

## **Words From Our Founder Pastor Sally Fahrenthold**

### ***How did the idea for Partners for Wichita come about?***

As a pastor (retired) I have seen the vitality that energizes congregations when they engage in community service. In past years, I had been developed and served in community services with Kansas City Metro Lutheran Ministry, and in many volunteer positions, especial advocating and developing services for people with developmental disabilities. I especially have enjoyed interfaith and ecumenical efforts. So, when Pastor Dave Fulton suggested adapting his former “Safe Streets” from Topeka and expanding it to engage congregations actively in community service, I said “Let’s do it! Let’s try!! “ We would call it “Partners for Wichita”.

### ***What do you like about developing community services?***

I especially enjoy bringing together people of different walks of life, various faiths and cultures and races, who share concerns for needs and possibilities for action in our community. I have met and worked with wonderful people. Together there have been remarkable results. It is my hope that others, too, will enjoy this way of experiencing belonging to a larger community, being part of the people and places of Wichita where needs are being met. It is also a joy for me to discover that people and congregations of different races and faiths (and differing expressions of my Christian faith) share compassion and good will.

### ***What did you envision for Partners for Wichita?***

We formed the Samaritan Community of Partner for Wichita as a coalition of diverse people to carry out the mission and share ideas in some practical ways, to encourage partnerships among congregations, faith-based organizations public agencies, individuals and other to create greater awareness of needs and service opportunities, and to support and encourage one another in these efforts. I looked for congregations (sometimes of different faiths or parts of town) teaming together as partners to support each other’s projects – more than Partners for Wichita leading community-wide efforts. Interestingly that shifted, especially as “Filling the Gap Lunches for Kids” and has become an important part of many congregations’ community service, this year with 19 sites in partnership plus Kansas Food Bank and many more.

### ***What were some early Partners for Wichita projects?***

One early opportunity was “Community Explorations” when groups dispersed into various neighborhoods to walk around, visit shops and service agencies and get a “feel” for interesting parts of Wichita. Another “first” was “Pedaling for Plainview” – collecting good used bikes with the help of a volunteer repairer and distributing them one day at Colvin Recreation Center. In early days, Pastor Dave and others in Safe Streets initiated community “Walks Against Gang Violence “with widespread community participation. In earlier days we sent frequent emails to congregations and others, offering opportunities for volunteers, donations, events and informative programming and providing indepth information and fliers for several faith based social service agencies.

### ***For the future...?***

It is my dream that Partners for Wichita will strengthen and deepen its partnership with diverse congregations and organizations, and encourage partnerships among them. So much creativity emerges when people of good will come together. The mission will remain important and make a difference in all who take part: To encourage partnerships among congregations, faith-based organizations public agencies, individuals and others to create greater awareness of needs and service opportunities, and to support and encourage one another in these efforts.