

## States Engaging Human Need with Community Partners: Oklahoma Reaching Out to At-risk youth in Foster Care

With over 12,000 children in the Oklahoma foster care system and a shortage of foster care families, the Oklahoma Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI), also known as “FaithLinks,” created an extensive marketing awareness campaign targeting the faith community. The primary message of the campaign was the development and strategic distribution of an information card called the “[Top 10 Things You Can Do For A Foster Child](#)” (PDF - 1.27 MB). A cross-section of media, primarily the faith media (print, TV and radio) partnered with the OFBCI to promote the “Top 10” list during National Foster Care Month. The message was to dispel the misconception that the only way to help these kids is to be a foster parent.

The OFBCI also participated in the Heart and Soles event at the Oklahoma State Capitol where 12,000 pairs of shoes were placed on the capitol steps—one for each child in foster care—to make a visual portrayal of their needs. A program in the capitol rotunda included presentations by Oklahoma’s Lieutenant Governor, the director of the Department of Human Services, and others.

The OFBCI plans to hold workshops for the community in the fall of 2008. The workshops will be both motivational and educational regarding the various opportunities to serve both directly and indirectly in the foster care arena. They will explain the process and reduce the concerns faith communities may have regarding working with the government. These workshops will serve as a recruitment tool by laying out the compassion mandate, providing statistics and stories of local child abuse and neglect, addressing opportunities to serve abused and neglected children and their families, sharing stories of hope and models that work, and instructing community organizations on how to get involved.



For more information, visit [www.FaithLinksOK.org](http://www.FaithLinksOK.org)