

United States of America
White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2008

The Conference met in the Ballroom in Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., at 8:30 a.m., Jay Hein, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, presiding.

PRESENT:

George W. Bush, President Of The United States Of America;
Elaine L. Chao, Secretary Of Labor;
Mark R. Dybul, U.S. Global Aids Coordinator;
Michael B. Mukasey, Attorney General Of The United States;
Steve Preston, Secretary Of Housing And Urban Development;
Ed Schafer, Secretary Of Agriculture;
John P. Walters, White House Office Of National Drug Control Policy;
Edith Espinoza, San Diego, California;
Jonathan Ford, Executive Director, Turning The Tide;
Laura Hughes, Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry;
Dorothy Wiley, Shreveport, Louisiana;
Tori Williams, Solid Rock Ministries

PROCEEDINGS:

MR. MEDEFIND: Good morning. Well, welcome to the National Conference on Innovations and Effective Compassion. Take a minute to look around you. You're in some of the best of company. There's some of America's great social entrepreneurs. There are out-of-the-box government officials, forwarding-leaning researchers. There are many individuals who are community servants and also community heroes. It's a very diverse group. We have many, many people here who are passionate to serve those in need, many who are motivated by their faith to serve people that others have completely forgotten. There are also many groups here of no religious affiliation at all, whose hearts beat just the same for the needs of this country, for the needs of the world.

We want each and everyone of you to feel welcome. There are people from, as I understand it, all of the 50 states, many foreign nations as well. There are people of just about every stripe and color under the sun. There are Republicans, there are Democrats, there are those who probably wouldn't join a political party if they were paid to do so. (Laughter.) But what draws us together today proves much stronger than anything that would differentiate us. We share a sense of hope. We share a sense of burden. We share a burden for those who lie on the side of the road, those who hunger for eye contact and a loving touch. And yet we share hope, hope that when we bring together the very best of American compassion with the best of American ingenuity, we can solve very age-old problems. And that's what today is about, what tomorrow

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is about, what every speaker will be digging into, bringing together American innovation and American compassion to bring new solutions to old problems. That's what happened over the last seven and a half years and that's what we are very confident will continue for many, many years to come.

Well, it is now my pleasure to introduce the woman, a very remarkable woman who will be singing our national anthem, Nikki Pearson. She's known as Ms. Nikki to the hundreds of former prisoners that she has helped find jobs. Years ago, Nikki faced her own struggles with addiction and homelessness, but today she embodies the hope that she helps others find, both as a volunteer and mentor coordinator with Concerned Black Men and also through her own small nonprofit, Restoring You. Now I'd like everyone to please rise for the presentation of the colors. (Pause.)

(National Anthem sung by Nikki Pearson)

MR. MEDEFIND: Please be seated. Thank you, Nikki. Wow. All right. It is now my great privilege to introduce a man who has earned a reputation as one of America's great social innovators, both inside of government and out. He's worked and served and led in think tanks in Washington, D.C., but also worked in federal government, state government, help engage and lead welfare reform efforts in the states, started the Sagamore Institute and led that for many years, but now he leads the President's Faith- Based and Community Initiative. And this man brings together what I was talking about earlier, both the burden and the hope. He's an individual who feels that burden for the needs of Americans, the needs of the world and yet at the same time applies a very, very sharp mind to those problems in ways that frequently brings solutions that no one else would have thought of. It's my privilege to introduce the Director of the White House Office of Faith- Based and Community Initiatives, Jay Hein. (Applause.)

MR. HEIN: Good morning. It's a delight to be in your company today. I could be the most popular man in this room if I just had Nikki come right back up here and I sat down, I put these notes away. (Applause.) You heard Jedd make reference to her story, that was inspiration enough, but the gift you have in those vocal chords and in your demeanor, reminds us why we're here because today is a hopeful day. Today is a historic day. It was seven and a half years ago that the President of the United States said that the best of America can be found in the compassion of America. And he started something called the Faith-Based and Community Initiative which is not a Washington, D.C. thing. We're your servants. It's a community thing.

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And that's why we are so delighted this many years later to look at a room that's at capacity. It's going to be over capacity when the big guy gets here at lunch, but 1500 registrants to this conference.

Some may think Faith-Based and Community Initiative, you don't read about it a lot in the newspapers. It's an old idea. It's something that was started pre-9/11, way in the early part of the Administration. Is it relevant? Well, your participation today shows just how relevant it is because the needs that are resonant in your community, homelessness and hunger, and the drop out crisis, demand the best of us. And so you showed up. What we'll do is our best to inspire you and hopefully equip you to go back and do more. But today is a bit of a look backwards, but it's a longer look forward to see what we might be able to accomplish together.

So that's a long way of saying thank you, Nikki, for personifying our mission and thank each of you for participating with us, not only in this conference, but day to day in your service to your neighbors. It's exciting to be in Washington, D.C. Jedd mentioned you hail from all 50 states and indeed the initiative is a 50 states story. It's always fun to come to Washington. The monuments are grand. We're here up in the Northwest part of the City. Hopefully, you can get downtown and see the monuments and the marble with those great words engraved in the walls that talk about the uniqueness of the America experiment, a democracy that is so uniquely American. But oftentimes what happens in those grand buildings, the Capitol, and other officialdom in Washington, D.C. can be a bit sterile. We talk about policy. We talk about statistics. We talk about funding. And all of those things are important because hopefully, in all of our work here in Washington, we do create a better environment for you, but indeed, as I said earlier, the work is done in communities.

And the President understood that in 2001. He was inaugurated for the first time and he had these words to say: "Compassion is the work of a nation, not just government. It is more than the calling of politicians. It is the calling of citizens. It is citizens who turn mean streets into good neighborhoods. It is citizens who turn cold cities into real communities." And so nine days after he said those words on the Capitol steps when he was inaugurated as President, he started the Faith-Based and Community Initiative by signing the very first Executive Orders of his Presidency and he created a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and then he created centers for faith-based and community initiatives, now 11 federal agencies and you will hear from them today. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you.

It's a big deal because as Jedd mentioned, we've changed the way we do business in this town and we've changed the orientation. The President said when we see human need, we will respond. That's

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the first order of business. We need to be aware of the needs around us, but government, as big and as powerful as it is, we will look first to faith-based and community groups to solve those problems. We know that you are the first responders to crisis anyway. We know that you are the last responders. You stay in the fight. So it is a rational point for us, you know, what can we do to lift up your arms. How can we leverage what is the best of government? We can convene, look at us today, we set the agenda, we set the policies, we do have a lot of money to put out, and if we can do so artfully to follow the contours of your work, the personal and the caring touch that you offer, then we will reach farther together.

You will hear today so much about what our efforts look like. You will hear from the Cabinet Secretaries that run those centers, at least a handful of them. You'll hear from the President of the United States, who will give us a landscape view of just how much has been accomplished and just how hard we're trying to reshape government on your behalf. But then you will also hear from you. You'll hear from social entrepreneurs who are getting it done, and innovators, who we're trying to learn from and whose success we're trying to replicate. And then as I said earlier, we'll consider together just how much more we have to do. I also mentioned, you know, this is a story that doesn't resonate very much in the media, does it.

We hear about the Church- State debate often in the national conversation and that's an important part of the conversation. We work very hard in this administration to find the right balance to follow the constitutional lines of protecting each of us in our free exercise of religion. President Bush believes deeply that private faith is an inherent right. We should have a free exercise to be a faithful people. He often says that people of faith, of different faiths or not faith at all are equally citizen. They're equally American, but it is a right of Americans to have the ability to practice our faith, and that's inherent in the first amendment of the Constitution. The President also knows that private faith has public value when it translates into loving a neighbor as oneself. But we also understand the other side of the first amendment equation, which is that government won't be in the business of picking a religion for the people. We won't establish a church. And so, finding that fine balance is an important part of our work. But too often, that's the part of the story that resonates in the media, sort of the controversy side of it or maybe a political side to it.

I get questions a lot these days, what will Senator Obama do? What will Senator McCain do with this initiative? And I have answers to that that are hopeful answers. Both of them speak very favorably about the Faith-based and Community Initiative.

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While that garners a lot of media attention, that too is not the majority of the story. The majority of the story is a service story. It's an innovation story. It's a reform story. And again, our agenda is just jam packed with chapters of that story for you. We have 200 speakers who will not all be at the podium, so I don't want you to feel weary on the front end. You get to pick most of them in your workshops according to your particular needs, but we have 200 speakers. We have 1,500 of you who have registered. This is a big and enlarging story, and I don't know what kind of press clip we'll get after today's session. And to be candid, that's not our interest. Our interest is in inspiring you and equipping you.

What I would like to do, as I've mentioned, you're going to hear a lot of particulars from the Cabinet Members and the President and others. What I would like to do is just now get a couple of quick high notes before we turn our attention to the Cabinet Member portion of the program. And first, I would like to talk a bit about money. I am announcing today that we have just analyzed the results of the fiscal year 2007 Federal Grant Competitions. All the federal agencies in Washington, Education, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, that are associated with this initiative, of course, hold grant competitions to deliver dollars for the services according to their program needs. We've taken the time to study those grant competitions to find out who is winning the dollars, which is the first time that we're aware of that government has been that intentional at trying to understand the contours of government and nonprofit sector partnerships. And the headline that I will share with you is that in fiscal year 2007, the federal government invested \$15.3 billion to faith-based and community groups across the country. That's a big number. That's a 3.9 percent - (Applause.) That's a 3.9 percent over fiscal year 2006. It includes \$2.2 billion to faith-based non-profits, and the \$2.2 billion to faith-based groups also are joined with a 20,000 unit number. That's how many groups win these grants. So those are big numbers.

They maybe don't resonate deeply with you, but at a broad level, it says that the federal government is a major investor in the nonprofit sector and we have reports for you that we will be distributing throughout this conference that show state by state where those grants reside, so we're beginning a new and more dynamic conversation with Governors about how their nonprofits and their states are winning these competitions and that will enliven their interest in you, I think, because they'll find out you're doing after school services and housing services and so many other pursuits that are agenda items on their desks, so we're creating a new understanding, but we also need to acknowledge that we're not the primary investor in the nonprofit sector. Those are big numbers I just talked about, billions of dollars.

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But Giving USA is a research organization that just released a report last year that said for the first time in history, private dollars, private philanthropy, private giving amounted to more than \$300 billion for the very first time in history and of those dollars, \$229 billion, the majority of the philanthropy in America is done by you, by individuals. And that also speaks to the heart of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative because it isn't all about government funding. It's all about more funding and more innovation to solve greater problems. David Eisner is here. You'll hear from him tomorrow. He's the head of the Corporation for National and Community Service and tomorrow, after hearing today a lot about government reform and how the federal government has organized itself to serve you better, tomorrow we're going to talk about social entrepreneurship and this marketplace of volunteerism and philanthropy and private strategies because it's all one big thing. If we believe need outpaces supply, that social need is greater than that which we've organized to respond to it, we need the best of all of us and we need public dollars spent wisely and we need private dollars spend effectively and we need to leverage the two. But those are big abstract concepts.

Something else we'll present to you today, some faces of this initiative. We held an awards competition called Portraits of Compassion and those tens of thousands of partnerships that I've mentioned where nonprofits are winning federal grant competitions. We opened up a creative competition to them and we said if you've gotten a grant since 2001 in this Administration, we'd like you to submit a three-minute video that puts a face on this work. And we had entries from all over the country. You're going to get to see the winners today. I should note briefly how we got that done. Health and Human Services organized this competition for us. We used technology that I don't think I could ask my kids this, I don't know this factually, but I don't think this technology existed in 2001. We asked them to upload, I think is the right term, on iTunes and Google video and I better look at my notes, YouTube and MySpace. (Applause.) They did. You did. And so today, you're going to meet via video the domestic winner and you're going to meet the international winner. And then we're going to use a video to help introduce the President and it's going to put a face on those like Nikki who are really leading this initiative. But we also have something else I want to draw your attention to and that's a website.

Also with gratitude to Ben O'Dell and his colleagues at Health and Human Services under Secretary Leavitt's leadership, they're hosting a website for us, sort of patterned and branded after the conference theme. And on that website, you're going to see fact sheets on the 15 great human needs that we've organized to present our story in to you today and you'll see fact sheets that speak to the results of

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the initiative, but also the great needs that need to animate more of our service. If you go to our website, perhaps you've already visited that to register for this conference. It's fbc.gov. We're always careful to make sure that you get the c in there. fbi.gov would take you to a whole other area of government, but fbc.gov will link you that website and you'll see the Portraits of Compassion video winners and you'll see the great needs fact sheets and I won't be longer here.

I wanted to summarize a bit the Cabinet Members' presentations for you. I won't do that for the sake of time, but what you'll hear from them are the contours of the story you'll see on these fact sheets and you'll see how in prisoner reentry and disaster response and all the other great needs that we're addressing, how government is an action on your behalf, but more so how you're responding to those needs and accomplishing just horrific outcomes. But as inspired as hopefully you'll be and encouraged that we're in the fight with you, that we're seven and a half years later and we're more relevant than we ever were and we're more in action than we ever were, of course we're going to leave this session realizing that we have that much more to do. When 50 percent of students drop out of high school before completion in inner cities and too many of our neighbors go hungry in a prosperous society likes ours, we can't rest.

I drive into Washington and look at those monuments every day and as I cross the Potomac there's one gentleman that greets me every single day and it's with a wave and he's a homeless individual that lives under the bridge near the river. And he a sunny demeanor and he's always with a smile and wave, but he's a terrific reminder of why we need to be more busy.

There's a great story about Martin Luther King who, of course, told us that the arc of history is long, but it bends towards justice and we're going to claim that promise today. But a good friend of mine, John Hope Bryant just shared this story with me. He's good friends with Andrew Young who walked the journey with Martin Luther King and Martin Luther King had just returned from the Middle East. David Eisner just returned from the Middle East yesterday, he told me. And Dr. King was speaking at an event. And following his return and the person introducing Dr. King said "oh, Dr. King, you're just like the Good Samaritan. You're just one that lifts up the least, the last, the lost and the injured." And it's true, that that was a part of his life. But he didn't say this publicly. He turned to Andrew Young privately and he said you know what, I do not want to be the Good Samaritan. He said I was on that road to Jericho. It's a dangerous road. It moves from a very high elevation to a low elevation. It has severe twists and turns. It's a dark and dangerous and rocky place. He said I want to be the guy that fixes the Jericho Road. I want to be the guy that puts street lights on it. I want to be the guy that paves it.

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You're both. You're the Good Samaritan. We thank you for the lifesaving work that you do every day and we thank you that you're our partner in paving the Jericho Road. Thank you very much.
(Applause.)

REV. FORD: Thank you. Good morning. I am Reverend Jonathan Ford and as has been stated, I'm the Executive Director of Turning the Tide. We are a faith-based and community technology center located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

I'm here today to introduce Judge Michael Mukasey, Attorney General of the United States. Judge Mukasey, along with his predecessors, have worked diligently to level the playing field to ensure that all organizations, including faith-based and small community-based nonprofits, have equal access to government grants and opportunities.

My organization, Turning the Tide, is one of the faith-based organizations that have been able to partner with the government in serving ex-offenders and ex-prisoners returning to our communities because of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative and more importantly, the work under Judge Mukasey's leadership at the Department of Justice. Turning the Tide stands for technology and information delivered for empowerment. This name refers to our church's mission of literally turning the tide of the conditions and aspirations of residents in our surrounding neighborhoods from one of little or no hope to one of revitalized thinking and empowerment which is desperately needed in our community. While many community residents do not believe in the potential they have, our church and our parishioners, we see their potential just as clear as the morning sun and we are committed to working hand in hand with them and other community partners in helping them to realize that great potential.

In 2005, Turning the Tide received its first federal grant, a grassroot grant from the Department of Labor. Through the success of applying for and winning this grant and other small grants, Turning the Tide has leveraged that success to win more grants and more support, including support from the Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This has come along with support from state and local government as well as corporate America and private entities. Through these grants, Turning the Tide has been able to expand our services. We now provide technology training, employment service, HIV and AIDs counseling, as well as testing, and other supportive services to ex- prisoners as well as their families, helping them to secure employment and build successful lives.

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In honor of his work to make sure our communities are safe, provide opportunities for ex-prisoners, and to level the playing field in ensuring small grass roots organizations and faith-based organizations can compete equally for federal grants, it is my pleasure to introduce Judge Michael Mukasey, the 81st Attorney General of our United States.(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL MUKASEY: Thank you very much, Reverend Ford, for the introduction and for your work. Good morning. It is a pleasure to join you in celebrating the work of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative.

I would like to thank the President for his leadership on this important issue and Jay Hein for inviting me to join you. Seven years ago, the President launched the Faith-Based and Community Initiative. When he did that, he called on each of our agencies to put faith-based and other local community organizations at the center of the government's efforts to respond to human needs, and we've answered that call. Throughout the federal government, and even beyond, because many state and local governments also follow the President's lead.

We are working as never before in partnership with faith-based and community organizations to achieve real results. Take the Department's efforts to promote rehabilitation in prison and to try to smooth out what is often a rough transition from prison back to free society. Working with faith-based and community organizations, the Justice Department's Federal Bureau of Prisons operates Life Connections, a voluntary faith and character based in prison reentry program in five facilities. An interim study of this program showed that graduates were about 50 percent less likely to commit acts of serious misconduct in prison. Similarly, the Administration's Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative has provided more than \$100 million to 69 state agencies, all of which work with faith-based and community organizations to help ex-prisoners in getting jobs, housing, and other services they need to help keep them from reoffending. Primarily results showed that these ex-prisoners have done far better on almost every measure, from housing, to employment, to avoiding alcohol and drug abuse. Or consider our efforts to combat gang violence. Although prosecutions obviously play a large part in the fight against violent crime, prevention does too.

Enforcing the law by taking those who terrorize our streets off those streets is important, but our ultimate goal is to keep kids out of gangs in the first place. Faith-based and community groups are key partners in those efforts. Through our Gang Reduction and Intervention Program and our comprehensive anti-gang initiative, we have funded large numbers of faith-based and community groups that aim to give

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kids and their families healthy and safe alternatives to gang involvement. The results have been impressive. For example, the Dallas-Fort Worth site reports that of 900 former gang members and other at-risk youth who participated in its programs in 2007, not one, that's right, not even a single one committed an offense during that school year. Moreover, their school attendance and family relationships improved during the same period.

I could go on and on, but these examples are enough to make my point. Working with a full range of local groups, including faith-based and community organizations, is often the best way to tackle programs, especially local problems. Programs like these, that build on the existing structures of local organizations, can help tremendously in a lot of what we're trying to do to make people's lives better and keep them safe. The results produced by these programs are among the many accomplishments of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative that we appropriately celebrate today. But perhaps the most significant and lasting accomplishment of the initiative is not the results of any one program, but the mere fact, and there's really nothing mere about it at all, that these programs and others like them are now welcomed as partners by our government. As you know, that was not always the case.

When the President launched his Faith-Based and Community Initiative in 2001, faith-based organizations faced many and varied obstacles to working with federal agencies. Good faith concerns about entanglement between government and religion lead to a situation in which the religious identity of faith-based organizations trying to partner with government often had to be hidden or compromised. In some instances, these organizations were totally excluded from federal programs. Where they were allowed to take part, they were often required to change their religious character or to restrict their religious activities in ways that were really not required by the Constitution. Of course, religiously-affiliated providers were not always excluded and signs of religion were not always discouraged. But there was a chilling effect and a lot of confusion. Many organizations doubted that they were eligible to be government partners at all. And government officials feared that they might be wrongly accused of supporting religion if they were to give a grant or a contract to a faith-based organization. The President recognized that this meant a lost opportunity to work with some of the best available partners in many communities, the groups who were already established and doing exactly the kind of good work we were trying to support. So he called for a reexamination of why it was that faith-based organizations faced hurdles when they tried to work with federal agencies and how we might lower or eliminate those hurdles in a way consistent with the Constitution.

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The Department of Justice has played and will continue to play a major role in that reexamination. In doing so, we built upon the principles behind Congress' charitable choice laws and the Supreme Court's first amendment jurisprudence that government must respect the essential character of faith-based providers, that no one needing help may be turned away because of his or her religion, and that no one may be forced into religious practices and that directly-awarded government funds must be spent on social services, not on religion.

Building upon these principles, we helped enact equal treatment regulations in nearly every federal department that offers grants to nonprofit organizations. We provided guidance on how and when government may enlist faith-based organizations and what faith-based organizations may do with government funds. We clarified the statutory rights of faith-based organizations to consider their faith in making hiring decisions and we made sure that these groups knew about their rights. And we argued strenuously in the Courts including in the Supreme Court on behalf of those programs and the equal treatment principles that underlie them. Thanks in part to these efforts today, as never before, the law guarantees even handedness. The watch word in this area is now neutrality. That means a body of laws and regulations that provide for the equal treatment of faith-based and other community organizations in the awarding of government grants and in participation in government programs. It means greater freedom for faith-based organizations to be faithful to what they are.

Faith-based groups, like other community organizations can promote common values, provide a sense of community, associate freely, and serve society in accordance with their beliefs. And they can do so free from government interference. The point is not to elevate faith-based organizations above others or to give them any preferences in the process, simply because of their faith, but neither is it to disregard or to disadvantage them simply because of their faith.

Our nation is large and diverse and our federal government does not by any means have all the answers to every challenge that we face. Sometimes we must rely on communities, private groups, and the American people to provide their own solutions. Faith-based and community organizations always have had and always will have a vital role to play in coming up with those solutions. From the Salvation Army to the United Jewish Communities, from Big Brothers/Big Sisters to Boys and Girls Clubs of America, our nation has been blessed throughout its history with the guidance and involvement of community organizations, some that were based on principles of faith and some that were not.

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Thanks to the President's initiative, government can now profit from this guidance and involvement as never before. If a nonprofit organization has a good program for fighting gang violence, the Department of Justice should be able to fund it. It should not and now does not matter in the slightest if that group has a Catholic priest on its board of directors. If someone has developed an innovative program to help teach life skills to prison inmates, to help them become productive members of society once they've served their time, it should not and now does not matter in the slightest if the person teaching that class wears a Jewish yarmulke or a Muslim kufi. What should and now does matter a great deal is that the program is effective and that all groups including faith-based groups have an equal opportunity to compete.

We, as a nation, cannot afford even if some would want to do such a thing to turn away help just because it is offered by someone who is motivated by religious faith. We as a government do not have the right to turn away from competing for grants those who fail to meet a religious litmus test. Work remains to be done. But I'm proud of what we have achieved so far.

I believe we have gotten closer to the intent of the first amendment and to the design of the American experiment in which religious faith is honored, but not required and in which religious motivations for service, like humanitarian motivations, are respected and in which excellent, local organizations, both faith-based and secular alike, can be partners with the government. The reforms we have accomplished are vital for religious freedom, both for organizations that participate and for people who need help and they have moved us toward our overall goal of better services.

We have tried to clear the air, to clarify for faith-based organizations and also for government officials what the guidelines are and where the line is between inappropriate government support for religion and inappropriate discrimination against religion. This greater clarity has encouraged many faith-based organizations to lend their expertise and their services to the government by becoming our partners and by making it clear to government officials that their mandate is to seek the best providers. These reforms have contributed to the overall goal of ensuring the most effective help for all of our citizens.

I want to thank you for your hard work in advancing the noble goals of the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative and for your help in creating the level playing field required by our laws and by fundamental principles of fairness. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMS: Good morning. My name is Tori Williams and I am not the Tori I was two years ago. Before I came to Solid Rock Ministries and Access to Recovery program I had given up my will to live. I was

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addicted to crack cocaine and I was a prostitute. I had tried many other things before and nothing ever worked for me, but this program fed me in every way, spiritually, mentally, and physically. (Applause.) It was through this program that I saw the value of my life again and my life was renewed. Access to Recovery taught me to love and to be loved. I am now a loving grandmother and mother. I also learned to live life on life's terms. I have now completed two years of recovery and restored my contact -- (Applause.) - with my family and with God. I currently serve as a housemother for Solid Rock Ministries and feel called to offer hope to hurting women. There are so many others who need this program like this to restore their lives. It is my pleasure to introduce to you Honorable John Walters, Director of the White House Office of National Drug Policy. Thank you. (Applause.)

DIRECTOR WALTERS: Thank you, Tori. The remarks she just gave are an example, I think, sometimes in a jaded world of miracles that happen in our communities and her journey, I know some people, many people in this room, is one from enormous pain and alienation, giving up and in some cases on life or on hope for the future to a genuine miracle of not only being invested in the future, but of giving futures to others in our community, the example of grace, the example of life moving forward, out of the hands of those who have seen the most broken aspects of life.

Congratulations to Tori and to the many of you here who work with those suffering. (Applause.) I also want to congratulate Jay Hein, the Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives for his outstanding work and the work represented at this conference. The program that we have been most involved which of course touched the organization that Tori got help from, the Access to Recovery Program. This program, as you no doubt know, exemplifies the President's commitment, I think, to faith-based initiatives, and the power of organizations of faith to help us attack effectively social ills.

The President launched ATR with the 2003 State of the Union Address. He called for expanded choice in both treatment and in those that seek support after treatment to getting their lives back on track. To date, the government has invested close to \$400 million and served over 200,000 people since the program was up and running. It's an average cost, I had to do this in advance, I confess, of \$2000 per person served, a remarkably small sum for the number of people that have been helped. ATR expanded the range of treatment and recovery support services by attracting a whole new cohort of faith-based and community groups, some of them represented by you sitting in this room. Faith-Based and community

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organizations now account for 23 percent of the recovery support services and 31 percent of the clinical treatment providers supported by the program.

By introducing a voucher system, the Access to Recovery Program empowered treatment seeking individuals to be free and to make independent choices that met their needs. It allowed them to use the power of faith, which so many have found as a pathway to recovery and sobriety, without the bigotry of the previous support from the government. It proved not only that we could allow faith to be what it has been for so many, but that we could make it more powerful to save more lives. From its inception, the Access to Recovery Program recognized that treatment alone would not suffice, that the view that to many in simplified terms had a period of intense treatment being enough was proven by the experience and reality by even the research that we had to be too limited, that we needed to have extended abilities beyond the immediate term of treatment to help people get and stay sober.

We needed to address multiple needs, housing, job training, spiritual support, education, relapse prevention, child care, transportation. As of March 2008, 65 percent of the people in the program have received recovery support services, that not only get them sober, but to allow them to regularize the sober life and reconnect their lives to their family and to their community. Yale University pointed out looking at the program that access to recovery funds are seeing development of an increasing array of recovery support, not only within the program but outside and an increasing sense of legitimacy and the necessity of that support. That's what the President had in mind.

The ATR program also allowed states to address specific populations that were not receiving the care and treatment that they needed. In Tennessee, for example, ATR funds were used to expand treatment for methamphetamine addiction. In other states, the treatment of juveniles or the treatment of women with dependent children was a focus of the additional funds provided by the program. Abstinence rates went from an average of 64 percent in June 2006 to 74.3 percent in March 2008 for those in the ATR program. Besides high abstinence rates, 24 percent of ATR clients also reported being stably housed, 32 percent employed, 61 percent socially connected to others now, as they weren't when they came in, and 87.8 percent reported no involvement of the criminal justice system at discharge. Remarkable success, since many of these programs have taken clients who have been through other treatment programs and episodes and have not been successful.

To sustain such efforts, the administration has increased, has just released \$96 million in 2007, seven grant funds, to 24 grantees and approximately \$25 million of the new grants are targeted on

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methamphetamine, which has been such a horrible additional threat in many parts of the country, especially places that have been underserved by treatment providers and support services. Currently, ATR is funding programs in 18 states, five tribes or tribal organizations, and the District of Columbia. States have also taken initiatives to sustain these changes and these programs with their own funds. Idaho is allocating \$6.5 million, Connecticut, \$1.75 billion, and Louisiana, \$9 million in state general funds and \$3 million in state block grant funds to continue these programs and the support they provide.

You are participating in a quiet revolution that is saving lives. You are participating in a quiet revolution that as the Attorney General just said is removing the bigotry against faith and allowing the reality of the contribution that faith can make appropriately in our government to become a more salient factor, and as it does, it is changing for the better, the future of our communities.

What we have seen with this, I think can be described simply, and I'll close with this, when the President called, you came forward and your faith and your work has saved thousands and thousands of lives. Tori is one example. And you know those lives change the future not only of all the lives that they touch, the children, the family, that have been broken by substance abuse and can be healed. They not only save the lives of the community members who have suffered from the destruction of their fellow human beings and the turning of that self destruction even on others around them, but in turning those lives back to become productive members of our community, as with Tori, most of the people I meet in recovery understand their recovery to tied aggressively to help other people get and stay sober, helping other people heal their lives.

You have taken not only the 200,000 who have been treated, but untold numbers already, and made them a part of our community and a part of our future that they would not have been without this. On behalf of the many, many people, children, parents, family members, and community members who will never get a chance to say thank you, on behalf of my colleagues and the President, it has been an honor to work with you. I want to say thank you and God Bless you. (Applause.)

MS. WILEY: Good morning. My name is Dorothy Wiley, and I am a resident of Shreveport, Louisiana. I am here to share with you for one minute before I introduce Secretary Preston, how my family life was transformed by two organizations. Too often, we take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, it forced my family and I to leave. We left with nothing, literally nothing, but the clothes on our back.

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We relocated to Shreveport, Louisiana. Traumatized, devastated, and overwhelmed, it was time for us to start a new life. This is when Community Renewal International stepped in to our lives. Community Renewal donated land and they partnered with the Fuller Center for housing to build us and other Hurricane Katrina evacuees a new home. They just didn't build us a home, but they gave us a sense of hope and the neighborhood they built in, they brought restoration back to it. Community Renewal and the Fuller Center transformed our lives and I am very grateful, I am thankful.

Their hard work reflects back which God values. I feel truly connected to Community Renewal International and continue to volunteer with their programs that help to spread the love and even the love that they show to me. This work is supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Development Block Grant Funding, and it is through the support of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the President's Faith-based and Community Initiative that organizations like Community Renewal and the Fuller Center are able to transform more lives like they did mine across the country.

It is my honor today to introduce to you the Secretary of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Honorable Steve Preston. (Applause.)

SECRETARY PRESTON: Thank you, Dorothy. Good morning, everyone. Hope you are enjoying yourself here in Washington. Before I start, I just have to tell you, for those of you who don't get to spend much time here, I just really encourage you to get out there. It's a beautiful time of year, and just walk around the city and look at all the, just the tremendous number of remembrances we have around this city of the great things our country has done, what we have been through, and how people have served, because there really is no other place like it.

You know, I was thinking about addressing this group today on the issue of homelessness, and it occurred to me, not only the fact that homelessness has been with us for centuries, but how filled, you know, our religious accounts are homelessness, from Islam to Buddhism, obviously, to the Old Testament is full of stories about homelessness and the New Testament starts with a story of homelessness in Bethlehem, and the one who is born there exhorts his followers to serve him by serving those in greatest need. So I think this is a very important issue for this group to be discussing and thinking through, and obviously, you all are so pivotal in making a difference for those who have such a desperate need in their lives. You know, homelessness is a daunting problem.

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As I've said, it is as old as history. There aren't any easy answers. The difficulties must not stop us, though, from developing an effective set of responses. My own department has led the federal response to providing shelter for homelessness. We provide targeted grants to states, to local governments, to nonprofits, to develop and operate housing assistance programs for homeless individuals and I think sometimes we often forget for their entire families because it's not just an individual issue. Certainly those of us who spent time in those shelters, you know, can vividly recall the times we've seen people walk in with their children and we see how deep the need goes.

Many of you have stepped forward to provide shelter or services, working in partnership with my Department and others. I just want to thank you so much for the work you do there. We need your efforts because there are about 750,000 homeless people on any given night or any given day in America. That figure, any figure, on homelessness used to be more of a guess than anything else, but now we do have information that helps us better pinpoint the number of homelessness and their needs. Last year, in fact, HUD announced its first ever annual Homeless Assessment Report and through the data collection for that report and the subsequent analysis of that data, we are learning a great deal about the demographics of homelessness. Prior to that report, we didn't even know how many homeless people there were in this country. Now with this report we do have sort of a point in time snapshot that gives us greater insight into where the homeless are which allows us to help them much more effectively. And we're going further developing that information necessary to see the patterns of homelessness over time which we think will be very helpful.

One of those patterns which many of you are familiar with is chronic homelessness. These are people who are living on the streets for more than just a few days. Many of them are mentally ill or addicted. Many of them are physically disabled. They are the most vulnerable among us, and the hardest to house and many times the hardest to serve. The chronically homeless are people who generally have been homeless for more than a year, often we're seeing them cycle back into homelessness and there are people who need serious sustained assistance to overcome that condition.

As you know, or as many of you may know in 2002, the Administration declared that we would work hard to end chronic homelessness as quickly as possible. And we have built constructive and successful partnerships with almost every city and county across our country. Many of these partnerships were with faith-based organizations. This has been an extremely complex, cooperation set of ventures, one of the most complicated domestic ventures every attempted by the federal government.

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For example, we've trained more than 40,000 nonprofit leaders in grant writing and other skills. We've offered almost 300 training sessions. Many of these training seminars involve faith-based groups. The training has produced results. From 2003 to 2006, the number of direct nonprofit grantees of HUD's continuum of care program grew by nearly 500 organizations which was a 30 percent increase. And in 2006, more than 134,000 homeless Americans were helped by the efforts of faith-based organizations working with HUD. Together, we are able to devote more resources to help the homeless. Since 2003, HUD has provided funding for more than 42,000 new permanent supportive beds. That's more than a 25 percent increase. And as a result of all of this effort, there is now a vast interrelated set of partnerships between HUD and states and localities and nonprofits around the country. This partnership has been effective. In November of last year, we announced that chronic homelessness had actually dropped in the United States and according to data collected in 2006 from about and counties across the country, there had been an 11.5 percent drop in chronic homelessness which means there are about 20,000 fewer chronically homeless Americans on the streets today as there were in the year before.

In other words, the hard work of thousands of people, many of whom are in this room today is paying off and we're seeing our efforts make a profound difference. Why? Well, the data seem to indicate that the investment by HUD and by these local efforts in what we call the continuums of care is working. Continuum of care is an important term for us. It means that we provide assistance across the entire spectrum of homelessness from those who find themselves on the streets for the first time who need immediate shelter, to those who need assistance with the problems of addiction or dependence, to those who need help in finding more permanent housing. This continuum of care is vital because homelessness is a complex multi-dimensional problem both for those who are homeless and for those who are working to meet the needs of the homeless. So yes, we are making very important progress and we should be very thankful for that, but we have a long way to go in addressing this problem more fully. There is still 155,000 chronic homeless people on the streets.

We're winning the battles in many cases, but homelessness remains a problem for us, often with frightening consequences for hundreds of thousands of people. And these really are battles that are worth fighting for all of us. Every person removed from chronic homelessness is a victory not only for that person, but for their families and for their communities.

Overall, this Administration has shown its commitment to helping the homeless with record levels of funding. Last year, HUD announced grants of \$1.5 billion nationwide to address homelessness, the latest

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in a commitment that since 2001 has totaled about \$10 billion to support the homeless. In the President's new budget, we're seeking an increased \$1.6 billion for HUD's continuum of care for homeless assistance grants programs.

Now I'd like to turn to a related matter which is the plight of homeless Veterans and I appreciate so much the video that preceded my coming up here because this is a problem that we're all terribly concerned about. The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that there are approximately 154,000 Veterans on the street. Now that is a number that's reduced significantly. Five years ago, we think it was about double that number, but it's still very large and it's still very concerning. And we need to do more for those people who served our country so valiantly. Recently, my Department announced the renewal of a joint HUD and VA program to provide assistance for our nation's homeless Veterans. This program is called the HUDVASHP or HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program. It will provide approximately 10,000 new vouchers for homeless Veterans and their families. The HUDVASHP initiative actually dates back to 1990. It was started by the former VA Secretary, Ed Derwinski and HUD Secretary Jack Kemp who at that point were providing vouchers as well as case management, but the program was discontinued in 1995. But funding was restored by Congress and the President for the current fiscal year. The program was given \$75 million and it allows us to reach about 10,000 Veterans.

Added to our other efforts, this is a major expansion of the funding that we have available for homeless Veterans. The President has also requested another \$75 million in his 2009 budget which means another 10,000 Veterans could be helped. That would bring the number to 20,000 Veterans. So it's very important for us to all continue to be moving forward. We're thankful for the funding and -- but once again, this is an effort that we are very focused on. More broadly though, the Faith-Based and Community Initiative is an innovative effort that unites the strengths of the public and the private sector to make our social programs more effective. We're part of a new way of making a difference and our work on homelessness could not be as comprehensive, could not be as successful without the partnership of so many faith-based organizations.

Clearly, the President saw something very powerful and very full of energy when he launched this initiative and if we could harness it, he knew that we could meld government programs to end homelessness with the powerful energies of people in the faith-based community. One thing I've learned through my own direct experience leading and serving in faith-based efforts is that the great talent and skill of their people in these organizations is fueled by tremendous amounts of good will, big hearts and in many

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cases a powerful sense of calling. These are results-oriented people, people who want to make a difference, people who want to change lives and these are places where compassion, I think in many cases works miracles in people's lives. And I know that in the faith-based organizations certainly that I've worked with they make every single dollar count. And in many cases they're turning that shoestring, they live on the shoestring into a lifeline. And I can't think of a better example of that than in the great work that so many of you are doing in addressing homelessness.

There's something else I've witnessed, something that's equally remarkable and I certainly see it in my own life is that the caregivers and the providers themselves are transformed in the active service. People who came to provide a service actually received a great blessing themselves and I think once again that is the power that fuels so many of you all in the great work that you do in faith-based initiatives. So I spoke earlier about our commitment, about yours, about mine.

We realize that every person is a child of God, created in his image. Every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect and our nation has always, always been led by compassion and generosity. So I believe that when we help the homeless we are doing God's work and our own work and this nation owes every one of you a deep debt of gratitude. So thank you for coming here. Thank you for the tremendous work you do and God bless you. (Applause.)

MS. HUGHES: Good morning, everyone. My name is Laura Hughes. I am one of the thousands of lives that have been transformed through the Prison Reentry Initiative at the U.S. Department of Labor. I was raised in an abusive home and by nine years old I was numbing the pain with alcohol and marijuana. I attempted suicide at age 11 and was placed in foster care. I married my abusive foster brother at 16 and soon gave birth to two daughters. One night he nearly killed me and that's when I left. After that I began using more drugs, committing crimes, and I was eventually sentenced to five years in prison. I turned to Arizona Women's Education and Employment or AWEE, a prison re-entry initiative site. They assisted me in building a better life for my daughters and myself. AWEE helped me find a good job, get life necessities, and regain custody of my youngest daughter, Ariel. I've been out of prison for over two years now and thanks to AWEE's help I am a 40-year-old professional woman, a mother, and a grandmother. (Applause.)

I now serve with my oldest daughter Amber on a mother-daughter domestic violence impact panel to help other women regain control of their lives and to show their children how to live a better life. My life has been transformed through AWEE, the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, the Prison Reentry

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Initiative, and the leadership of Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao without which my daughters might have grown up without me. I would like to personally thank Secretary Chao for her leadership. With great personal admiration, I introduce Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. (Applause.)

SECRETARY CHAO: Thank you, Laura. Wasn't she terrific? You've got to give her another round of applause. (Applause.) Laura, we all want to congratulate you for your hard work, for your determination, and your commitment to turning your life around. It's not easy. You're a very positive role model for others to follow. Before I begin, I want to also recognize all of you in the audience who have a commitment to increasing the impact of faith-based and community organizations. Over the last seven and a half years, you've put into action the President's vision of launching a nationwide effort to better the lives of others. Community and faith-based groups possess unique and invaluable strengths and often it is the personal concern and caring touch that groups like this provide that make the critical difference for those who are at risk: the father, who has lost his job and his hope; the ex-offender wanting a fresh start; the struggling, single mom.

Empowering the faith-based and community organizations throughout America is something that you know that President Bush and the First Lady Laura Bush care deeply about. Their strategy is to reach those most in need. We've just got to enlist and include every single willing partner. Now in the past, a lot of the organizations, some in this room, worked in total isolation from government, even when we were working towards similar goals and I saw that when I was President of United Way or Director of the Peace Corps. Today, the Department of Labor and other federal agencies are working with faith-based and community organizations toward these shared goals, benefitting our country and our communities. As a result of the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative, hundreds of dedicated organizations have stepped forward to work side by side with in my case the Department of Labor, to help the unemployed, the underemployed and the never employed.

Like Laura Hughes, more than 150,000 men, women, and at-risk young people here in the United States have been helped by faith-based and community organizations funded by the Department. Isn't that great? (Laughter.) And in fact, since 2002, the Department has awarded more than 1300 grants worth over \$742 million, that's real dollars, to help more Americans overcome hurdles to employment, find jobs and stay employed through the unique partnership and work of faith-based and community organizations. Now I've got here a report of the final report that we're releasing today. This is what it looks like. I think all of you

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have it. It highlights the Department's success in creating access to new opportunities through public/private partnerships with faith-based and community organizations.

Together, we are transforming the lives of thousands of individuals and their families. So today, let me share with you some results of the Department of Labor's efforts to further the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative, especially in the area of prisoner reentry. The reality is and we all know this, the reality is that most of the men and women who are incarcerated today will return home. Unfortunately, history has shown that in the absence of intervention, a majority of them will relapse and be reincarcerated. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, two out of three inmates released will be rearrested within three years and more than half will be reincarcerated. That's unacceptable. Our efforts are aimed at giving hope and a second chance to those who have paid their debt to society.

In 2004, the Department of Labor launched a three-year, \$20 million program called Ready for Work. Eleven sites were chosen to participate in the pilot program and provide services to adult ex-offenders. Ready for Work was designed to leverage the trust and leadership of faith-based and community organizations to help ex-offenders build new lives and the program offers job training, job placement, mentoring and other transitional services to help these men and women transition successfully back into their communities. We know there are about 650,000 offenders who are released every year and helping this population is a major challenge for our society. Ready for Work helped ex-offenders access stable employment and develop strong social bonds so that they can access hope and opportunity. And the positive results were that Ready for Work participants had a 50 percent lower rate of reincarceration. Reincarnation too, for a new life. (Applause.) After six months, that's incredible. Then Justice Department benchmarks. They had a 34 percent lower rate after one year. Isn't that terrific? That is real results.

As the President has said many times, our nation is great because of the compassion of our citizens and in response to the historical cycle of crime and reincarceration, I'm going to say that very carefully now, the President announced the Prisoner Reentry Initiative or PRI in his 2004 State of the Union Address. PRI builds upon the strong foundation laid by the Ready for Work program, providing returning prisoners with a positive, productive link to the communities to which they are returning.

Let me just share a quick story. In January of this year, the President and I visited the Jericho Program in Baltimore, Maryland, one of more than 30 PRI sites funded by the Department of Labor to help ex-offenders. Jericho is run by the Episcopal Community Services of Maryland and serves nonviolent adult male offenders who have been released from prison within the last six months. And when I was there I met

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a gentleman named Thomas. Thomas has spent more than 20 years of his life in and out of prison and finally he made a decision to turn his life around. So three days after his last release, Thomas enrolled himself in the Jericho Program and he completed the initial two weeks of training. He learned how to search for a job, how to budget his money, and how to address barriers to employment. And after his training, with the help of those who helped him, Thomas created a resume and received coaching on how to interview for a job. And the practice paid off. Thomas was offered a position as a security guard and he's doing a wonderful job. (Applause.)

It was so inspiring to meet him, hear him tell his story, tell about his family has benefitted and see the tremendous confidence that he now has. And Thomas is not alone. That's the wonderful part about what I'm telling you. Through the first 25 months, the Department's Prisoner Reentry Initiative program has helped more than 13,000 ex- prisoners. Isn't that great? (Applause.) And over 8,000 have been placed into jobs. And after one year, the reincarceration rate is about one third the national average, one third. (Applause.) That's a tremendous accomplishment. But you and I know that much more remains to be done. But these results give us hope that with the proper help those most at risk in our society can turn their lives around. Congress recognizes the success of the Prisoner Reentry Initiative and included it in a Second Chance Act which the President signed earlier this spring.

While these results are just a beginning, the successful models developed under Ready for Work and Prisoner Reentry has helped thousands of ex-offenders and they're the entrepreneurial ideas that are becoming tomorrow's solutions. And I know that you're going to hear more about how the Administration is addressing other challenges facing ex-offenders later today and tomorrow, programs like the Justice Department's Serious and Violent Offender Reentry and Anti Gang Initiative and the Department of Health and Human Services' access to recovery and mentoring children of prisoners program. These programs are making a real difference.

So I want to thank you like the other speakers have before me. Thank you for everything that you are doing to bring hope and opportunity to those who need it most. Thank you for spending the day with us and investing your time and yourself in finding out how we can better help those at risk in our communities because working together we can continue to ensure that everyone in our society has a second chance. America is a land of second chances. We all need second chances. (Applause.)

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And we need to give those who need those second chances the tools that they need to build lives and independence and dignity for the benefit of themselves, their families, the communities and for our country. So thank you so much. Have a great conference. (Applause.)

MR. MEDEFIND: ...Well, I hope that over the course of the morning, both in the plenary time and in the workshops, the vision for the faith-based and community initiative came into clearer focus, even if you've been someone that has been involved with it from the very beginning. This vision of changing the way that government addresses human need, and leading a shift from government's natural inclination for the large and the distant and the bureaucratic program, and consistently moving in the direction of solutions that are rooted in the community, that are focused on the personal touch of neighbors serving neighbors, something that government alone never can bring. And so we have seen that all across -- that vision at work all across the Federal Government from prisoner reentry and addiction to homelessness.

But one thing that some people aren't aware of is that this vision is at work internationally as well. As Elizabeth mentioned earlier, it doesn't stop at the edge of the ocean -- this vision for transforming the way that we engage development and aid overseas as well. And so this lunch, as you will notice, is focused on this latter part of the vision -- engaging human need over the oceans from -- everything from malaria to economic development to hunger to HIV/AIDS. And to begin this, we are going to be welcoming to the stage an individual who straddles this world.

This U.S. Department of Agriculture is engaged in fighting hunger both here in the United States as well as across the world. And so who better than the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to tell us about this work. So it's my pleasure to introduce to you The Honorable Ed Schafer, who is the 29th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And when we talk about innovative leaders who bring together experience from a variety of sectors, Secretary Schafer certainly is that. He has been a corporate leader, as well as an entrepreneur in the private sector. He has been engaged in a range of non-profit efforts. He was also a very successful two-term Governor in North Carolina. And he is bringing all of these strengths and background and knowledge to bear on hunger issues, both here in the United States and over the seas. Please welcome Secretary Ed Schafer (Applause.)

SECRETARY SCHAFFER: Thank you, everyone. Thank you for the warm welcome here today. It is a great day in America, and I am really honored to be with you here. I am proud to be a part of this program and

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congratulate you all for being with us. You know, I see that you are having lunch. I can hear the silverware clanking and the glasses being raised. Please continue to do so. Get up and get seconds, visit with your neighbor, do whatever. You know, as a former Governor, I'm used to speaking to the legislature.

(Laughter.) But thank you all.

I see that we have Ambassador Mark Dybul with us here today. He is the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. Thanks, Mark, for being with us. And, you know, it is kind of fun to be up here at the podium today. I see the President is speaking shortly. Kind of feels like I am at the concert. You know, you have to have the warm-up act? (Laughter.) I have to tell you that in my first times in the office, when I would appear on the same stage with the President, I just was to stand there. I didn't say anything. I didn't have a speaking role. So I guess that I have passed that probation period now. (Laughter.) And I am glad to be here, with some comments today, for this important issue.

I really am pleased to join you for our faith-based and community initiatives, and how they have helped the United States Department of Agriculture provide food to Americans in need. This national conference on research, evaluation, and outcomes is clearly a partner, and we want to recognize your efforts there at USDA. You know, last week I had the honor to tour Iowa with President Bush. The floods have devastated many people there, and it reminded me of a situation we faced in my state after the Red River flood of 1997. And Jedd, by the way, it is North Dakota, not North Carolina. (Laughter.) A little different geography. Hey, that is 50 percent right, it's great. But -- (Laughter.) But it reminded me when we were at the flood waters about the devastation that we saw in North Dakota in 1997. You know, that was the largest forced evacuation and the 1,000-year flood event, the biggest flood event in the history of the United States of America before Katrina. I was Governor at the time, and I remember the frustrations of being there and knowing that there is only so much you can do.

You know, the state provided some money to help with recovery efforts, the Federal Government weighed in with dollars and resources, and the money certainly is important -- very important. It pays for the new sheet rock and the new carpeting at needed homes. It pays for people to stay in a location when they have been flooded out and their homes have been destroyed. But so much of the really critical work is done by faith-based and community organizations. They are the ones that send the people, the hands, that come in and lug out those water-logged carpets, that muck out the mud that is left after the waters recede, and who lovingly clean off the photos and the keepsakes of the family, and help bring that family back together.

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They provide the human touch that helps people get back on their feet. And that's why we, in government, need you as partners.

Working together, we can address people's needs in their entirety, so that we are not only looking at one aspect of a problem, but all. At USDA, our faith-based and community initiatives have clearly helped us address the many challenges that we face today. Fighting hunger in America is one of our core missions. Roughly two-thirds, or \$62 billion, out of our \$95 billion budget is set aside for nutrition assistance programs. We believe that no one in this country should go hungry. And since 2001, our funding for nutrition assistance in the United States has nearly doubled. We have 15 nutrition assistance programs that provide children and low-income Americans access to food, to a healthy diet, and to nutrition education.

All told, our programs reach one in every five Americans. Our Women, Infants, and Children's program should benefit well over eight million participants this year. Our school lunch program provides means for more than 32 million of our youngsters. And our Food Stamp program reaches 27 million people each month. Another part of our Food Stamp program, importantly, these days is our disaster assistance Food Stamp programs, where we can go into disaster areas and provide opportunities to buy food, even if you haven't previously qualified for the Food Stamp program.

Our partnerships with faith-based and community organizations are critical to the success of nutrition programs. For instance, many Americans who are eligible for Food Stamp assistance don't take advantage of this program, often because they aren't aware of the food stamps or where you get them or how you do it. In the last three years, USDA has awarded nearly \$4 million to 43 faith-based and community organizations to help reach out to these people. Outreach efforts with partnerships, with you, your organizations, helped us boost participation in the Food Stamp program by 11 percent between 2000 and 2005. And that is a success that must be celebrated. But still, as always, there is much work to be done, both here at home and abroad.

Along with our domestic nutrition programs, USDA has a wide array of programs to provide food aid to people in need overseas. The United States is the world's largest provider of food aid. We consistently provide more than half of the food aid distributed in the world today, helping feed about 68 million people. The generosity of our country is astounding, and I am proud to represent our country when we see the impact of half of the food aid given across the world today. Our Food for Progress program donates commodities to people in developing countries that support democracy. And our Food for Education program helps support education and nutrition for nearly 1.5 million of the world's poorest

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children. Both programs are distributed with the help of faith-based and non-profit organizations. With the world's population growing by around 50 million people every year, this assistance is only going to grow more critical for all of us.

What I find most inspiring is how much people really want to help each other. In fact, I find that pretty often the biggest barrier that is keeping Americans from helping their neighbors in need isn't a lack of desire -- that's there -- but it's a lack of know-how. And that's why I am pleased to announce today that USDA is launching a new program called Fight for Hunger initiative, in order to help all Americans join USDA in the battle against hunger. (Applause.) Thank you. Right before I left North Dakota to come to Washington, D.C. -- quite a change, mind you -- but right before I left there was a group of high school students who visited a food bank. And for some reason, they were profoundly impacted by that visit. They saw people getting food that needed it. They saw the effort that it took to collect the food, to get it, to assemble it and distribute it, and they decided they wanted to get involved and they went back and they talked to their classmates. They traveled around and knocked on doors in the business community. They went to their church congregations and encouraged them to participate, and put a program together called Fill the Dome. We have a big covered dome, sports dome, in Fargo, and they started a program called Fill the Dome, with food. And they did a terrific job. And when I came out here, I thought, you know, we need to learn how to do that from those students, how to get involved in the community and leverage the assets that we put in to feed hungry people. So we've created this program based on the work that those students did, and our Fight Hunger initiative is now being launched today.

We have created an online tool kit that contains the step-by-step guides to start projects in your community, ranging from food drives to planting community gardens. We are also encouraging people to share their ideas on how to make a difference. You can nominate someone in your community doing the good work for the Fighting Hunger Initiative Award. It used to be called the Secretary's Award when we started it, but I think the lawyers got involved and there may be a different Secretary soon. So it's now the Fight Hunger Initiative Award. (Laughter.) But we really hope that this tool serves as an inspiration and a guide for communities, for people to get involved in the nutrition and nutrition needs of the people in their neighborhoods and in their communities across the nation. It was created in the same spirit as the faith-based and the community initiatives.

You know, I am a mechanic by nature. I grew up building automobile engines. And I like building things and getting moving parts together to create this kind of functional hole. And I look at the food

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problem and the hunger problem that way. I look at it kind of as a mechanical problem. There are jobs that need big tools, that need big things. The government is good at doing that, at providing the resources and the dollars that have an impact on the larger picture. But that's not only the work that needs to be done. To really fine tune things, you need those smaller tools as well, that precision tool that gets right to the heart of the work. You need to get local and personal. And that is where faith-based and community organizations can help so much. You provide that delicate work, the fine tuning, the detailed knowledge.

All together, we can make things run out there. And I am proud to work with the faith-based and community organizations, and I hope that we can continue to expand and improve our partnerships in the future. Thank you very much for your time today. I wish you Godspeed in all your work. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR KIMONYO: Thank you very much. I am also a former Governor. (Laughter.) And I now privileged to serve my country and this great nation as an Ambassador. My task this afternoon is to introduce a friend and a humble man, that I have ever seen, a public servant who has demonstrated extraordinary efficiency and a capacity to serve American people and the other nations. And this man is Ambassador Mark Dybul.

Ambassador Mark Dybul serves as the United States Global AIDS Coordinator, leading the implementation of President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. He previously served on the planning task force for the emergency plan, and was the lead for the Department of Health and Human Services for President Bush's International Prevention of Mother and Child HIV Initiative. Ambassador Dybul is a physician and holds the rank of Assistant Surgeon General and Rear Admiral in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. He is also a former member of the World Health Organization's Writing Committee, to develop global HIV therapy guidelines. He lives in Washington, but he is from Wisconsin. Please join me to welcome Ambassador Dybul. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR DYBUL: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, and thank you for the partnership of the people of Rwanda in the fight against global HIV/AIDS. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here and for your inspirational comments. Thanks to Jay Hein for his leadership and his friendship to all of us, and to me personally. It is really wonderful to be here with all of you today to discuss a great work of compassion - the President's emergency plan for AIDS relief, also known as PEPFAR. It is the largest international

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health initiative in history dedicated to a single disease. It's a rather extraordinary statement with strong bipartisan support.

The American people will commit \$18.8 billion for five years to achieve aggressive goals to turn the tide against HIV/AIDS. President Bush set very aggressive goals for us as a people. The American people will support treatment for two million HIV- positive individuals, will support the prevention of seven million new infections, and will support care for ten million people, including the least of these, orphans and vulnerable children.

We are well on our way to achieving these goals, and the President will provide you an update in a few minutes. Why have the American people made this massive commitment of treasure and of our heart? Well, the principal reason is humanitarian, and I think one most people in this room would understand. Twenty million people have died from this disease globally -- 20 million people. And we couldn't stand by and watch the 40 million people who are currently infected also die, nor could we stand by and observe as millions upon millions more became infected.

As President Bush often quotes, "To whom much is given, much is required." And it's that impulse that led to this massive effort. But HIV/AIDS is also somewhat unique. Unlike most diseases that kill the very young or very old, HIV/AIDS kills 15- to 50-year olds, the most productive and reproductive part of society. HIV/AIDS is decimating a generation of parents, teachers, health care workers, bread winners, and peacekeepers, rending the social fabric, and creating hopelessness and despair. And where there is hopelessness and despair, there is a breeding ground for radicalism, and that is not in our interest. But we also made this massive commitment to fight HIV/AIDS because we knew it could be done.

Five years ago the skeptic said it couldn't be done, the goals couldn't be met. And we're proving them wrong. We knew it could be done, because PEPFAR is part of what President Bush has called "a new era in development" -- a new era that is founded in the dignity and worth of every human life, a new era that moves beyond notions of donors and recipients with a foundation and partnership between equals, with the belief that with a little support seemingly ordinary people will do extraordinary things. And a new era based on achieving results and measuring success by lives saved and people lifted up.

Together we have proven the skeptics wrong, and we have shattered the pernicious and paternalistic myth that people in resource-poor countries could not manage complex chronic diseases and, in fact, can scale them up on national and continental scale. Although the expansion of HI prevention and treatment services has been national and continental in scale, it begins one person, one family, one

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community at a time. And that is why the faith- and community-based organizations are so important to us, because they have a reach and credibility in the hearts and lives of individuals, families, and communities. Tribal leaders and traditional healers, pastors and moms, monks, rabbis, bishops, and patriarchs, friends and neighbors, are serving one another, restoring life and hope. And as one community-based volunteer in Zambia said, "They are doing it out of love."

Faith communities also own and operate many of the medical facilities that bring health and healing in the developing world. The World Health Organization estimates that 30 to 70 percent of health care in sub-Saharan African is provided by faith- based organizations. We don't have very good statistics, but I would guess that 90 percent of orphan care is provided by faith- and community-based organizations. And because of the reach and credibility in the community, faith- and community-based organizations are key partners in changing behaviors for a healthy lifestyle to prevent HIV infection.

Put simply, the emergency plan could not succeed without the active engagements of faith- and community-based organizations. And so we have sought participation of these organizations in all aspects of the program, and we are encouraged by the fact that more than 80 percent of our partners are local organizations, and 22 percent are faith-based organizations. But we can do better. We know that government grants can seem, and in fact are, cumbersome and difficult. And we know there has not always been a level playing field for faith- and community-based organizations. So to encourage greater participation of these groups with reach and deep commitment in communities, President Bush launched the New Partners Initiative, a \$200 million effort to provide technical support and capacity-building in managing U.S. Government grants, but also so that these organizations could provide services. So far, 50 percent of the New Partner grantees are faith-based organizations.

We will continue our efforts to expand opportunities for faith- and community-based organizations because we know we cannot succeed in the American people's effort to turn the tide against HIV/AIDS without them. But I would also like to gently challenge the organizations to do more, to seek opportunities to grow in capacity and to manage government grants, or to be in consortia that manage such grants, to expand abilities to monitor, evaluate, and report on the good work you are doing. In some traditions, we are called not to be a light under a bushel, but a light atop a mountain, as a beacon to all, showing the way. And sometimes that requires moving past our own comfort zone, learning new approaches and methodologies, and learning new techniques to share knowledge and wisdom with others.

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You know, we talk a lot about number of people served, number of lives saved. But it really comes from the community, and the communities tell us the impact of these programs. Sam Gbende in Kampala Uganda describes the impact of the President's emergency plan in his community. He said five years ago, on weekends, the streets of Kampala were filled with coffins and hearses, because in Africa many people go home to their world homes to be buried. And so many people were dying from HIV/AIDS that literally the streets were packed with coffins and hearses. Now, on the weekends, the streets of Kampala have been returned to the normal congested and awful traffic that Kampala should have -- of cars and people and bicycles and a general cacophony of normal life. That is the impact of HIV/AIDS in Kampala. (Applause.)

These programs are not only good for communities abroad, they are good for our own communities. As President Bush has said, these types of programs are good for our national conscience, our national soul. They are also good for the view others have of Americans. People in distant lands know what we stand for when we stand with them. I was in rural Namibia not long ago. I visited a small clinic, St. Mary's Clinic, where we're -- that the American people are supporting. A young doctor there, one of the most brilliant people I have met, went through a beautiful slide presentation, very scientific, of the work and of the lives that were being saved, with the support of the American people. His last slide read, "God Bless America." God Bless America, in rural Namibia. (Applause.)

So much has been done, but so much more remains to be done. So looking to the future, let's continue to dare to dream, to have the temerity to hope, and the courage and openness of spirit to move forward together in the service of others. For as President Bush always quotes, to whom much is given, much is required. And working together, everything is possible. And now it's my great opportunity to announce what partnerships and possibility can do. I have the honor of announcing the winner of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiative's Portraits of Compassion video contest, in the category of international service. I have actually seen the work of the awardee, and it is truly wonderful, life-giving, and work that lifts up the community. The winner is Free Wheelchair Mission. This organization provides high-quality, low-cost wheelchairs to individuals living in poverty around the world. These wheelchairs bring both mobility and an affirmation of dignity for many who have come to expect living without either. Since its founding in 2001, Free Wheelchair Mission has sent more than 300,000 wheelchairs to 76 countries, from Afghanistan to Malawi, from Nepal to Sudan. While most of their funding is raised privately, the U.S. Agency for International Development is proud to be a partner in Free

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Wheelchair Mission's good work. So now you have the privilege of seeing the video of this great work. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. ESPINOZA: Good afternoon. My name is Edith Espinoza. After 13 years of living with abuse, I had enough courage to leave my husband, and I moved to San Diego, California, with my two young daughters. After staying in a homeless shelter for two months, I entered a transitional housing program called Enido. Thanks to a great deal of help from the program, my daughters and I moved into our own apartment that I am solely support. Now I plan to pursue a degree in child development to become a social worker, so that - (Applause.) Thank you. So that I can help other women. The President's initiative has supported organizations like Enido, who serve people like me. It is my honor and pleasure to introduce the President of the United States, George W. Bush. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Please be seated. (Applause.) How beautiful was that? From being a homeless mother of two to introducing the President of the United States. (Applause.) There has to be a higher power. I love being with members of the armies of compassion, foot soldiers in helping make America a more hopeful place. Every day you mend broken hearts with love. You mend broken lives with hope. And you mend broken communities with countless acts of extraordinary kindness.

Groups like yours have harnessed a power that no government bureaucracy can match. So when I came to Washington, my goal was to ensure that government made you a full partner in our efforts to serve those in need. And the results have been uplifting. And that's what we're here to talk about today. It's an opportunity to celebrate your achievements, to thank you for your life-changing work, and to look ahead to ways that you will extend your record of compassion in the years to come.

I really want to thank Jay Hein, and those who worked hard to put on this conference. It looks like it's a successful one from here. (Applause.) I'm honored that members of the administration have come -- the Attorney General, Judge Michael Mukasey. Mr. General, thanks for coming. Secretary Ed Shafer, Department of Agriculture; Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Department of Commerce; Director John Walters, Office of National Drug Control Policy -- thank you all for taking time to be here. (Applause.)

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Ambassador Mark Dybul, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator -- Mark, thanks for coming, appreciate you being here. I'm going to talk about PEPFAR in a minute. But when I talk about PEPFAR, think about his extraordinary leadership, as I do.

I want to thank the Ambassador from the Republic of Rwanda. Mr. Ambassador, I'm proud you're here. And I want to thank all of those who have come around the country who work in our Faith-Based and Community Initiative for your leadership and your compassion and your decency.

You know, when I ran for President, like a lot of others around our country, I was troubled to see so many of our citizens' greatest needs going unmet. Too many addicts walked the rough road of recovery alone. Too many prisoners had the desire for reform, but no one showed them a way. Across the country, the hungry and the homeless and the sick and the suffering begged for deliverance -- and too many heard only silence.

And the tragedy that was -- a lot of good folks in America, a lot of good men and women who had the desire to help, but didn't have the resources -- they had the heart, but not the resources. And because many of them worked with small charities, they were overlooked by Washington as potential partners in service. And because many of them belonged to faith-based organizations, they were often barred from receiving support from the federal government.

So I set about to change that, at least from the federal perspective, with an approach called "compassionate conservatism." This approach was compassionate because it was rooted in a timeless truth: that we ought to love our neighbors as we'd like to be loved ourselves. (Applause.) And it was conservative, because it recognized the limits of government: Bureaucracies can put money in people's hands, but they cannot put hope in a person's heart. (Applause.)

Putting hope in people's hearts is the mission of our nation's faith-based and community groups. And today we're going to herald some of the results of the collective work of compassionate Americans. To me, it does not matter if there's a crescent on your group's wall, a rabbi on your group's board, or Christ in your group's name. If your organization puts medicine in people's hands, food in people's mouths, or a roof over

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people's heads, then you're succeeding. (Applause.) And for the sake of our country, the government ought to support your work. (Applause.)

I was reviewing my first major policy speech as a candidate for President. It seems like a long time ago -- (laughter) -- July 22, 1999. Here's what I said. I said: "In every instance where my administration sees a responsibility to help people, we will look first to faith-based organizations, charities, and community groups that have shown their ability to save and change lives. We will make a determined attack on need, by promoting the compassionate acts of others."

As President, my first executive order was to establish the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the White House. (Applause.) And my next one led to the creation of Faith-Based and Community offices at 11 federal agencies. These offices were tasked with this new mission: to lower the legal and institutional barriers that prevented government and faith-based groups from working as partners -- and to ensure that the armies of compassion played a central role in our campaign to make America more promising and more just.

We've carried out this mission in two ways: First, we have helped level the playing field for faith-based groups and other charities -- especially small organizations that have struggled to compete for funds in the past. We've educated religious groups about their civil rights. We've made the federal grant application process more accessible and transparent. We've trained thousands of federal employees to ensure that government does not discriminate against faith-based organizations. We've ensured that these groups do not have to give up their religious character to receive taxpayer money. (Applause.)

With these steps, we followed a principle rooted both in our Constitution and the best traditions of our nation: Government should never fund the teaching of faith, but it should support the good works of the faithful. (Applause.)

Second, my administration has advanced policies that yield greater support for faith-based and community groups. In other words, it's one thing to talk it; it's another thing to act. So we worked with Congress -- and we've had a lot of help in the Congress. By the way, this wasn't an easy idea for some to swallow in the

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Congress. (Laughter.) And yet we did have good help. We amended the tax code to provide greater incentives for charitable donations, and we established what's called the Compassion Capital Fund, to help faith-based and community groups operate more efficiently and secure additional funding from the private sector. This year, we launched what's called the Pro Bono Challenge, a three-year campaign to encourage corporate professionals like accountants and lawyers to share their time and expertise with groups such as yours.

In all these ways, the administration has upheld its promise to treat community and faith-based organizations as trusted partners. We've held your organizations to high standard and insisted on clear results. And your organizations have delivered on those results. You've helped revolutionize the way government addresses the greatest challenges facing our society. I truly believe the Faith-Based Initiative is one of the most important initiatives of this administration. (Applause.)

I would like to share with you some of your record. Faith-based and community groups have revolutionized the way our government shelters the homeless. Together, we've worked to reduce the number of Americans who go to sleep each night vulnerable and exposed, unsure of where they'll sleep tomorrow. For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has partnered with faith-based and community groups to find homeless Americans safe places to stay. And according to the most recent data, this program has helped reduce the number of chronically ill [sic] homeless by nearly 12 percent -- getting more than 20,000 Americans off the street. (Applause.)

Faith-based and community groups have revolutionized the way we help Americans break the chains of addiction. Through our Access to Recovery program, we provide addicts with vouchers that they can redeem at treatment centers of their choice. So far, Access to Recovery has helped approximately 200,000 addicts along the path to clean lives. (Applause.) And many have been inspired to call upon a higher power to help them break the chains of addiction. (Applause.)

One person who's turned her life around through this program is Ramie Siler. You don't know Ramie yet, but you're about to. Ramie was once lost to substance abuse and depression. Even when she tried to get clean for her daughter's high-school graduation, Ramie could not break free from her addiction. And then

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she found a faith-based group, a group of decent citizens reaching out to people like Ramie. It was called The Next Door. At The Next Door, Ramie met people who stood by her during the difficult times of recovery. They gave Ramie a second chance to become a productive citizen and a good mother. Today, she's reunited with her daughter, Dawn. She helps other women as a Next Door case manager. And I'd like to tell you what she said. She used the words of Saint Paul: "Old things have passed away; behold, all things are becoming new." (Applause.)

Ramie is with us today, with a Vanderbilt sophomore -- her daughter, Dawn. Ramie, where are you? (Applause.) There they are. (Applause.)

So you applaud for Ramie -- but you're also applauding for those compassionate souls at The Next Door. (Applause.) Faith-based communities -- our faith community is doing a fantastic job of saving lives.

Faith-based and community groups have revolutionized the way our government helps the children of prisoners. It's hard to imagine what it's like for a child to have to enter a prison gate just to get a hug from a mom or a dad. Government can't hug these kids -- but it can support caring mentors who do. Through our Mentoring Children of Prisoners program, we've joined with faith-based and community groups to match nearly 90,000 children of prisoners with adults who offer love and guidance and a positive example.

Faith-based and community groups have revolutionized the way our government gives prisoners across America a second chance. In the past, government frequently ignored groups like yours in its efforts to help former prisoners become productive citizens -- like, it just didn't enter people's minds that the faith-based and community groups could actually help change lives. Yet through the Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative that we created in 2004, we've enlisted faith-based and community groups to help provide services like job placement and mentoring programs for thousands of former inmates. Really what we did is help them find love.

And the work has made a huge difference. Nationwide, 44 percent of prisoners are rearrested within a year of their release. Yet among prisoners that have been helped by people like people in this room, the number is three times lower -- just 15 percent. (Applause.)

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Faith-based and community groups have helped a lot in America, and they've help revolutionize the way our government alleviates suffering and disease around the world. I'm about to describe some of our programs. But oftentimes I'm asked, why? Why do you care what happens outside of America? I believe to whom much is given, much is required. (Applause.) And I believe we got plenty of capacity to help people at home and abroad. (Applause.) And I believe it is in the moral interests of the United States to help when it comes to defeating malaria, for example.

Malaria is a disease which kills one African child every 30 seconds. And it is something we can do something about. The U.S. government launched a five-year, \$1.2 billion initiative in 2005 to cut the number of malaria-related deaths in 15 African nations by half. With strong support from groups like yours, our Malaria Initiative is producing results, tangible results. In just over two years, it's reached more than 25 million people.

The island of Zanzibar, which is affiliated with Tanzania, the infection rate has gone from 20 percent of babies born to less than 1 percent of babies born in 16 months. (Applause.)

The organizations about which I'm talking today are vital to the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, known as PEPFAR. We got to give everything initials in Washington. (Laughter.) We launched this program in 2003 -- this is a program that Ambassador Dybul runs so effectively. We launched this program in 2003 -- when we launched it there was about 50,000 people in Sub-Sahara Africa that were receiving anti-retroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS. As a result of a focused campaign, I'm pleased to announced that today we support treatment for nearly 1.7 million people. Think about that. (Applause.)

And one of the beautiful things about this initiative is that we're saving babies. To date, PEPFAR has allowed nearly 200,000 African babies to be born HIV-free. (Applause.)

These new numbers show the program is a huge success. And it would not have been a -- nearly the success it's been without the partners who carry out the work -- without the faith-based community that is on the front line of saving lives, not only here at home, but in places like Africa.

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You know, it's been amazing to watch this experience; people who report back to Mark and myself talk about what's called the "Lazarus effect" -- where communities were once given up for dead have now found new life and new hope. (Applause.)

I traveled to -- you know, we had a fantastic trip to Africa; Laura and I went. And the outpouring of love for the American citizens is great. I mean, it is such an honor to represent our country, and to see the hard work of the American citizens and the generosity of the American citizens paying off in the smiling faces that line the road.

When we were in Tanzania we went to visit a clinic where a 9-year-old girl was HIV-positive, and she'd lost both her parents to AIDS. And for the last year, Catholic Relief Services had been helping the girl. And her grandmother said this: "As a Muslim, I never imagined a Catholic group would help me like that." And she went on to say, "I'm so grateful to the American people."

The United States Senate must follow the lead of the United States House and reauthorize this vital program. (Applause.)

I really am grateful for those who are here and those around the country who serve in the armies of compassion. It didn't require a government law to get you to sign up. You chose to do so out of the goodness of your heart. We made great strides in fulfilling the goal, and I am confident that the progress that you have made over the last eight years will continue.

I'm confident because the movement is bigger than politics or any political party. (Applause.) This is not a political convention. This is a compassion convention. (Applause.) This is "we don't care about politic" convention. (Applause.) We care about saving lives.

You realize that 35 governors have faith-based offices -- 19 of them Democrats, 16 of them Republicans. Seventy mayors of both parties have similar programs at the municipal level.

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I'm confident that this initiative has built a powerful grassroots network. We've trained over 100,000 social entrepreneurs. Isn't that amazing, in this brief period of time -- 100,000 people have been trained. Last year we provided more than 19,000 competitive grants to community and faith-based organizations. Why? Because we want to change America for the better. We want people to be able to be empowered to do their work of love and compassion, and bringing dignity to every human life. We've laid the foundation for an effort that will continue transforming lives long after I've been back to Texas. (Laughter and applause.)

I am confident about the power of this program because the initiative has tapped into the compassionate spirit of America. Over the past seven years, more of our fellow citizens have discovered that the pursuit of happiness leads by following the path of service. It's amazing what happens when you love somebody like you like to be loved yourself; your own soul is enriched. More citizens are understanding that by serving, you serve yourself. Americans have volunteered in record numbers; 60 million people have volunteered in America this year, nearly a third of them through faith-based groups. It's an amazing statistic, isn't it? It really speaks to the great beauty of our country.

I'm confident because I know how easily the compassionate spirit can spread. There's an interesting story that I want to share with you about Ugandan women who helped -- have been helped by PEPFAR. These were good souls who worked in a mine. They crushed rocks into gravel by hand. And it is tough work, really hard work. Then they heard about Katrina, and somehow they scraped together \$1,000, and they gave it to the U.S. Embassy for the storm's victim. And one woman said with pride: "We are now donors." (Applause.)

But I'm confident above all because I know the character of the men and women gathered in this hall. In your countless quiet acts of grace, you serve the highest ideals of our nation. These are the ideals that preserve America as the beacon of hope, the great light of freedom.

A few years ago, I met a young guy named Elijah Anyieth. Elijah was a little boy, and his village was bombed during Sudan's civil war. He lost both his parents, and spent years wandering from one refugee camp to another. Eventually, he resettled in Virginia -- thanks to a partnership between a faith-based group and the State Department. Once Elijah arrived, a local Catholic charity found him a place to call home. He came to a foreign soil after wandering in refugee camps, and he found some love.

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He enrolled in high school. Just last month, he graduated from college. He's landed his dream job: The boy who grew up without electricity or running water is now a mechanical engineer. (Applause.) Elijah, where are you? There he is, right there. (Applause.) You applaud for a good man named Elijah, but also for those kind souls who share in the great story of this good man. (Applause.)

It's only in a place like America -- think about it, think about our country for a second -- could a life nearly extinguished by hate be restored by love and compassion. (Applause.)

So I've been proud to stand by you as you have worked these miracles across our country. You probably don't even realize some of the acts of kindness are miracles. I'm telling you they are. And you can find it in the hopeful expressions on the people you've helped. And so I thank you for your efforts. I thank you for your life-changing work. And I thank you for your record of compassion that I'm confident you will build on in the years to come. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless our country. (Applause.)