

Buckner marks 125 years of ministry to children, families and the elderly_40504

April 7, 2004

Posted: 4/02/04

The population of the Buckner Orphans Home grew dramatically in the early part of the 20th century, with entire family groups of children accepted as residents. The children pictured were representative of orphans from the Great Depression.

Buckner marks 125 years of ministry to children, families and the elderly

DALLAS-The vision for Buckner Baptist Benevolences began 125 years ago in the heart of R.C. Buckner and his love for “widows and orphans.” Today, it touches points around the globe.

Burdened by a deep concern for the weak and vulnerable, Buckner—a Baptist preacher and editor—traveled Texas to campaign for the creation of an orphans' home. He found an ally in Texas Baptist deacons. After a series of letters, he called for the formation of a Texas Baptist Deacons Convention.

See related articles:

- [Buckner honors BGCT, Park Cities, orphans' home alumnus](#)
- [Buckner marks 125 years of ministry](#)

At the deacons' meeting in Paris, Buckner sponsored a resolution to begin an orphans' home as soon as \$2,000 could be raised, and those present named him fund-raising agent for the project. Under the shade of a spreading oak tree, Buckner passed a hat, putting the first dollar in himself. When the collection was counted, it totaled \$27.



Buckner's Shoes for Orphan Souls humanitarian aid drive, expects to net its 1 millionth pair of new, donated shoes in 2004. The shoes are sent to children in more than 30 countries.

By the end of 1879, Buckner had collected \$1,200, which he supplemented with a personal bank note. On April 9, 1879, a charter was filed with the secretary of state, and in December of the same year, Buckner rented a small cottage in East Dallas to care for the first three orphan children.

Within two years, Buckner had purchased 44 acres six miles east of Dallas, where Buckner Children's Home still operates today. Gradually adding land and property, the home owned more than 500 acres by the turn of the century. The home became almost entirely self-sufficient with its own school, farming operation, bakery, laundry and eventually its own radio station.

But even from those earliest days, the vision of R.C. Buckner was far beyond just the accumulation of land and the building of structures to house the homeless. His was a vision for helping children and families put together the broken pieces of their lives.

Today, Buckner Children and Family Services seeks to strengthen individuals and families through services ranging from parenting classes for incarcerated women to residential treatment for abused and neglected children to extensive non-residential services.

Buckner's vision also included care for senior adults. In the early days, row houses on the edge of the Buckner campus provided a place to live for retired pastors and missionaries who served as grandparents for the children living at the home.

The first “official” retirement community opened in 1954 with the Mary E. Trew Home in Dallas.

Buckner Benevolences now is one of the largest and most diversified private social care agencies of its kind in the nation, serving about 70,000 people each year.

Under the leadership of Ken Hall, the organization's fifth president, Buckner is expanding its ministry to children, families and senior adults.

Buckner Orphan Care International meets the needs of orphaned children around the world, with current programs in Botswana, Bulgaria, China, Guatemala, Kenya, Latvia, Mexico, Romania and Russia.

Through Buckner Orphan Care International's Shoes for Orphan Souls shoe drive campaign, more than 950,000 children in the United States and 30 countries have received new shoes, socks and shoelaces.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.