

CONNECTS

CASEY

WINTER/SPRING 2003
A REPORT FROM THE
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

IN THIS ISSUE: Meeting Explores Role of the Faith Community in Family Strengthening; Notes of Recognition; Helping Baltimore Residents Reap the Rewards of Redevelopment; INSITES

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY IN FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Since 1976, hundreds of pastors, lay leaders, and seminary students have gathered every other year in Chicago to talk about the challenge of urban ministry. This year's meeting March 11–14 had special relevance both because of the economic downturn and the emphasis the White House is placing on expanding the role of faith-based institutions in the delivery of human services.

“Churches everywhere are wrestling with the role of the faith community as more and more families find themselves in poverty, with fewer resources available to help,” says Rev. David J. Frenchak, executive director of the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE), a Chicago-based national interdenominational educational organization. The biennial Congress on Urban Ministry that SCUPE sponsors has emerged as one of the preeminent gatherings of people of faith who are committed to social outreach.

A special focus of this year's meeting was exploring how communities of faith can have impact, influence, and leverage—the power to help mobilize and draw support from other important players—



Rev. Reginald Littlejohn and Rev. Mary Littlejohn, of the Faith Temple Pentacostal Church in Philadelphia, with three children they mentor as part of the Amachi program. The children, from left to right, are Monterray Robinson, Danyelle Robinson, and Tiffany Robinson.

in efforts to strengthen families and communities.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation was one of the Congress's cosponsors, along with the Lilly Endowment. The Foundation supported a track of 15 workshops on family strengthening.

Since 1997, the Foundation has been reviewing the multiple roles of the faith community in strengthening families and communities. This work was particularly relevant in cities in our *Making Connections* initiative, where the first phase of our involvement focused on demonstrating how residents, civic groups, and the public and private sectors could

be mobilized around an agenda to improve the odds for children by helping their families and neighborhoods become stronger.

“We found that faith matters because of its power to promote personal transformation and its potential to strengthen family and community bonds,” says Carole Thompson, a senior associate with the Foundation. “Because of the spiritual development they foster, communities of faith have been and will continue to be strong partners in our effort to promote family and community strengthening. We recognize the assets and gifts that faith communities bring to this work.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

NOTES OF RECOGNITION

YOUTH MOVEMENTS CRY OUT FOR CHANGE

From coast to coast, young people are mobilizing to challenge—and change—juvenile justice policies. And at the helm of these movements are Kate Rhee and Van Jones.

CASEY CONNECTS

Winter/Spring 2003

*A quarterly newsletter published by
The Annie E. Casey Foundation*

701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Phone: 410.547.6600
Fax: 410.547.6624
www.aecf.org

James P. Kelly
Chairman

Douglas W. Nelson
President

Ralph Smith
Senior Vice President

Tony Cipollone
Vice President

Dana Vickers Shelley
Director of Strategic Communications

Joy Thomas Moore
*Manager of Grantee Relations and
Media Projects*

Deborah L. Cohen
Editor

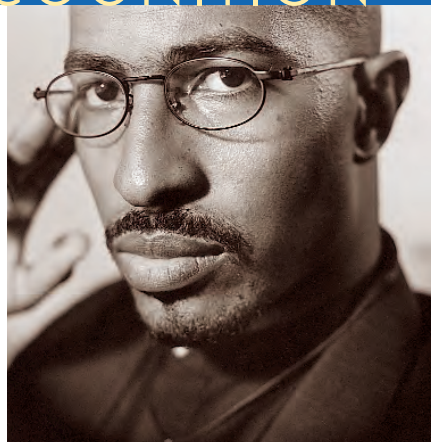
Diane Camper, Martha Shirk,
Cecile Sorra
Contributing Writers

Kristin Coffey
Copyeditor

Kathryn Shagas Design
Design and Production

© 2003, *The Annie E. Casey Foundation,
Baltimore, Maryland*

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs.



Van Jones



Kate Rhee

LEFT: SAUL BROMBERG; SANDRA HOOVER / RIGHT: JASON MESSER

Rhee, 30, and Jones, 34, have led their respective Casey Foundation-supported organizations in campaigns that have dismantled plans for juvenile detention center expansion in opposite ends of the country. In the process, they've won national acclaim, most recently in the *Source* and *Utne Reader* magazines.

Rhee is the director of the Brooklyn-based Prison Moratorium Project in New York City. Last year, that group and the Coalition 4 Youth Justice, an umbrella group of youth and advocacy organizations, pressured the Department of Juvenile Justice and city officials to pull \$53 million from a plan to expand juvenile detention centers in Brooklyn and the Bronx. The youth-led movement, demanding “education, not incarceration,” also has pressured campuses to divest stock in the controversial Corrections Corporation of America.

On the opposite coast is Jones, cofounder and director of the San Francisco-based Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. Last year, the center's campaign, Books Not Bars, worked with other youth organizations and youth who testified against the building of a 540-bed “Super Jail” in Alameda County. Through a series of public protests, meetings with elected officials, and advocacy for alternative solutions, the youth movement raised enough

challenges to suspend the project, and advocates are hopeful that a better plan will emerge as a result.

The center also works on a national level to advocate against human rights abuses in the criminal justice system, particularly the criminalization, incarceration, and abuse of low-income people and people of color.

Both the Prison Moratorium Project and the Ella Baker Center also work with the music industry to get their messages out. With Raptivism Records, the Prison Moratorium Project released the *No More Prisons* CD compilation of rap music, considered one of the most successful partnerships between a social movement and rap artists. The Ella Baker Center is developing its own record label, Freedom Fighter Music, which harnesses urban music and youth culture to tackle human rights issues.

LIVING THE PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLING

The George Washington Community School in Indianapolis had been closed since the mid-1990s. But three years ago, the community fought to reopen the school—and won.

Charged with resurrecting the school, Principal Eileen Champagne set to work. With Champagne at the helm, community

members, parents, service providers, business leaders, and teachers have been able to provide top-notch educational and developmental services to the school's 840 students. The National Association of Secondary School Principals has recognized Champagne's leadership by awarding her the MetLife Bridge Builder Award, an honor bestowed on only four other principals throughout the country.

In the early stages of the school's rebuilding, Champagne and community leaders turned to the Casey Foundation for technical assistance. Through the *Making Connections* initiative, the group was able to visit exemplary community school models and applied what they learned to design a program that has leveraged more than \$4.2 million worth of support services for students and families.

Today, local businesses and organizations, like Indiana and Purdue universities,

Eileen Champagne at a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the George Washington Community School.



JOHN GENTRY

provide intensive one-on-one tutoring services. The local Humane Society works with the school's Paws to Think program that helps emotionally and behaviorally troubled students train shelter dogs. Local businesses and community members have raised \$35,000 toward the building of an athletic program, and the local Kiwanis Club is donating band instruments for the music program.

"We have a community school that operates to a degree that's far beyond what goes on in other schools," Champagne says.

INDIANAPOLIS NEIGHBORHOOD BLOOMS TO NEW LIFE

Rachel Cooper remembers when kids in her southeast Indianapolis neighborhood couldn't get on buses without running into drug dealers. That was eight years, thousands of tons of cleaned up trash, dozens of planted flower gardens, and hundreds of gallons of paint ago.

Cooper's years of work in her community, which is one of the target neighborhoods in the Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative, recently earned her the Lady Bird Johnson Award from Keep America Beautiful, a nonprofit organization dedicated to litter prevention, environmental conservation, and community beautification.

Under Cooper's leadership, the South East Community Organization has bloomed into a neighborhood powerhouse that supports eight teams of 17 children each in a summer baseball league and a crew of 35 young people who work each summer painting and cutting grass for the elderly and cleaning up trash every week.

Last year, the organization and the young people picked up 2,182 tons of trash, painted the homes of four senior citizens, and planted three flower gardens



CABLE RISDON PHOTOGRAPHY

Rachel Cooper accepts award from G. Raymond Empson, president of Keep America Beautiful, at right, and Greg Fennig, president of Keep Indianapolis Beautiful.

at intersections formerly populated by drug dealers. With local business partners, they razed an eyesore that used to be a bar and filled the space with flowers. And they repainted 55 alleys that had been littered with gang graffiti.

"I want to make the youth understand that if they take back their communities, there is so much they can change," Cooper says. "I want them to know they can change the world."

WIRING LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS FOR SUCCESS

One Economy Corp. has one agenda: to help low-income Americans use technology to better their lives. The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit doesn't just want to bridge the digital divide. The group wants to eliminate it.

A tall order, for sure. But since One Economy was conceived in July 2000—with seed money from the Casey Foundation—the group has made enough inroads to win the Susan G. Hadden Pioneer Award in 2003 and to receive national attention in publications like *Fast Company* and *Wired* magazines.

As a Hadden award recipient, One Economy joins the ranks of government

officials, individuals, and organizations that have furthered the benefits of technology to ever-wider audiences—a legacy left by the late Susan Hadden, who worked to ensure equitable access to technology as a democratizing principle. The award is sponsored by the Alliance for Public Technology.

One Economy not only brings PCs into low-income homes, but also has successfully lobbied state and federal legislators to require Internet connections in newly built low-income housing projects. The organization has created partnerships with the affordable-housing industry to develop strategies to wire existing communities and works with local partners to train new computer owners in using the technology.

One Economy’s website, The Beehive, contains such information as how to recoup tax money through the Earned Income Tax Credit, advice on educational activities to do with children, help in determining if a child qualifies for free health insurance, and online job training.

“One Economy has created an opportunity for nonprofit organizations to more efficiently deliver information and services, for governments to communicate with constituents, for businesses to reach new markets, and for low-income people to move beyond being passive recipients of services to better-informed consumers and producers,” writes William Kennard, past chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.



JENNIFER HUGEL

FILM HIGHLIGHTING FAMILY, FOSTER-CARE THEMES EARNS NOMINATION

A short film offering a snapshot of the rocky but resilient journey of two boys from New York City coping with a drug-addicted mother has earned an Oscar nomination.

The Casey Foundation-sponsored film, *Why Can't We Be a Family Again?* was produced and directed by Roger Weisberg and Murray Nossel of Public Policy Productions, Inc.

The 27-minute film traces the lives of Daniel and Raymond Jacob and their swings between hope and despair and shows how their grandmother, their foster mother for most of their lives, inspired them with tenderness and toughness.

“I want people who are in the same situation to know kids can do it, that

Raymond Jacob, left, and Daniel Jacob.

you can't give up on them, Erslena Jacob says. “You just have to show them a lot of love and give them a strong foundation.” The family also received support from the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park in Brooklyn, a long-time Casey Foundation grantee.

The film shows how much both brothers have achieved and how the older one stayed on track to be a positive influence on his brother and other foster children.

This is the second Casey Foundation-sponsored documentary to be considered for an Oscar. *Legacy*, a Tod Lending production chronicling the transformation of a Chicago family following a tragic event, was nominated in 2001.



NEW GROUP OF CASEY FELLOWS NAMED

The Casey Foundation Children and Family Fellowship program seeks to increase the pool of leaders who have the vision, skills, and capacities needed to lead major system reform efforts to improve results for children, families, and communities. The 11-month program offers an array of skill-building, knowledge development, and field placement experiences for accomplished professionals who have demonstrated leadership in working for change. The Fellowship class of 2003 includes, from left: Jo-Anne Henry, Jorge L. Salazar, Janet Carter, Melorra Sochet, Mónica L. Villalta, Tara Lea Mulhauser, John Zalenski, Valerie Russo; Seated: Azim W. Ramelize, Azadeh Khalili.

BILL DENISON

HELPING BALTIMORE RESIDENTS REAP THE REWARDS OF REDEVELOPMENT

Last November, when the Annie E. Casey Foundation was honored by the Maryland chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals as the state's Outstanding Foundation in 2002, President Douglas Nelson accepted the award with a humble and challenging admission that a major national philanthropy was grappling with how best to make a difference in its hometown.

Nelson conceded that in the past year, he had “decided that we needed to focus more on the toughest neighborhoods here, that we needed to learn more about these challenged communities, that we needed to risk more, that we needed to apply the best lessons from around the country more, and that we needed to spend more.”

All of that, he said, “seemed like a...sensible philanthropic initiative,” until seven members of a family on the city's East Side were killed when their house was firebombed because they tried to combat neighborhood drug dealing. As Nelson told the comfortable crowd at the Philanthropy Day luncheon, ever since the Dawson family died, he felt an “absolute and utter imperative” to do more in Baltimore.

The Casey Foundation is now demonstrating an unprecedented level of hometown commitment through its involvement in a major East Side redevelopment project. The centerpiece of the project is a biotech park that will be built over the next decade adjacent to Johns Hopkins Medical Center. The project seeks to develop business opportunities from the medical research generated by Hopkins, Baltimore's largest private employer and one of its biggest economic assets. It is estimated that the project could generate between 8,000 and 12,000 jobs, about

Pat Tracey, president of SMEAC, speaks at a rally highlighting concerns of residents about the redevelopment of their neighborhood.

1,000 units of new and renovated housing, parks and recreational space, and new and refurbished retail establishments that will enhance two existing business corridors.

Hopkins and Baltimore City officials hope the project will revitalize a 30-block area that has long been troubled by blight, population decline, crime, and drugs. But, for about 800 families that are likely to be relocated as part of the redevelopment, the project inspires mixed feelings. Even with a residential occupancy rate of less than 50 percent, there are still families with strong ties to the community, including long-time homeowners, young couples owning or renting their first homes, and grandparents raising children.

One organization trying to address local unease is the Save Middle East Action Committee (SMEAC), which is composed of residents in the Middle East neighborhood. The group, supported by the Casey Foundation since it was formed in 2001, has been pivotal in shaping responses to the concerns of all the East Baltimore communities that fall within the project's path.

Focusing on the human implications of the project is also where the Casey Foundation hopes to make the biggest difference. The Foundation has become an integral partner in the venture to ensure that the affected families are treated not just fairly, but can gain maximum benefit from the project. “Most nonvoluntary relocation projects have disappointing results for affected families,” says Sandy Jibrell, the Foundation's director of civic investments. But in East Baltimore, “the Casey Foundation is working to bring about a different result.”

The Foundation's commitment to better results starts with Nelson, who chairs the relocation and housing committee of East Baltimore Development, Inc., the quasi-public, nonprofit group that is managing the overall redevelopment project. Nelson has made a personal and professional commitment and has mobilized Foundation resources and staff to address the concerns and fears of residents.

The Foundation and Hopkins are contributing to a fund that will be used to augment the federal government's relocation allowance for each family. The Foundation is also helping to plan a neighborhood resource center that would offer personalized help to relocating families, including counseling and advocacy to meet their financial, housing, and legal needs. Data experts are working with residents to document their needs and track their progress in order to ensure that they are better, not worse off wherever they relocate.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6





The Annie E. Casey Foundation

701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Phone: 410.547.6600
Fax: 410.547.6624
www.aecf.org



DAVON BARBOUR

A young Baltimore resident looks at a model for the redevelopment project in East Baltimore.

BALTIMORE RESIDENTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Putting the Casey Foundation’s muscle behind the project is a key test of its values and principles. “There are no guarantees,” Nelson says. “But doing nothing to change the odds in East Baltimore is the unacceptable risk.”

Since moving to Baltimore in 1994, the Foundation has instituted a citywide grant program to support nonprofits providing direct services to children and families and coinvested in numerous city initiatives. The most recent is Reason to Believe, a coalition of foundations, businesses, city leaders, and advocates that plans to raise \$30 million in the next two years to support citywide programs—and push for more state funding—to help strengthen fragile families. The Foundation also has focused specifically on East Baltimore by supporting resident engagement, organizing, and leadership efforts, and through Casey Family Services, which offers a variety of services to young parents in East Baltimore.

MEETING EXPLORES ROLE OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The goals of the Foundation’s Faith and Families Agenda are to identify strategies and promising practices that help produce better outcomes for children, families, and neighborhoods by:

- Strengthening connections between faith-based organizations and families and communities in order to provide spiritual and material services and supports;
- Supporting and expanding the reach of strategies faith-based organizations are using to promote family economic success;
- Bolstering informal and formal networks among faith-based organizations to improve their support to families; and
- Fostering leadership development opportunities for clergy and members of faith communities.

Foundation-sponsored sessions at the SCUPE meeting focused on helping clergy and lay leaders develop the skills they need “to address some of the tough issues that their parishioners and their communities face,” Thompson notes.

The workshops included discussions on evaluating programs from a faith-based perspective; the use of congregations as a family resource; how to promote family involvement in faith-based programs for at-risk youth; and how faith communities can help promote strategies that help

families build savings and assets. Among about 600 attendees at the meeting were 38 participants from ten *Making Connections* sites, who had an opportunity to network and exchange ideas.

A highlight was the screening of an episode of *This Far by Faith*, a six-hour documentary history of the African-American spiritual journey and its role in community change that will air on public television stations June 25, 26, and 27. For the past two years, *Making Connections* sites have been using a set of videos and other resource materials produced in connection with the Casey Foundation-sponsored film in a variety of forums to share promising practices used by faith-based groups.

Rev. Harold Dean Trulear, senior pastor at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Twin Oaks, Pa., and cochair of the SCUPE Congress, says “one thing that resounded through the group was a sense of hope that things can be done.” It was inspiring, especially for people from smaller congregations and agencies, “to see people with agencies of similar sizes getting things done and meeting the people who were doing those things.”

The meeting, he notes, sparked “a renewed commitment to strengthen collaboration between congregations and between the faith community and other service-delivery agencies.”

INSITES

WINTER/SPRING 2003
A REPORT FROM THE
ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



PAUL SROCHMAN

Left, Rev. Wilson W. Goode, Sr., was able to line up congregations quickly to participate in the Amachi program in Philadelphia, which provides mentors for the children of incarcerated parents. Miriam Harris, center, is a mentor in the program, and Rev. Ruben Ortiz is also an Amachi mentor and pastor of La Iglesia del Barrio.

HAVING FAITH IN COMMUNITIES

As the child of an incarcerated parent, former Philadelphia Mayor Wilson W. Goode, Sr., now an ordained minister, knows firsthand how powerful a mentor can be—particularly one with a faith-based perspective.

“I was 13 years of age when my father went to jail,” says Rev. Goode. “What helped me to move beyond who he was and to come out the other end was a minister and his wife in my local church, who said to me that I could do anything that I wanted to do in my life. And I

ended up becoming mayor of the fourth largest city in the country.”

By almost any measure, children in the United States whose parents are in jail have a much harder time than most overcoming the odds. There are more than 1.5 million of them, 20 million if you count children whose parents have ever been in jail.

“The data show that unless some kind of intervention happens, 70 percent of these children are likely to be incarcerated

themselves. It’s the single strongest indicator that a child will go to jail,” notes Frederick Davie, vice president for public policy and community partnerships at Public/Private Ventures. P/PV is one of the premier nonprofit institutions doing applied research and working with philanthropies, the public and business sectors, and other organizations to improve social policies and programs for young people.

In 1999, P/PV set out to improve the prospects of children of inmates in its

home city, Philadelphia. With an initial grant of \$4.5 million from Pew Charitable Trusts, P/PV partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America to launch a demonstration project to pair children of prisoners with mentors recruited from African-American churches. This connection was important since African-American children are disproportionately at risk for having a parent incarcerated.

Ministers see this
as HELPING the
community by
RESCUING
THE NEXT
GENERATION.

The project was named Amachi, incorporating an Ibo word meaning, “Who knows what God has brought us with this child?”

In the fall of 2000, Rev. Goode joined P/PV to run Amachi. Thanks to his well-established reputation and the power of the idea, it took him just a few months to line up 42 congregations that committed to providing at least ten mentors each.

“I told them that this would be a faith-based program that recognized and respected the contribution the church could make,” he recalls. “I told them the church would be an equal partner. And I told them that these children

wouldn't be strangers. They live in their neighborhoods. Ministers see this as helping the community by rescuing the next generation.”

By mid-January 2003, the program had matched 600 children with volunteer mentors recruited from churches, doubling the number of Philadelphia children with Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors. The participating churches, which receive an annual stipend to pay a part-time volunteer coordinator, range from 25 to 2,500 members in size. Each has committed to maintaining ten active mentors, all of whom undergo screening and training by Big Brothers Big Sisters before being assigned a child. Mentors agree to spend at least an hour once a week for a year with their “Littles.”

Other private and public donors also have committed to helping support the program, including the William E. Simon Foundation, the city of Philadelphia, and Americorps. And last summer, Amachi expanded to Brooklyn, where 20 churches are now providing mentors for 186 children. Active discussions and planning are now under way to garner the public and private resources to take the program nationwide.

In his State of the Union address, President Bush made a commitment to bring mentors to more than a million disadvantaged junior high school students and children of prisoners, voicing special concern for children “who have to go through a prison gate to be hugged by their mom or dad.” Last year, the President visited an Amachi site and spent time with ten pairs of Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors participating in the program, which is likely to play a prominent role in any administration mentoring initiative.

Judy Vredenburg, president of Big Brothers Big Sisters, says Casey

Foundation investments helped pave the way for her organization to lead a nationwide effort to better serve the children of incarcerated parents. In 1995, the Foundation began investing about \$200,000 a year to help Big Brothers Big Sisters bring more diversity to its national and local leadership and find more effective ways, such as school-based mentoring programs, to reach children from the most vulnerable families and neighborhoods.

“As we began to work in poor communities and identify resources, it gave us an understanding that faith-based institutions are real centers of action in reaching out to children,” notes John Lubbe, vice president of fund development for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

POLICIES THAT HELP HEAL

A group of African-American churches in Los Angeles is attacking another side of the issue Amachi addresses by helping nonviolent offenders stay out of jail through educational opportunity. The work of Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM) demonstrates how powerful a faith-based coalition can be in promoting policies that can help heal families and neighborhoods.

For most of their history, the many small- to midsize African-American churches in South Central Los Angeles functioned largely in the shadows. Most were so focused on survival that they didn't take stands on policy issues, much less try to pass a law.

The seeds for change were planted in 1991, when three ministers concerned about the challenges their neighborhoods faced met up with Rev. Eugene Williams III, a community organizer working in Philadelphia. Williams had a vision of linking isolated congregations

in a faith-based, community change-oriented movement that would compel policymakers and legislators to take notice.

With Williams's help, the ministers—Richard Byrd, Ed Bass, and Curtis Morris—undertook a three-year listening campaign to “hear their members’ groans,” as they put it. The loudest groan was about crime—not just fear of victimization, but concern for the many young men from their neighborhoods who were incarcerated. In 1994, the ministers persuaded Williams to relocate to Los Angeles to help their churches

less likely to reoffend, LAM decided to seek passage of a law permitting judges to “sentence” nonviolent felony offenders to GED preparation classes as a condition of probation. Through a series of actions including large community meetings, LAM enlisted then-District Attorney Gil Garcetti to draft the legislation, then-Assemblyman Carl Washington to introduce it, and Los Angeles Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite Burke to support local government funding.

Moving from an idea to legislative action took four years. On September 15, 1998,

Jacquelyn Lacey, the district attorney's liaison to the project, says LAM has been a good partner. “I think that the willingness of these churches to open their doors could be a turning point for these offenders and actually cause them to change their lives.”

Buoyed by its early success, LAM, now 50 churches strong, is taking on other policy initiatives, such as “One Church, One School,” which promotes the use of church facilities as after-school and weekend learning centers.

Donald E. Miller, executive director of the Center for Religion and Civic

I've watched these pastors
COME TO LIFE as they
realized that they could MAKE
DEMOCRACY WORK in ways
that they never imagined.



JERRY BERNDT, COURTESY OF THE USC CENTER FOR RELIGION AND CIVIC CULTURE

organize. LAM had 17 founding churches, ranging in size from 25 to 300 members.

The issue around which LAM decided to organize was recidivism. At 70 percent, California has the highest recidivism rate in the country.

“In one church, when we asked the question, ‘How many people here have someone in their family incarcerated?’ 80 percent of the people raised their hands,” Williams says. “The pastors recognized that this incarceration problem was huge.”

LAM learned that the majority of recidivists were illiterate. Reasoning that offenders who earned GEDs would be

then-Governor Pete Wilson signed the law authorizing a pilot project. “No one knows how many people turn to crime out of desperation, out of sheer hopelessness in the face of what they deem a lack of prospects and opportunity,” Wilson said. “We do know, however, that the more educated a person is, the less likely he or she is to commit crimes, and the more likely to find good jobs and keep them.”

Since March 2001, about 75 probationers have enrolled in GED classes in Los Angeles. Although the pilot project doesn't finish until next year, San Diego, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties are replicating it.

Rev. Eugene Williams III, executive director of Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches, had a vision of linking isolated congregations in a community change movement.

Culture at the University of Southern California, has chronicled LAM's evolution in a series of reports to the James Irvine Foundation, one of LAM's funders.

“I've watched these pastors come to life as they've realized that they could make democracy work in ways that they never imagined,” Miller says. “And now they're working at the local level to make democracy work in ways that are highly tangible to their neighborhoods.”



Rick Granberry instructor of Masjid An-Nur's Cooking for Hire program.

Through collaborative efforts with other FAITH COMMUNITIES and neighborhood organizations, Masjid An-Nur has IMPROVED THE LIVES of many individuals and families in Minneapolis and beyond.

A MOSQUE MAKES CONNECTIONS TO HELP FAMILIES

In 1996, the McKnight Foundation tapped five faith-based organizations in the Twin Cities area to participate in "Congregations in Community," an eight-year, \$6.5 million-plus effort to increase volunteerism and spur religious institutions to address the social needs in their communities. By the end of last year, the effort had brought in more than 25,000 volunteers, tripling the foundation's expectations.

One partner in the effort was Masjid An-Nur, a largely African-American Muslim congregation that was already thinking about how to reach out to residents of its impoverished North Minneapolis neighborhood. The Masjid's response illustrates how a faith-based group's attentiveness to community needs and connections with other neighborhood public- and private-sector institutions can reap results.

"Through collaborative efforts with other faith communities and neighborhood organizations, they have improved the lives of many individuals and families in Minneapolis and beyond," notes Nancy Latimer, senior program officer at the McKnight Foundation.

Masjid An-Nur's leaders learned from talking with neighborhood residents that their most pressing needs were for basics: food, shelter, and jobs. So the Masjid's first outreach program was a monthly distribution of food, which still serves about 100 families a month. Then came periodic clothing giveaways and help with legal problems and home repairs.

Volunteers were recruited from the 450-member congregation and ten other mosques.

In 2001, with welfare reform under way, Masjid An-Nur began offering job training to help residents become more self-sufficient. Taking advantage of the commercial kitchen in its building, a former restaurant, the Masjid used part of its \$750,000 grant from McKnight to start the Cooking for Hire program, a six-week short-order cooking class. In two years, the program has graduated about 65 students, about 75 percent of whom are working as cooks. An added bonus is that local residents can purchase the meals that the students prepare.

In January 2002, Masjid An-Nur moved in a new direction. Responding to a call from the local schools to help at-risk students pass state-mandated basic skills tests, it became one of four faith-based organizations to team up with Summit Academy Opportunities Industrialization Center, a vocational training program, in offering the Quantum Opportunities Program.

So now, 25 high school students come to the Masjid for help with homework and basic skills every school day but Friday, the Muslim day of prayer. During this four-year commitment, each student will also spend 250 hours in personal development activities and 250 hours volunteering. The students receive cash incentives for participation, with the money deposited in interest-bearing accounts that can be used for post-secondary education.

"Helping those in need is a central part of our tradition," notes Arlene El-Amin, the Masjid's executive director. "It's incumbent on us to be charitable, to have compassion, and to give to those less fortunate."