



The Dallas Morning News: Natalie Caudill

Faith Focus host Mary Jacobs (center) is joined by guests (from left) Amatullah Mustafa, Souraya Sawas, Mammie Sharrieff and Nazreen Hassan.

Keeping focus

Interfaith program gets past recent setbacks

There have been detours and diversions along the path taken by *Faith Focus*, Dallas' longest-running interfaith television program, but — as the show's title implies — somehow things have always worked out.

A lot of the credit for the 17-year-old-show's recent survival can be given to Virginia Sullivan, its producer since 1997. Through loss of

Art Matters

funding, loss of personnel and loss of a carrying station, Ms. Sullivan has stuck with *Faith Focus*.

"It's the show that will not die," she says with a laugh. Although she was paid for her first six months with the program, she has donated her time ever since. "I've just been unable to let it go. I've never wanted to do a job more."

Part of the show's appeal for Ms. Sullivan is its inclusive nature.

"We don't ask for money, we don't proselytize, and we don't have people arguing over theology," she says.

Past topics have included forgiveness and the challenges that mental illness can pose to faith. An coming program will deal with issues facing Muslim women.

Guests will include Amatullah Mustafa, who was recently ejected from Town East Mall because of her head covering.

Last year Ms. Sullivan brought back Mary Jacobs, who had hosted the program earlier but left to battle Hodgkins' disease. (Ms. Jacobs writes free-lance stories for *The Dallas Morning News*.)

Not long after Ms. Jacobs joined, the show lost not only its funding but its channel as well. Although KXTX (Channel 39) stepped in and offered to carry the show, the pair suffered through a grueling season, trying to balance *Faith Focus* and their families with virtually no funding.

They were just about to throw in the towel when Thanks-Giving Square — a Dallas-based nonprofit organization — stepped in. Although it was unable to provide cash, it allowed the program to use its name and resources to widen fund-raising efforts.

"There's a lot of diversity in North Texas," Ms. Sullivan says. "We want to help people of different traditions understand each other."

DETAILS: *Faith Focus* airs at 6 a.m. Sunday on KXTX (Channel 39) and at 6:30 p.m. on KDTN (Channel 2).

— Matt Weitz