

CBF workshop encourages college ministers to persevere_71105

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GRAPEVINE (ABP)—“Churches need to do better jobs connecting with college students and keeping them in the denomination,” former college minister Ryan Clark told a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship workshop.

“Students often go to college and don’t get connected to a church,” he said.

Helping college students move into their dorms or inviting them to get involved in the church worship team can help draw them into the fold, Clark added. He also stressed the importance of communicating church activities through fliers, calendars and newsletters to keep those who are interested informed, and said free luncheons draw in students in search of a free meal.

David McDuram, college minister at First Baptist Church of Arlington, encouraged churches with small college groups to persevere. “Free yourself (from) beating yourself up over not having 600 students. ... (It's OK

to) try and fail," McDuram said.

Even if the group is small, it is important for children to know there will be a ministry for them when they start college, he insisted.

Church newsletters keep college students informed when they go to school out of town, he noted. Recreational and mission trips for college students help unite the group.

Clark said college ministries can reach out to more students if they become recognized by the university as an official organization. Once formally recognized, the group can set up information booths during events like orientation and make some contacts.

According to the "M Collegiate Resource," a newsletter issued by McAfee School of Theology, certain things are needed to become a campus organization: a faculty sponsor; a constitution and bylaws; identified student leadership; and meeting times, description of purpose, and instructions on becoming a member.

The newsletter also said relationships are essential to college ministry. "A student will go to your church regardless (almost) of worship style, if they have a personal connection and feel at home in your church," it said.

The newsletter said it's also good for college ministers to have conversations with students outside the church setting.

in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.