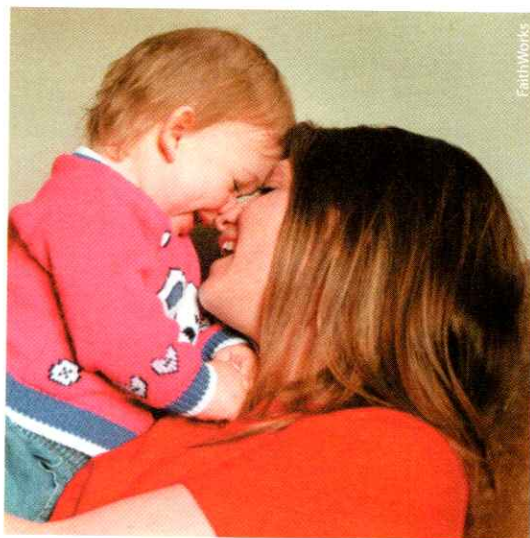


Charitable Choice

By Patty Rhule

*Faith-based
groups share their
successes and cite
concerns*

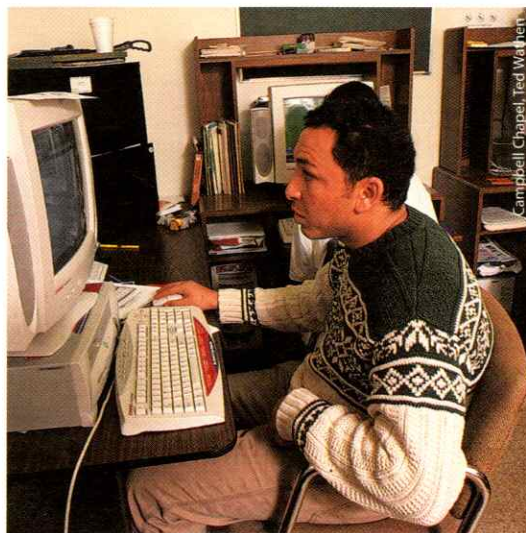
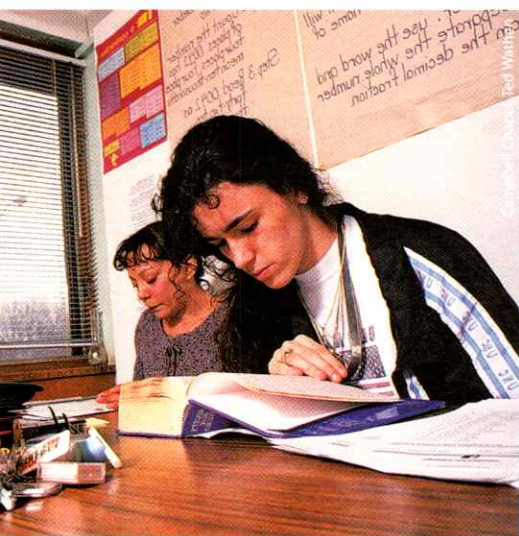


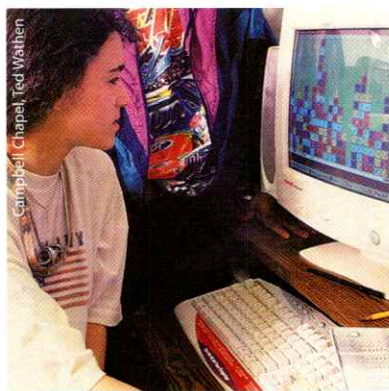
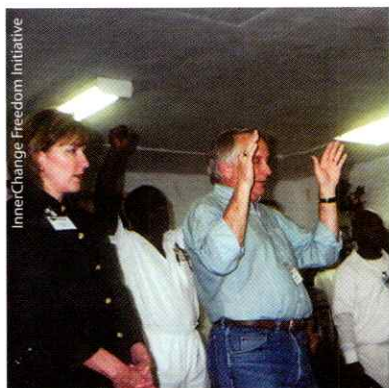
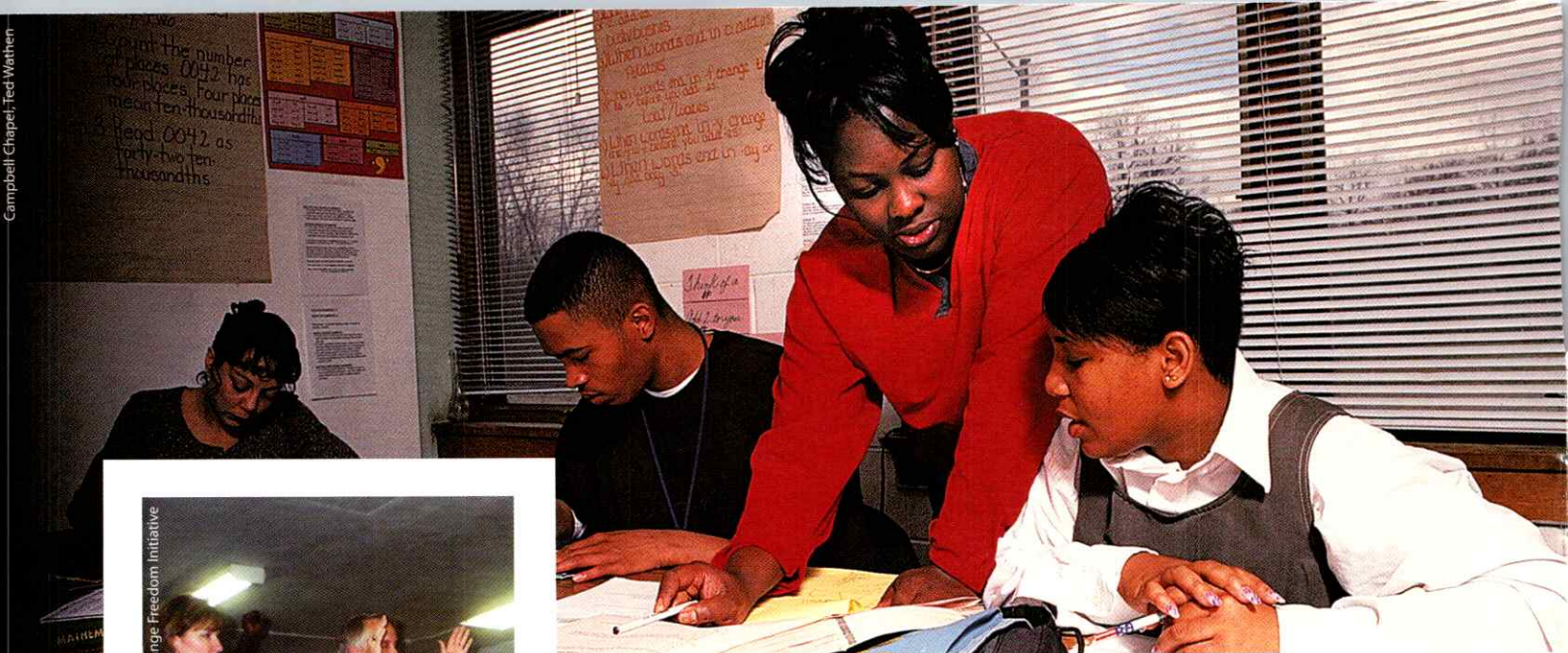
FaithWorks

When Campbell Chapel Youth and Family Services in Indianapolis opens its doors each month to teach GED and computer classes and provide after-school enrichment for children in nearby public housing, Director Steve Bonds has no large stash of federal cash to pay his staff or buy supplies.

"At the beginning of the month, we have zero dollars," says Bonds, who has been at the Campbell Chapel AMEZ's social service arm since it began in 1991. "No one wrote a check and said 'here, good luck with your project.' We have to produce in order to get paid. We start out with nothing."

In order to get paid, within that month, Bonds' staff of nine part-time employees has to produce daunting progress with its undereducated clientele: raise ➡





achievement on GED tests by two grade levels to receive \$250. If someone receives a GED within the month, Campbell gets \$1,000. Stays on a job 60 days? \$300; for 90 days, \$500. Campbell Chapel has placed 100 people in jobs since 1996; in the past two years, 25 clients have received their GEDs, 70 have received computer training. Of those placed in jobs, 70% have retained them.

"It's very difficult. When you hire somebody, you can't pay them for 30 days. We're a small congregation," says Bonds. "Our church can't say 'we'll cover payroll this week.' We hire people who understand the situation, who love the Lord. They have other income."

His morning GED teacher, for example, is a cosmetologist who does hair in the evenings.

For faith-based and community social service programs hoping to reap a bonanza of federal dollars in light of Charitable Choice legislation and President Bush's faith-based initiative, Bonds says: "A lot of churches are misled into thinking they are getting a big check."

Indeed, no one has promised more money for faith and community

groups to help the poor and needy; more likely, more groups will seek ever slimmer slices of the funding pie.

"My understanding is, there is not going to be a bigger pie," says Capt. George Hood, national public affairs officer for the Salvation Army, which has partnered with government to aid the needy since its start in England in 1865. The Salvation Army is working with the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and sees its role as being the catalyst to create grassroots coalitions, with The Salvation Army providing the administrative support needed to contract with the government.

The Salvation Army gets 15.6% of its operating budget from government contracts "and we like it that way," says Hood. "We don't want to get addicted to government money because it comes and goes."

The regulations and level of accountability involved in receiving government funding are burdensome, Hood says. "You subject yourself to government audits, outside audits ... it consumes a lot of time and paperwork. I fear that many grassroots

Top to bottom, Campbell Chapel GED class; InnerChange Freedom Initiative worship service and inmates on the eve of their release; learning computer skills at Campbell Chapel Youth and Family Services.

organizations don't have the full concept of what that's all about."

Understanding the procurement system for securing tax dollars is another stumbling block for groups new to the system, says David Rolfes of Indiana's FaithWorks, a state-funded office that provides technical assistance to faith and community groups seeking social service contracts. "That doesn't mean there's a pot of money available anytime to do any kind of service you want to do. There are specific funding opportunities at specific times of the year. The services being looked for are very specific. Does their organization have the capacity to provide this specific service?"

Charitable Choice aims to make it easier for faith and community organizations to get federal funding for substance abuse treatment, welfare-to-work programs and other needs of low-income communities, from emergency housing to home repair and nutrition counseling. Although it has been law for nearly six years, its impact so far has been moderate, experts say, largely because state and local funding agencies haven't altered their regulations.

Is Charitable Choice helping faith-based organizations do more work? "To a modest degree," says Amy Sherman of the Hudson Institute, who recently studied its impact on nine states and found 125 new faith-based organizations receiving government contracts. "New organizations were brought

in to the competition for government funds. In that sense, Charitable Choice is making a difference. It's all about providing equal access."

Amid political posturing over separation of church and state and related issues, church and faith-based groups across the country are successfully partnering with government to help those in their communities who need it most.

Faith Behind Bars

The InnerChange Prison Fellowship Ministry model for reducing repeat offenders by changing inmates' relationship to God is now working in Iowa and Kansas after its start in 1997 at a prison in Richmond, Texas. Although InnerChange receives no state funding from Texas, it does in Iowa and Kansas—not tax dollars, but money received from the inmate phone system.

"As we began to see the requests from states explode, it was obvious we needed to take state funding," says Jack Cowley, national director of operations. "I was in corrections for a long time and had been doing business with secular, therapeutic programs. It seemed to me that faith-based programs were being discriminated against. I wanted to level the playing field."

InnerChange offers inmates a Christ-centered rehabilitation program; 18 months in prison of daily devotions, work, study, counseling and homework designed to alter the inmate's relationship with God ➡

Report Card on Charitable Choice

The Center for Public Justice in Annapolis, Md., last summer released a 50-state survey of Charitable Choice compliance, which found that many faith organizations remain hesitant to accept federal money. Charitable Choice Compliance: A National Report Card also found that while a few states have been aggressively complying with Charitable Choice guidelines, the majority have not yet implemented changes necessary to make Charitable Choice work on the local level.

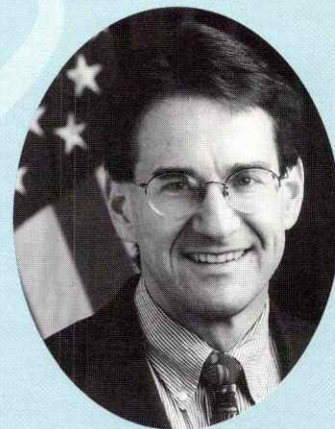
The study, which was conducted by the Center for Public Justice, a national, non-partisan Christian policy research and civic education organization in Washington, D.C., graded each state based on its compliance with Charitable Choice.

At the top of class was Texas, which received an A-plus for its aggressive compliance with Charitable Choice and its major policy revisions to maximize openness to faith-based organizations.

Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin were next on the list, each receiving a grade of A. Arizona, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Virginia were graded B, while Arkansas, California, Michigan and North Carolina each received a C.

Thirty-seven states, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, received a failing grade from the organization. Only Alabama did not receive a grade because it did not supply information.

Charitable Choice as Policy



Q. What has the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives accomplished so far?

We have already substantially changed the debate in America regarding how to effectively confront poverty and how to bring about community revitalization. We have developed a legislative package that, among other things, would generate almost \$15 billion in new charitable giving every year and expand Charitable Choice. We have created Centers for Faith-based and Community Initiatives at HUD, HHS, Labor, Education and Justice, whose job will be to conduct a performance review of each of these agencies to identify obstacles in our funding policies that might adversely affect small community and faith-based organizations.

Q. How will you make it easier for community and faith-based groups to administer services to the poor?

Barriers include limited access to grants and contracts and onerous regulatory barriers which are unjustified. In a good many cases, the greatest barriers have to do with the lack of capacity among small nonprofits. We have a major interest in providing greater technical assistance for small nonprofits.

Q. Will more government funds be made available to help the work of faith-based and community organizations? If so, where will that money come from?

Although some new funds will be set aside, for example, to expand mentoring services to the children of inmates, our general approach is to simply try to create a level playing field with existing federal programs and funding streams so that a wider array of community-serving organizations can apply.

Q. What will be the role of such established faith-based providers as Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and Lutheran Services in this new initiative?

These organizations are already a vital part of the nation's social service delivery system, and we expect that to continue. Again, we think the competitive bidding process should be wide open, and that it should not favor or disfavor any particular social service provider.

Q. How much money do you estimate the proposed tax credit for charitable giving for those who do not itemize will raise?

Remarkably, it would generate upwards of \$15 billion in increased annual donations and, according to PriceWaterhouse-Coopers, a major accounting firm, as much as \$160 billion over 10 years.

Q. Tell me about the "compassionate capital" fund? How will that money be raised, and how will it be distributed?

This initiative is still under development, and we anticipate that its primary purpose will be to fund technical assistance to nonprofits and provide funds for highly prescribed projects, such as city-wide mentoring initiatives.

Q. There are fears among some sectors that by placing more emphasis on faith-based and community groups aiding the poor, government will get out of the business of helping the less fortunate. Are those fears valid?

Our objective is not to get government out of serving the less fortunate; our objective is to do a better job of confronting poverty and need in the hope of reversing these conditions through more effective community-based approaches. The president did not come to office promising to do away with our existing social service system; his pledge was to give fresh attention to effective small-scale community-serving organizations.

*Don E. Eberly,
founder of the National
Fatherhood Initiative
who is now serving as
deputy director and
deputy assistant to the
President, White House
Office of Faith-Based
and Community
Initiatives, answered
some questions from
Volunteer Leadership
about the work that's
been done so far.*

and ultimately, society. Treatment continues for six to nine months in a halfway house. If the inmate shows signs of progress, when he is released, InnerChange finds him a job, a home church, a place to live, a Christian mentor and continues the relationship for three years.

"We see crime as a result of sin and therefore, we know that a relationship with Christ can heal people," says Cowley. "Inmates do not have to be Christian when they come into the program; they can leave at any time. They do not have to have a conversion experience to receive the follow-up aftercare. The state is asking us to apply certain values while an inmate is involved in the program and hopefully he will develop values within himself to develop a successful, crime-free life. Our goal, of course, is to lead people to Christ."

Is it preventing repeat offenses? Texas is preparing a study of recidivism; Cowley says his unofficial figures indicate InnerChange's repeat offense rate is 6% vs. 50% to 60% statewide.

"As long as the inmate volunteers, as long as anybody can enter the program, as long as there is not an expectation to complete it based on conversion experience and they can leave at any time, the fact that they sing gospel hymns, we use the Bible as our foundation curriculum, what difference does it make when it comes to the result of a crime-free life?" says Cowley. "In prison we assume because inmates broke law, they don't know how to make choices, so we make all their choices," he says. InnerChange allows opportunities for failure and a Biblical component to help the men recover from their missteps.

Communities in Action

In Shasta County, Calif., FaithWORKs has been connecting congregations in mentoring relationships with families on state welfare rolls for three years. Families are referred by CalWORKs, FaithWORKs matches the families with a church of their choice, and the relationship begins. FaithWORKs acts as a resource center for questions the churches can't solve on their own. The mentor church helps the family with everything from clothing, housing and food to day-care, getting a driver's license, family counseling and more. CalWORKs pays FaithWORKs' \$225,000 annual budget, which includes five full-time and one part-time employees.

Of more than 1,500 clients who have been connected with FaithWORKs' 119 churches, 80% are now affiliated with a church or ministry; 66% have made notable, significant improvements in their lives, whether attending school, getting a GED, finding work, improving their jobs or receiving substance abuse counseling, says H.R. "Skip" Tyler, director of FaithWORKs Community Coalition.

Tyler's advice for other communities of faith hoping to produce similar successes: "You need to spend time intimately building relations with churches in the faith community, spending time in prayer, talking with pastors. And on the social services government side, have a clear perspective that is very clearly based on business-like results that you will produce."

None of the faith-based groups interviewed for this article had experienced any problems relating to the faith elements of their programs, though the Salvation Army's Hood says issues have been raised in some communities.

Bonds says the state money has helped Campbell Chapel's program work. "We were able to serve more people."

Campbell Chapel keeps its faith far removed from the work being done with its clients. "We're going to ask name, address, job history, how far did you go in high school, do you need child care"—but nothing about what church he or she might attend.

But Bonds, the great-grandson of the church's founder, hastens to add: "Don't get me wrong—we do say, 'Come visit on Sunday morning.'"

Patty Rhule, a freelance writer in University Park, Md., is a regular contributor to Volunteer Leadership.

Want to Know More?

- **The Center for Public Justice** lists books, web sites and other resources on Charitable Choice; www.cpjustice.org.

- **"The Charitable Choice Handbook for Ministries,"** by Amy Sherman, an overview of charitable choice, discusses pros and cons of contracting with the government, how to navigate government bureaucracy; call Hudson Institute, 804-295-3844, or e-mail shermana@cstone.net

- **"The Growing Impact of Charitable Choice,"** Amy Sherman, \$10, 410-571-6300, Center for Public Justice

- **Indiana FaithWorks** is a state-funded department that acts as a liaison between faith-based and community groups. It has helped about 500 faith-based groups in less than two years. www.in.gov/faithworks

- **FaithWORKs Community Coalition**, Shasta County, Calif., www.faith-works.org

'Charitable Choice' Increases Mission of Service

By Commissioner John Busby

The Salvation Army's social service outreach into communities across the United States has been unquestionably strengthened through our local, state and federal government partnerships. Either as a result of our own community assessments, or in cooperation with government, The Army during its 130 years of work in America has sought to identify areas of particular need and then draw from our resources to assist those who are in many cases incapable of helping themselves.

Last year, alone, The Army assisted nearly 37 million people from our 9,222 centers of operation—our Corps or churches, rehabilitation centers, day care and senior citizen centers, temporary housing and medical facilities, camps, emergency centers and other venues in which help was provided to anyone walking through our doors. That number is equivalent to one of every 10 Americans seeking aid from The Army, a testament we believe to the ever-growing need for linking the social service work of organizations such as ours with government.

Thus, The Army's support for President Bush's faith-based initiatives—known as the "Charitable Choice" provisions—is in keeping with our long-standing government relationships like those we have in Los Angeles, where we are one of the largest providers of AIDS services; or in Florida, where 23 counties turn to us for probation services; or in Seattle, where our women's domestic violence programs are among the region's most innovative. Programs like these, at least within The Army,



Commissioner John Busby is president and CEO of The Salvation Army, which has 9,037 Units and 1.7 million volunteers worldwide.

number in the dozens; the people helped in the millions.

These efforts—indeed, our very mission—are rooted in service to those who need it most. We seek no advantage, no particular accolade for this work, other than to be considered equally when the call comes to extend a hand to the unfortunate among us. We believe that the President's initiatives will assist in preserving our ability to work as a religious organization, while ensuring that those seeking help are equally as protected in their choice for assistance, whether it is The Army or another organization just as capable.

Further, the President's initiatives are entirely consistent with existing federal "Charitable Choice" laws that have made possible any number of programs successfully directed by experienced religious and non-secular organizations. The opportunity to broaden this approach, and thus enable the possible expansion of

social service programs across the country is one that we enthusiastically support. Anyone who works with an Army officer or volunteer for a day will most assuredly come away from the experience with a conviction to support these initiatives as convincing as the need in the eyes of those seeking help.

We agree that the path our President has assumed must be one taken with careful consideration. To his credit, his approach is bipartisan and inclusive of our faith-based colleagues and non-secular organizations alike. We also see value in the manner in which the President has extended the reach of the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives into five cabinet-level departments, working with government program managers and organizations such as The Army to identify and possibly remove obstacles to expanding the access available to government/faith-based partnerships.

The Army—indeed, the country—is at a critical point in my view. President Bush is challenging us all to renew our view of how churches and, perhaps, faith itself have become a part of our efforts to govern the way we help the poor. I cannot help but wonder how tragic it would be if we stood aside and allowed our extraordinary network of social services to slowly unravel as the result of our inability to amicably address differences on the issues posed by the President and his faith-based initiatives.

The President has our support and our prayers. ♦