

SPOT 31'S FAITH-BASED PERSPECTIVE

What is a "faith-based organization?"

A faith-based organization is an organization that is directly connected to a faith community (a group of people organized around a religious or spiritual belief system), that may have a religiously-oriented or religiously-informed mission statement, that may receive significant support from religious organizations, and/or may be initiated by a religious institution.

There are many service organizations affiliated with or initiated from within religious communities. These service organizations came into being as a formal way to carry out their communities' spiritual commitments. Some, such as Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, the Salvation Army, and United Jewish Communities, maintain an active identification with a particular denomination. Others, such as Goodwill Industries and the YMCA, began as faith-based service initiatives but are no longer identified with religious communities. Regardless of their degree of association with their respective faith communities, all are critical elements in the agency landscape within a community. In smaller communities, they may be the only service providers available.

What are the benefits to partnering with or receiving services from a faith-based organization?

Experience has shown that many things are possible when community partners work together with faith-based groups with integrity and mutual respect:

- Strengthening of community ties and improved neighborhood health for residents.
- Geographic, neighborhood and school renewal.
- Stretching of public resources to help individuals improve their assets.
- Providing children and youth services to create positive environments for families and neighborhoods, promoting positive peer influences, and modeling for families of how to build and sustain a supportive community that can work together for change.

What does it mean for SPOT 31 to be a faith-based organization?

SPOT 31 is wholly-owned by St. Matthew's United Methodist Church--a small, neighborhood-based Christian faith congregation in east Tulsa. This congregation, along with state and national United Methodist Church (UMC) agencies, offers substantial support to SPOT 31. In addition, we rely on Search Institute, the nation's foremost authority on the attitudes and behaviors of children and youth, to help us strengthen a child's developmental assets; Search Institute is substantially supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA).

SPOT 31's hopeful and expansive vision of "all children and youth growing into healthy adults" reflects the UMC's larger Social Principles, a set of quadrennial resolutions which guide the UMC's relationship with the world. This faith-based vision expresses the hopes held by many of our neighborhood families, teachers and schools for their children, regardless of their religious affiliations or beliefs. Therefore, by furthering the common good, and in partnership with many different "secular" and religious institutions--including non-Christian faiths--SPOT 31 remains faithful to its own religious heritage. Proselytism is not a part of SPOT 31's faith-based DNA and is never practiced or tolerated.

SPOT 31 believes that spiritual development within a religious tradition is an asset. Therefore, some of our programs offer optional child-appropriate Christian ecumenical (cross-denominational), interfaith (cross-religion), value/character development, and faith diversity experiences. In doing this, SPOT 31's first goal is to help strengthen a family's existing religious faith. Therefore, children participate in these optional offerings only with parental/guardian understanding and permission. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to and sometimes do accompany their children during these times.

When SPOT 31 provides school campus-located club activities, we rigorously follow the expectations and instructions of the schools and institutions we serve. And because we know that spiritual health is just one of many assets that every child needs to become a healthy adult, here is SPOT 31's bottom-line: we are passionate about furthering a child's (and their family's) holistic development and growth. Helping a child strengthen their reading skills, for example, is therefore just as important to us as any religious practice we can think of.

Please direct any questions you have about SPOT 31's faith-based understanding to the [Executive Director, Debbie Gant](#).