

## Concord's Jericho Road Project is set to expand

By Patrick Ball/Staff Writer

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CONCORD - Just after the turn of the millennium, a group of church members and leaders of [First Parish](#) in Concord set out to fix the fabled road to Jericho.

They developed an idea of matching the professional talents of their suburban volunteer pool with the needs of community-based organizations in nearby Lowell to help the organizations to become economically self-sustaining. And they named it the Jericho Road Project, after the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s sermon.

Nearly a decade later, they're extending it all the way to Pasadena, Calif.

"This is an incredible moment in time, when America is at an unprecedented place where things are collapsing and nonprofits are on the frontline," said [Dan Holin](#), executive director of the Jericho Road Project. "You have an incredible alignment between demand from nonprofits for that expertise and a supply that is experienced. Jericho Road is poised to bridge that supply and demand."

Jericho Road is meeting this challenge by increasing its number of sites from two to five over the next 18 months, as Jericho Road Lynn, Jericho Road Worcester and Jericho Road Pasadena will join existing Jericho Road programs, which bridge Concord and Lowell and North Andover and Lawrence.

### The beginning

The idea for Jericho Road Project started cooking in living rooms around Concord, where a group of entrepreneurs, lawyers, venture capitalists and ministers gathered. The a-ha moment, according to Holin, was when they looked around to see the highly trained people who could help build the strength of nonprofits in a long-term way by volunteering their heads instead of their hands.

They set their sights on Lowell, and began building a volunteer base.

"What made Lowell the first choice was that it had deep needs, was welcoming and was different," Holin said. "It has incredible diversity that doesn't exist [in Concord] in terms of architecture and eth-



Photo by Ross Harris

Jericho Road Project volunteer/interior designer Kathy Craig meets with Lowell's Pollard Memorial Library staff and clients.

nicity. It also had an ego — it wanted to go somewhere and so did Jericho Road."

Volunteers came from all over the greater Concord area: Consultants, lawyers, independent business owners, retirees and people between jobs. To date, more than 200 Concordians have volunteered for Jericho Road Project, and Holin says they have a 94 percent success rate connecting them with nonprofits.

"It's very impressive, the caliber of volunteers they have," said Dorcas Grigg-Saito, chief executive officer of the [Lowell Community Health Center](#). "If you look around the city, I think you will find the majority of nonprofits throughout the city are being helped by Jericho Road."

Since the funding services are free, Jericho Road relies on grants and donations for funding. But they are still able to provide an average of 1,700 professional volunteer hours annually to Lowell nonprofits at an average market value of \$150 per hour.

"If I had to assess the monetary value of all the volunteers they've given me over the years, it would be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars," said Diane Testa, director of the [Revolving Museum](#) in Lowell. "It's an amazing model and there is a huge need for it in the nonprofit community."

### Slow growth

Holin says Jericho Road is not actively looking to grow any larger, as it wants to be smart about replication opportunities.

Jericho Road will target smaller, struggling cities where a community-based organization could make a difference by connecting nonprofit organizations with white-collar volunteers who could provide pro

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bono services — marketing, legal, IT services, professional coaching — that nonprofits would otherwise have to contract out.

“One thing we pride ourselves in is our proactive approach to our clients,” Holin said. “We’re not a big funder on a hill that waits for clients to come to us, we’re a gritty nonprofit. We live the lives with our clients.”

Replication was initially reactive. A Unitarian Universalist church from North Andover came to them, and by 2005 they had contractual agreements for a Jericho Road Lawrence. That opportunity led to Jericho Road revisiting its mission.

“The conclusion was that our mission was replication — that Lowell was a premier site, but also a model,” Holin said.

Three sites rolling out over the next 18 months will all be adaptations of that model. Jericho Road Worcester will be led by two faith communities from within the city, General Electric volunteers are at the forefront of Jericho Road Lynn and a UU Church is trying to bridge two sides of the city in Jericho Road Pasadena.

“What appealed to me among other things about Jericho Road is that with very little cost and effort the model allows me to unleash incredible amounts of power and good will that can help

transform the quality of life in my community,” the Rev. Hannah Petrie, associate minister of Neighborhood UU Church in Pasadena, wrote in an e-mail. “It is a program that uses social capital — relationship building and the shared interests between NPOS and volunteers of helping people and being of service on a professional level.”

Petrie said Jericho Road is a different way of doing social justice in the church setting other than the usual kitchen-service model, in that it combines professional talent with the desire to serve.

“The net benefit to the community is ongoing in a paradigm that is more creative; it can have more reverberating effect,” Petrie wrote. “Rather than adapting to the ‘phantom wealth’ economy of Wall Street, this model is suited for the ‘real wealth’ of Main Street, where relationships are the capital, and unlikely friendships can be facilitated for the common good in the long term.”

*The Jericho Road Project is at 20 Lexington Road. For more information, visit [www.jerichoroadproject.org](http://www.jerichoroadproject.org) or call 978-369-9602 ext. 457.*