requires a clear vision and the identification of key elements that are critical to the program's growth.

To achieve the desired goal of incorporating faith-based organizations into crime prevention efforts it is essential to develop a vision statement. The vision statement must reflect the values and core objectives of the organization, and it establishes a course of action for the direction where the organization wants to go and how it will get there. The following is an example provided by the author of such a vision statement:

> Law enforcement's primary responsibility is to provide for the safety and security of the community it serves. Law enforcement recognizes the importance of the philosophy of Community Policing and is committed to work in partnership with the community to solve problems and engage in crime prevention efforts to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. By engaging the community to work collaboratively with law enforcement, we recognize that we are moving from a service model whereby we react to calls for service to an empowerment model whereby ordinary citizens become part of the decision making process to resolve problems that affect them. We believe in the power of ordinary people coming together to create extraordinary changes in our communities. Law enforcement also acknowledges the influence that faith-based organizations have on communities to address a myriad of societal ills. We appreciate the value of

> our faith-based communities to the city and the significance of their mission. We believe that faith-based programs can curb crime, treat addictions, feed and clothe the needy, and improve the quality of life in our communities by strengthening families and neighborhoods. We are committed to developing effective relationships with our faith communities and sharing resources to accomplish mutual goals.

Faith-Based Crime Prevention Model

The author offers the following crime prevention model for law enforcement agencies that want to incorporate faith-based organizations into their community policing efforts.

The crime prevention manager is responsible for providing crime prevention methods, safety methods, and programs that reduce crime, the fear of crime and public disorder within his/her jurisdiction. The crime prevention manager will manage and lead the department's crime prevention efforts, including liaisoning with faith-based stakeholders. The crime prevention manager will have oversight over all the activities involving faith-based programs and communicate his/her findings to the proper authority.

The Faith-Based Organization Coordinator is the supervisor assigned as the primary liaison between the police department, participating FBO's and other city departments. In addition to his/her other crime prevention duties and responsibilities the FBO Coordinator will be responsible for supervising the crime prevention services, safety presentations, and administration of the Neighborhood Crime Watch and Business Crime Watch programs involving FBO's. The FBO Coordinator will report directly to the Crime Prevention Manager and will also be responsible for supervising the activities of the Community Engagement Specialists (CES) who operate at the line level. The community engagement specialists are responsible for the following activities:

- Providing community crime prevention efforts, safety presentations and administration of the Neighborhood Crime Watch and Business Crime Watch programs, including FBO's
- Responsible for expanding resident and FBO involvement by developing contacts in neighborhoods on a block-by-block basis
- Responsible for developing FBO leaders and the skills they will need to lead training sessions, conduct one-on-one interviews, facilitate meetings and gain consensus on city and neighborhood goals
- Assist community leaders in determining and evaluating alternative courses of action to solve problems
- Provide practical information regarding meeting settings, facilitation techniques, developing agendas and the follow-up required on decisions made and actions taken
- Provide a written and/or verbal response to inquiries, complaints and investigations
- Responsible for increasing the number of activities that FBO's can be involved in at the block, neighborhood and community level
- Responsible for coordinating the efforts of FBO leaders in their neighborhoods and business communities
- Responsible for working with City staff to develop and enhance their community engagement skills
- Able to provide information to participants regarding resources from various governmental entities, educational establishments, business organizations and electronic and print media

- Responsible for strengthening police involvement in the faith community by organizing neighborhoods, identifying issues and solving problems at the grass roots level
- Responsible for meeting with City staff to prioritize issues and determine which FBO will receive focused assistance at any point in time
- Responsible for coordinating FBO program activities with those of established police activities, i.e., community engagement, mediation services, and interest based negotiations
- Responsible for providing FBO support in the Police Department, and all other city departments
- Responsible for maintaining accurate records and preparing reports related to FBO program activities and expenditures
- Responsible for explaining to superiors and elected officials the status of developments and issues involving FBO's at most levels
- Responsible for developing FBO program budgets
- Responsible for engagement parameters and reports
- Responsible for recommending and implementing operational changes
- Responsible for the oversight of special projects and community events
- Responsible for the effective use of cell phones, pagers, personal computers, and other hi-tech equipment
- Have working knowledge of computer hardware and software relevant to the workplace, e.g., word processing and data base programs

- Responsible for knowledge of all applicable Federal, State and City statutes, including Department rules, regulations, policies and procedures
- Responsible for responding to oral and written orders
- Responsible for the appropriate and effective response to potentially hostile situations, while demonstrating resourcefulness, courtesy, and initiative
- Responsible for effectively communicating with individuals and groups from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Responsible for directing, organizing, and supervising the work of volunteers
- Responsible for handling internal and external customer service requests
- Perform other police duties as assigned by competent authority.

A Community Engagement Specialist will be assigned to monitor the activities of a specific geographic boundary known as a "Neighborhood Service Areas (NSA). An Office of Neighborhood's consultant working with various focus groups established the boundaries for these NSA's. The participants of each focus group acknowledged and claimed ownership of their NSA and identified them as "their neighborhood," or "their community" within the city.

Within each NSA the community engagement specialist will be responsible for mobilizing the faith-based organizations/communities as part of a Neighborhood Faith Council. Each, Neighborhood Faith Council will select a member from within its ranks to represent their entire faith community. The purpose of these local councils will be to form a cadre of faith leaders who will provide representation to the umbrella non-profit organization known as the City's Inter-Faith Council. Under this model the faith leaders can identify and help solve problems in their neighborhoods and they can have representation at the city level.

Monitoring and Feedback

A process to monitor the ongoing progress and success of the initiative is important to determine the program's effectiveness and to answer the question, "Did we meet our goals?" The criteria used to measure the effectiveness of faith-based programs involved in crime prevention efforts will include:

- The number of faith-based organizations that joined the umbrella organization
- The number of increased paid staff
- The number of volunteers involved in various crime- prevention efforts
- The number of homeless removed from the streets
- The number of after-school programs started
- The number of juveniles involved in after school programs
- The number of persons on parole and probation (recidivism rate)
- The number of service learning programs that were started and sustained
- The crime rate
- The number of families that moved into new low-cost housing units
- The number of structured interviews, surveys, and evaluations completed

This ongoing assessment and evaluation process is vital to the success of the program. People will make mistakes and there will be disagreements about how to administer the program. The key stakeholders should have a mindset of flexibility. If something is not working as was originally designed, then managers have the authority and responsibility to make changes as necessary.

Transition Structure

It is important that the Faith-Based Organization Coordinator possesses good organizational and motivational skills and have a high level of interest and commitment to the program. Ideally, this individual will assume the role of faith-based program coordinator as soon as the program starts.

To assist the project manager with the transition, it is necessary to form a team of individuals that include representatives from all levels of the agency as well as representatives from the faith communities. Also included on this team should be the human resources director, or his/her designee to represent that office. The team will be responsible for developing program standards as well as the criteria that will judge the success of the program. The team will also need to sell the program at every opportunity both internally and externally. The individuals selected to participate must be committed to the program and respected within the agency. It is anticipated that some members of this group will go on to become informal faith-based advisers for the program.

Ideally the Transition Team, the Neighborhood Councils, and the City Inter-Faith Council will incorporate the following key strategies into their organizations:

- Foster trust and respect between the department and the community
- Promote understanding
- Share insights and exchange ideas
- Disseminate accurate, pertinent, timely and vital information
- Dispel misinformation
- Identify problems and potential problems and devise solutions

Summary and Recommendation

National, state, and local leaders want to revitalize the spirit of involvement and citizenship in America. President Bush says he wants to accomplish this by encouraging faith-based community programs to help those in need without changing the essential mission of their faith, whatever their religion. In California the Governor wants FBO's to reach the most difficult to serve and the hardest to employ individuals including homeless men and women, substance abusers, at-risk youth, limited English-speaking individuals, and non-custodial parents.

A community-policing environment was the background for this article because crime prevention is as vital to police operations as patrol and investigations. The full acceptance of the philosophy of community policing is required for any law enforcement agency that hopes to reduce crime and disorder by fostering trust and respect by building partnerships in the community it serves.

As law enforcement reaches out and becomes more involved in the overall well being of the community, community members will need to step up and be active participants in the daily activities of community governance.

We do not have to wait for the United States Senate to pass the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Act and watch it become, just another government program. The author recommends that law enforcement start collaborating today with our faith communities to build capacity, identify issues, and develop resources to help solve some of our community's long-term problems and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. There is certainly room for the traditionalist model of policing when dealing with core crime issues and certain criminal elements. Supporters of community policing and specifically those

involved with the crime prevention aspect of community policing do not advocate coddling criminals. Instead, community policing emphasizes collaborative, long-term problem solving methods and implementing crime prevention measures. Community policing is about getting to the root causes of crime and other social disorders, and asking a three-part question: 1) What is causing this problem? 2) How do we solve this problem? 3) How can we keep it from being a problem in the future? The faith community is part of the WE in how do we solve this problem. Faith communities have an interest and a voice in what happens in their communities. Members of faith-based organizations should no longer be viewed as Sunday morning, pew potatoes and their activities limited to narrow-minded conventional roles, while the community suffers the consequences of crime-related problems. There are just too many communities out there in need of a complete transformation where faith-based organizations can make a major impact.

Faith-based organizations have a mission and that mission is to serve people. It is their calling. Should the service of FBO's be restricted to dishing food in a soup kitchen or giving away coats to the needy in the wintertime? The answer is an obvious no! People of faith need to be actively involved in every avenue of their communities. They can help keep children safe by providing positive role models and sharing their facilities for various crime prevention programs. People of faith can help restore and strengthen families by working to treat drug and alcohol addiction, as well as victims of domestic violence. People of faith can assist those released from detention facilities that want to stay out and lead productive lives. Members of faith-based programs can play a significant role in addressing these and other crime prevention issues, but they will be most effective sharing their resources and working in

partnership with law enforcement professionals to find positive solutions to complex problems.

To engage our faith communities to address crime prevention issues, in a community-policing environment, will require law enforcement leaders with a bold vision for the future. These leaders must possess the courage, strength and stamina to continually challenge the current process. These leaders must be risk takers in the truest sense of the word, with the ability to inspire and appeal to the values, interests, hopes and dreams of a diverse community. Law enforcement leaders must enable others to act by developing their employees and volunteers to solve problems. Law enforcement leaders must be role models for their constituents by finding creative and innovative ways to improve the quality of life in the community. The incorporation of faith-based organizations into community policing efforts to address crime prevention issues is an effective method of combining government and community resources.

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