

# UMHB students invest time in neighborhood children

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Students from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor teach neighborhood children a biblical story about sowing good seed.

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**By Jennifer Sicking**

*University of Mary Hardin-Baylor*

BELTON—Business management student Felicia Cano sees her Tuesday and Thursday afternoons as an investment.

“It really gives us the opportunity to invest in kids’ lives,” said Cano, a [University of Mary Hardin-Baylor](#) junior from Bay City.

“They don’t see love—that anyone cares or is committed most of the time. It

gives us a chance to show Christ's love just by playing with them.”



University of Mary Hardin-Baylor student Allison Daniel helps a neighborhood child on the swings.

Cano and about 20 other University of Mary Hardin-Baylor students spend one hour twice a week playing with children in low-income areas of Belton.

The students team up with [Hope for the Hungry](#), a faith-based international agency.

Ben Ray, who works with the Belton-based organization, said the group focused exclusively on its children homes and missionaries outside the United States for many years, until someone mentioned the unmet needs of local children.

“We’re losing a generation of kids,” Ray said. “They’re not getting the role models growing up. This is a way to reach out to them.”

Twice a week, UMHB students meet at the Baptist Student Ministry wearing red T-shirts proclaiming their mission—“Love kids. Play games. Share Jesus”—before heading to a designated area for ministry.

On a recent Thursday, students knocked on doors in a low-income neighborhood and invited children to play in a nearby park. Soon, about 20 children arrived and joined in a spirited kickball game.

Kat Smith, a freshman Christian ministries major from Fort Worth, sees playing as a way to continue her ministry to children.

“I lived in Mexico for a while, and I interned at an orphanage,” she said. “I loved working with the kids there.”

The Belton ministry offers the kind of personalized attention that allow students to develop meaningful relationships with children, she noted.

“The numbers aren’t too large, so you can get to know the kids,” she said.

Katerina Davila, 11, said she enjoys coming to the park to play with the college students.

“You get to do stuff like kickball,” she said while taking a break from doing cartwheels as she waited her turn to kick the ball. “You get to run and have fun.”

After working off some energy, the children gather in a circle under a shade tree for a drink of cold water and a Bible story. Ray told the children the parable of the farmer sowing seed in his field.

“The seed is the good news that Jesus gives us new life,” Ray said.

While some people, like the ground, reject the seed, others accept the seed by then new life is choked out through rocks or thorns. However, some ground accepts the seed and it grows abundantly.

“When we accept the good news and receive it in, it can change lives,” he said.

The children then spread handfuls of seed on the ground.

Nathan Nipp, a junior history major from Houston, said this is his first year to participate in the ministry.

“Over the summer, I thought I needed to do some sort of outreach,” he said. Upon returning to school, he heard about the ministry and attended a meeting. “I thought this is something I can do.”

Initially, he didn’t see himself as a “kid person,” but involvement in the ministry has given him an opportunity to stretch and grow.

“The more I do this, the more comfortable I get with the kids,” he said. “It’s a good way to get in ministry.”

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