

Crossover participants persevere in spite of downpour

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INDIANAPOLIS—Some people might call it “the Crossover that almost wasn’t.” But Indiana Baptists and hundreds of out-of-state volunteers persevered following torrential rains June 7 to share the gospel and host block parties around Indianapolis as part of the evangelistic emphasis held prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.



Ed Goodman, a student at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College in Pineville, Ky., shares the plan of salvation with Lillyan Whitlow, 6, using an EvangeCube at a block party at Cloverleaf Baptist Church in Indianapolis. The evangelistic outreach was part of Crossover '08, an event cosponsored by North American Mission Board and the State Convention of Baptist in Indiana, which preceded the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting. (BP photo by Jonathan Blair)

Flash flooding closed roads and forced the cancellation of some Crossover events. Another challenge was a significant drop in out-of-state volunteers compared to the previous Crossover Indianapolis effort in 2004. John Rogers, missions and evangelism team leader for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, reported about 500 Baptists outside the Hoosier state came to help, compared to 900 volunteers who mobilized in Indianapolis four years ago.

While he is unsure why the numbers dropped so significantly, Rogers noted local volunteers “stepped up to the plate” to follow through on goals set nearly a year ago.

The Indianapolis-area Crossroads Baptist Association launched “Houses, Hearts, Hope” last year, Rogers said. About 200 volunteers renovated homes, prayerwalked neighborhoods and assisted local churches.

“That was really the beginning of Crossover,” he said, adding that for local Southern Baptists, “Crossover is a process, not an event.”



Asking a boy what is the true meaning of sin, Marcus Redding, pastor of Hull's Grove Baptist Church in Vail, N.C., stamps his name into a horseshoe at a block party at Eastside Baptist Church in Indianapolis. The evangelistic outreach was part of Crossover '08, co-sponsored by the North American Mission Board and the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana. (BP photo by Bob Carey)

Part of that process for five Indianapolis churches was a door-to-door gospel-sharing initiative that began days before the weekend block parties. Terry Lewis, pastor of Eastside Community Baptist Church, said Intentional Community Evangelism teams brought trained lay-evangelists to neighborhoods in great spiritual need. The Eastside congregation hosted a group from White Oak Baptist Church in Houston.

Even before the block parties, weather was an issue. A tornado hit northeast Indianapolis May 31, followed by severe storms throughout the week.

“Sirens went off twice since the tornado,” Lewis said. “We had to come off the streets.”

The weather did not dampen the evangelistic team’s enthusiasm.

“We’ve had two drug dealers make professions of faith,” Lewis said prior to Eastside’s Crossover block party. “A prostitute on 10th (Street) gave her heart to the Lord.”

In all, 130 people living in the immediate area of Eastside Community Baptist made professions of faith in Christ, he said.



Mark Hobafcovich, a Georgia-based urban church planter with the North American Mission Board, shares the gospel with a homeless man in downtown Indianapolis. (BP photo by Jon Blair)

The experience “re-emphasizes for me and for our ... (members) the willingness of people to hear the gospel,” Lewis said.

Tom Polak, pastor of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship and director of church and community ministries for Crossroads Baptist Association, said the work of the five “anchor churches” hosting evangelism teams was key to the 746 salvation decisions made during the week.

“These area churches are known for ministry evangelism,” Polak said. “When ... (the evangelism teams) came in, the field was ready.”



Charles Gilpin prays before a free lunch, offered as part of a block party Gabriel Missionary Baptist Church in Indianapolis hosted. (BP staff photo)

Another successful pre-Crossover effort was a Vacation Bible School hosted by Elim Baptist Church, a Korean congregation in Fishers, Ind., north of

Indianapolis. Pastor Yong Pil Yun said it was the church's first VBS since forming three years ago and would not have been possible without volunteers from Cedar Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.

"We never had anyone qualified to teach small kids and youth," Yong explained. Cedar Creek brought materials and served as mentors for church members, the pastor said. Teenagers assisted, translating for the Korean adults.

Lindsey Bird Cedar Creek said they began the Wednesday-through-Saturday VBS with nine students and concluded with 17. Children "learned five (Bible) verses in four days," said Bird, who teaches sixth grade girls in Sunday school.

Yong said he saw "so many good things" during VBS about "how to approach kids" with the gospel.

Members of Elim Baptist concluded VBS with a community block party. In addition to the Moon Bounce, slide, face painting and Korean-style beef barbecue, guests listened to a concert by the youth choir of First Baptist Church of Biloxi, Miss.