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*At faith-based event, Bush recalls drinking problem*

*By Ayesha Rascoe*

BALTIMORE (Reuters) - President George W. Bush reflected on his battle with alcohol abuse on Tuesday, acknowledging that he once drank too much, as he sought to showcase the religious-based programs that have been one of the controversial initiatives of his presidency.

Bush, who gave up alcohol at age 40, made the comment during a visit to the Jericho program, run by the Episcopal Community Services of Maryland, which helps recently released prisoners re-enter the workforce.

The visit was part of an effort to highlight one of his domestic priorities — providing government funding for religious-based organizations to help their communities.

“Addiction is hard to overcome. As you might remember, I drank too much at one time in my life,” said Bush, who has often stated that religion became a greater part of his life after he gave up alcohol.

“I understand faith-based programs. I understand that sometimes you can find the inspiration from a higher power to solve an addiction problem,” he said.

Faith-based programs like Jericho should not be forced to give up their spiritual underpinning to receive federal funding, Bush said.

Critics of the initiative oppose the use of taxpayers’ money by faith-based groups because it blurs the line separating religion and government.

**Some supporters of the program have also voiced concerns that Bush has not provided as much money to these organizations as he promised. A study by the Rockefeller Institute found the number of faith-based organizations that received federal funding rose to 762 in 2004 from 665 in 2002.**

In his State of the Union address on Monday night, Bush asked Congress to guarantee funding permanently for faith-based groups.