

Action

PUBLIC ISSUE INFORMATION FOR ALABAMA CITIZENS

FROM THE EDITOR

Faith-Based Organizations and Community Development

Caring for the poor in our local communities has been and will continue to be an issue all communities must face. Many strongly favor increased government support of the poor. A Pew Forum and the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press poll in July of last year indicated that 69 percent of Americans favor providing more generous government assistance to the poor. Whether to increase support and how best to do this must be decided by each community. The creation of the White House Office of **Faith-based and Community Initiatives** five years ago partnered religious organizations with governmental agencies to address this issue.

"Action" is a quarterly publication of the newly formed Economic and Community Development Institute, a partnership organization of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Auburn University. The goal of ECDI is to help people solve community problems, take advantage of opportunities and build on their assets. ECDI provides educational and technical assistance in economic development, leadership development, strategic planning and public policy education. "Action" is one tool we use to link community groups to internal and external resources. This issue represents links between ECDI and the family programs area of Extension.

This fall 2006 issue of "Action" focuses on Extension's involvement and links to others involved in **faith-based organizations and community development**. Arturo Menefee, Extension associate, is the coordinator for this issue.

The winter 2007 issue of "Action" will highlight the newly formed **Economic and Community Development Institute**. For more information on these topics or suggestions for additional topics, contact the editor at (334) 844-3517, fax (334) 844-9022 or e-mail chesnjt@auburn.edu.

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Faith-Based Organizations and Community Development

Philanthropic and nonprofit organizations play major roles in providing services to destitute and poor individuals in the United States. Nonprofit organizations are voluntary and community groups that focus on several concerns at the community level, such as health, education, financial sustainability, the environment and other social issues. Moreover, nonprofit organizations reduce human suffering, enhance human capacity, promote equity and justice and foster pluralism. According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), there are approximately 1.4 million nonprofit organizations in America with about 190,000 (registered with the IRS) of those organizations considered as faith-based entities. A faith-based organization is essentially a social group that is organized and motivated by a common faith (e.g., religion). These entities range from small congregation-based soup kitchens to multibillion-dollar social service and economic agencies.

White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

Interest in religious organizations as providers of social services has increased dramatically over the past

few years. For instance, faith-based initiatives are core components of the current administration's domestic agenda. According to the White House, President George W. Bush created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCO) and Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 11 federal agencies to lead a determined attack on need by enhancing and expanding the role of the FBCOs in providing social services. The federal government has worked to accomplish this mission through an array of regulatory and policy reforms, legislative efforts and public outreach to FBCOs. Additionally, by making information about federal grants more accessible and the application process less burdensome, the initiative has empowered FBCOs to compete more effectively for funds. The ultimate beneficiaries are America's poor, who are best served when the federal government partners with the providers most capable of meeting their needs. This initiative is centered on the following components:

- Identifying and eliminating barriers that impede full participation of FBCOs in the federal grants process.
- Ensuring that federally funded social services administered by state and local governments are consistent with equal treatment provisions.

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- Encouraging greater corporate and philanthropic support for FBCO social service programs through public education and outreach activities.
- Pursuing legislative efforts to extend charitable choice provisions that prevent discrimination against faith-based organizations, protecting the religious freedom of beneficiaries and preserving religious hiring rights of faith-based charities.

Referring to a press release from the Office of the Press Secretary (March 9, 2006), President Bush promulgated that there was an increase in competitive federal grants to FBCOs. Seven federal agencies awarded more than \$2.1 billion in grants to religious organizations in fiscal year 2005. In addition to this announcement, the President also signed an executive order creating the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The center will coordinate DHS's efforts to remove regulatory, contracting and other programmatic impediments to the participation of FBCOs in its provision of social and community services, including disaster relief and recovery services.

Faith-Based Organizations

Religious institutions have always been an essential element in the world, providing opportunity for change and fostering social, political and community development. Dating back to the 18th century, religion played a major role during the Great Awakening. According to Herman (1994)*, the Great Awakening was a religious revival that swept through the colonies between 1740 and 1760. Throughout the colonies, ecclesiastical controversies quickly bloomed into full-blown struggles for political and economic dominance. The evangelicals became champions of popular liberties and stood at the forefront of revolutionary agitation by organizing voluntary associations, such as

the Committees of Correspondence and the Sons of Liberty who took the lead in resisting British rule. By the 1760s, Americans had begun to think of themselves as citizens possessing political, economic and religious rights (Herman, 1994). Individuals may not be aware of voluntary/faith organizations such as the Committees of Correspondence and the Sons of Liberty, but many Americans recognize the large faith-based entities, such as the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities USA and Feed The Children.

Salvation Army. In 1865, William Booth, an ordained Methodist minister, and his wife Catherine formed an evangelical group dedicated to preaching to people living in the midst of appalling poverty in London. In addition to preaching to individuals, Booth's ministry became involved in feeding and providing shelter to the hungry and the homeless, as well as providing rehabilitation services to alcoholics. Booth and his followers, originally known as the Christian Mission, became the Salvation Army in 1878. The Salvation Army provides an array of services including disaster relief, day care, summer camps, holiday assistance, services for the aging, AIDS education and residential services, shelters for battered women, family and career counseling, vocational training and other human development services. The Salvation Army provides some form of assistance to more than 30 million people per year. During 2003, the Salvation Army spent \$2.55 billion in serving people, an increase from \$2.49 billion the prior year.

Catholic Charities USA. Catholic Charities USA is the membership association of one of the nation's largest social service networks. The mission of Catholic Charities is to provide services to people in need, to advocate for justice in social structures and to call the entire church and other people of good will to do the same. Founded in 1910 as the National Conference of Catholic Charities, Catholic

Charities agencies and institutions nationwide provide vital services to people in need, regardless of their religious, social or economic backgrounds. This organization supports and enhances the work of its membership by providing networking opportunities, national advocacy and media efforts, program development, training in technical assistance and financial support. Total assets of the organization are approximately \$22.3 million. Major programs of Catholic Charities USA include the National Housing Counseling Program, hurricane relief assistance and the Just Faith Social Justice Training Program.

- National Housing Counseling Program—The purpose of this program is to help low-income and homeless individuals purchase homes as well as maintain them. In 2004, the program provided housing counseling for 38,362 people, and 18,000 people purchased homes.
- Hurricane Relief Assistance—The Disaster Response Office provides technical and financial assistance to communities. Following Hurricane Frances in 2004, Catholic Charities USA donated \$4.7 million to Florida for hurricane relief and to help with revitalization efforts.
- Just Faith—The goal of this program is to facilitate growth in a commitment to empower the vulnerable and to become advocates for justice and social transformation. According to the 2004 annual report, approximately 10,000 people have participated in the program.

Feed The Children. Feed The Children is an international Christian, nonprofit relief organization with a mission to deliver food, medicine, clothing and other necessities to individuals, children and families who lack these essential items due to famine, war, poverty or natural disaster. Larry and Frances Jones are co-founders of Feed The Children and started this organization 26 years ago in their kitchen. Since the inception of this organization in 1979, Feed The Children has grown into one

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of the world's largest private organizations dedicated to helping the hungry and people in need. Last year, Feed The Children shipped 183 million pounds of food and other essentials to children and families in all 50 states and internationally, supplementing more than 1,463,000 meals a day worldwide. This organization has assisted children and families in 118 countries throughout the world.

Feed The Children is the third largest charity in the United States and is noted as one of the most efficient charities, consistently spending less than 15 percent on fund-raising and administrative costs. During fiscal year 2005, Feed The Children committed \$746,212,248 to program services. The breakdown of expenditures is listed below:

- Program services (childcare, food, medical, disaster relief, education and community development)—89 percent
- Fund-raising—8 percent
- Management and supporting services—3 percent
- Total—100 percent

Greater Peace Community Development Corporation. The Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and Feed The Children are international and national organizations that have ubiquitous impacts throughout the world. In addition to these mega faith-based institutions, there are some small grassroots faith-based organizations that are making differences in local communities in Alabama. One such example is the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation (CDC) located in Opelika, Ala.

The mission of the Greater Peace CDC is to forge common community identity and develop a shared vision among major groups and stakeholders

within the community. This vision is to develop community-based leadership to economically revitalize distressed neighborhoods in the Lee County area. The CDC was developed through the vision of Reverend Clifford E. Jones, senior pastor of the Greater Peace Missionary Baptist Church in Opelika, Ala. Reverend Jones and many others within the church envisioned an organization that could support and extend the church's programs to serve community needs, particularly those associated with family and community development. To that end, the Greater Peace CDC was established on May 16, 2000, as a public nonprofit organization under Section 501c(3) of the Internal Revenue Service.

The CDC has developed and conducted a host of programs that emphasize youth, community and economic development. The CDC has conducted the Youth Leadership Academy for 5 years, focusing on such subjects as parenthood, entrepreneurship, health, character development and community leadership. In the area of community and economic development, the CDC has conducted a Fatherhood Entrepreneurship Workshop, assisting noncustodial fathers in the development of small businesses to financially support their families. Additionally, the CDC has acquired nine rental homes to provide affordable housing to low-income families. To date, more than 100 individuals have attended and completed the CDC training programs (100 youth



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Action

Alabama
Communities
in Transition

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We would like you to share success stories in your community for inclusion in future issues of "Action." Send to: J. Thomas Chesnutt, 218 Extension Hall, Auburn University, Alabama 36849.

academy graduates and three father entrepreneurship graduates), and eight families presently participate in CDC's affordable housing program. In addition to the Youth Academy, the Fatherhood Entrepreneurship Workshop and other programs, the CDC has developed a childcare facility to assist low-income families with childcare services. The childcare facility is currently providing services for 74 children in the area.

Conclusion

Faith-based and nonprofit organizations will continue to play a major role in America, providing vital services to those in need for the betterment of the community. Critics of faith-based organizations are primarily concerned with the accountability of faith institutions in regard to the use of federal/public funds. In an effort to satisfy the

critics, nonprofit and faith-based organizations should consider the following recommendations:

- Develop a code of ethics (focusing on the purpose of the organizations, promoting stewardship and addressing responsibility and accountability of individuals associated with the organization). Board members, staff and volunteers should read and sign this document
- Develop and conduct training programs relating to efficiency, customer service and accountability.
- Develop an annual report (stating the amount of money received and the expenditures for the organization) and disseminate to stakeholders.
- Get a reputable accounting firm to audit the organization's financial statements.
- Make the information regarding the organization's programs and financial status readily available to stakeholders (i.e., the public).

- Offer programs and services in accordance with the organization's mission. If a program or activity is not in accordance with the mission of the organization, the organization should not engage in such a program or activity.

For more information on items discussed in this article, contact Arturo S. Menefee at (334) 844-2307 or e-mail menefas@auburn.edu.

* Robert D. Herman and Associates, The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1994).

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