

Twenty-two tons of sweet potatoes just one draw at Crossover Triad

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A resident of an upscale neighborhood west of Winston-Salem, N.C., discusses spiritual concerns with Katherine Morris, 18, (left) and Allison Wiggins, 16, members of a youth group from First Baptist Church in Marion, Ark. (BP photo by Bob Carey)

Twenty-two tons of sweet potatoes just one draw at Crossover Triad

By Mike Creswell

N.C. Baptist State Convention

GREENSBORO, N.C.—Baptists threw muscles and prayers into Crossover Triad during the weekend prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, using an international festival biker rally, rodeo, block parties, puppet shows and even sweet potatoes to get a hearing for the gospel.

About 2,000 volunteers served in the weekend evangelistic outreach. By the weekend's conclusion, Mark Gray, church planting director for North Carolina Baptists, predicted the goal of starting 19 churches would be met or exceeded.

Gray expects the fledgling congregations to take wing by the end of the year. Workers are using Crossover events to give an extra push to long-term results, he said.



Emily Adair, 10, (front)
Landis Brown, 10, (middle)
and Amber Numley, 11,
(back) thrilled to a hot-air
balloon ride piloted by Ken
Draughn during a June 10
block party at Life
Community Church in
Jamestown, N.C. (BP Photo
by Bob Carey)

Prayer was an integral part of the planning. Saturday morning, several dozen Baptists gathered at South Elm Street Baptist Church on Greensboro's south side for final instructions and maps to guide them to Crossover events. The plan was for them to "pray on-site with insight" as the prayer-walking philosophy puts it. They were to pray for the people working and the people they wanted to reach with the gospel.

"If there's nobody there, remember, pray anyway, " instructed Glenn

Walker, a member of Faith Community Church in Shelby.

Three Crossover events highlighted significant ministry directions for North Carolina Baptists—bikers, cowboys and internationals. Some of the 160 missionary church planters who work with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina are pushing to get new Baptist churches organized among each of the three groups.

Undoubtedly, the loudest project was the Biker Day and Charity Ride for the Children which drew more than 350 people, most riding motorcycles, to a field near the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro. A motorcycle ride through High Point and Asheboro drew over 175 riders and collected more than \$3,000 for the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina. The Wheelz North Christian Stunt Riding Team performed stunts, spending more time on one wheel than two, it seemed.

Mike Young, event organizer and ministry coordinator for Carolina Faith Riders motorcycle ministry, has been helping churches all across the state establish ministries to reach out to the motorcycle enthusiasts within their local community. He was elated with the turnout.

"It has been an awesome day! God is good! What else can I say?" he asked with a broad smile.



“Red Hot” takes Triad-area bull rider Terry Owens for a wild ride during a June 10 rodeo in Archdale, N.C., sponsored by Triad Cowboy Church. Owens was the only one of 10 riders who stayed on his bull for the required eight seconds. (BP Photo by Jon Blair)

Riders from various Christian motorcycle groups came from all over North Carolina; some also came from Tennessee, Florida and Georgia, he said. A number of non-Christians also attended, but he confessed it’s sometimes hard to tell a T-shirt-and-jeans-clad Christian from a similarly attired non-Christian.

“The idea of the day was to let people know that Jesus can make a difference and I think that has come through loud and clear. Everybody I’ve talked to said they’ve had a great time. And you know, nobody can

walk away from here and say 'I've never heard anything about Jesus,' because the message has certainly been out today And that was our objective," Young said.

The crowd quieted respectfully as Gerald Rinehart of Rinehart Racing took the stage to remind people that Jesus is the only way to get right with God. Rinehart's company engineers exhaust systems for NASCAR and for motorcycles. Mr. Rinehart personally donated a set of Rinehart exhaust systems for the grand prize.

Transportation at the Cowboy Stampede at the Triad Livestock Arena in Archdale was of the four-legged kind, but the atmosphere was just as positive. Hundreds of spectators, many sporting cowboy hats and boots, filled the arena to capacity to watch horseback riders race their mounts around barrels or poles at breakneck speed, competing against the clock and each other. Two cowboys even fired six-shooters and a rifle to shoot balloons, all while galloping at full speed.

The crowd stayed to hear cowboy evangelist Jeff Smith urge the crowd to let Jesus Christ straighten their lives out. Smith wore boots, cowboy hat and jeans as he preached from the middle of the dirt floor arena.

Earlier on Saturday, well over 1,000 people filled the gymnasium of Ben L. Smith High School, a few blocks from the Koury Center, for an International Festival representing 15 nationalities who now live in North Carolina.



A stunt rider from WheelzNorth of Bolivar, Ohio, entertains during a June 10 demonstration in Greensboro, N.C. *BP photo by Bob Carey)

Asian children and Mexican grownups sang songs in their own languages and teenaged girls from India performed traditional Indian dances that seemed to blend traditional dance moves with the latest ones from the Bollywood music movies, all done to booming Asian music.

Organizer Vijay Kumar, who has started churches for Asian Indians, said he was delighted with the great turnout. Outside, a refreshment stand operated by Carolina Baptist Association, handed out snow cones and hot dogs non-stop.

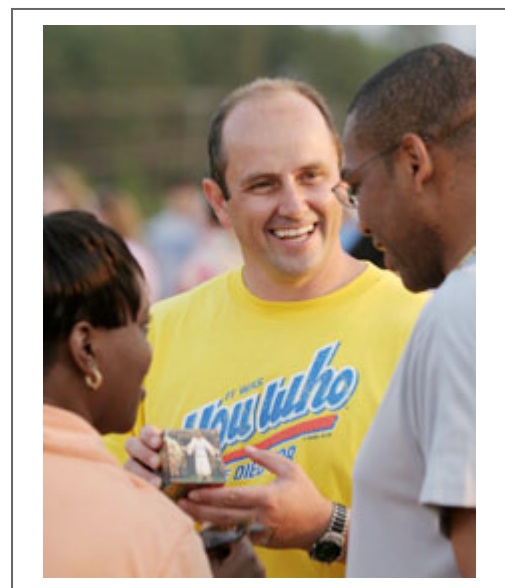
Some groups displayed crafts and items of cultural importance and some people wore their national costumes; kimono-clad Japanese girls walked demurely from the auditorium.

Vietnamese spring rolls and other foods were offered and a Native American group, including some from the Lumberton, N.C. area, handed out sweet potato bread as samples. Registration workers tracked visitors for later follow-up.

Not counting the livestock of the Cowboy Stampede, the heaviest Crossover project was likely the sweet potato one.

On Friday, scores of Baptists sat or knelt around a whopping 44,000-pound mountain of sweet potatoes in a Winston-Salem parking lot as they bagged the potatoes for delivery later to people as a helping ministry.

Joe Royston, who helped organize the Sweet Potato Drop, is a member of First Baptist Church, Downers Grove, Ill., and operates a ministry called Gleaners for the Lord. He said the sweet potatoes were donated by a Louisiana grower, and Pilot Mountain Baptist Association paid to get them shipped to Greensboro for local delivery. The freight was \$3,200, according to Bobby Stafford, Pilot Mountain associational missionary.



Lynn Webb of El Bethel Baptist Church in Morganton, N.C. uses the EvangeCube to share the Gospel with a couple who attended a block party June 10 at Life Community Church in Jamestown, N.C. (BP photo by Bob Carey)

Friday night at Kernersville, members of Main Street Baptist Church threw a block party in a downtown park complete with barbecue, popcorn, music, puppets and games. A 19-member ministry team from Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., provided puppet shows, drama and music, interspersed by preaching from team leader Johnny Crocker, Whiteburg's minister of missions.

The most important contacts undoubtedly took place as Main Street members greeted visitors and invited them to their church. Member David Wood laughed and joked with visitors as he welcomed them.

Some Crossover events were smaller, but still had local significance. Members of Church at the Streams, a new Baptist church meeting in an elementary school, offered free car washes at a bank to get a chance to talk to people. Pastor and church planter Todd Felkel was joined by five-year-old Max Graham who stretched to wash the lower edges of cars under the watchful eye of his mom, Mrs. Lailtrice Graham. Meanwhile members of Hopewell Baptist Church, Morganton, N.C., operated a one-day Vacation Bible School at Sedalia Elementary School's gym, where the church meets on Sundays.

Youth and children minister Rob Castle, Lisa Baker and teenager Sarah Snow helped the children make bracelets of beads to help them learn the

gospel.

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