

# Family vacation centers on missions and service

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KANSAS CITY, Kan. (ABP)—Four families packed a church van and headed on summer vacation. Although they only drove a few hours to Kansas City, Kan., this was no ordinary vacation for these Missourians.

This vacation was about sharing God's love through mission projects.

Betty Arrell, Virginia Kreimeyer, and Nelda Taylor of Austin Baptist Association surround a janitor whom they met and prayed for while ministering at City Springs Elementary School in Baltimore during FamilyFEST, a hands-on missions opportunity for families sponsored by Embrace Baltimore, the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, Maryland/Delaware WMU and national WMU. WMU  
PHOTO/Gayla Parker

“What more can you ask for? You get to have fun and tell people about

Jesus at the same time,” 8-year-old Matthew Black said. “It makes you have such a joy in your heart. I’d do it again—any time, any place.”

Black and his family joined more than 100 other volunteers at FamilyFest, a hands-on missions opportunity for families sponsored by Woman’s Missionary Union. The volunteers, ranging in age from 4 to 72 and representing 10 states, did everything from painting and construction to servant ministries to backyard Bible clubs in the Kansas City area.

Meanwhile, 1,100 miles to the east, more than 60 volunteers ages 5 to 77 traveled from seven states to minister in 10 churches and four ministries in Baltimore, Md., during another FamilyFest missions event.

Nelda Taylor, former president of Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas, was part of a team who won a FamilyFest trip during a contest at the 2007 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in San Antonio.

Taylor and her team from Austin Baptist Association served at City Springs Elementary School in Baltimore, where they mopped and cleaned the facility and prayed over the school’s students and teachers.

With rising gas prices, Gena Brown of Richland, Mo., said her family knew they would need to stay close to home this year. So, four families—almost half of their small church—decided to pool their vacation money and do something as part of God’s work.

Brown admits she was not sure how taking young children would work on a mission trip.

“I was afraid they’d get bored or tired,” she said. “But they’ve loved every second of this. The older kids are already talking about what we can do back home for mission projects in our own community.

“That’s exactly what we had hoped for. We wanted to open the kids’ eyes,

as well as our own, to God's will for us to serve others and share his love."



Texan Kathy Jean Applegate from First Baptist Church in Godley fastens some glitter strings to a classroom doorway at Metropolitan Baptist Church, Kansas City, Kansas. Applegate volunteered at the church as part of WMU's FamilyFest.

Twenty-one members of Osawatomie (Kan.) Baptist Church took vacation time as well to cross the state line into Missouri and repair a church. Melissa Cooke, an Osawatomie member, said her congregation decided to participate in FamilyFest as a way to "give back" what they've received.

Almost a year ago, floods flowed through the Kansas town. Soon after, volunteers came to assist. Cooke said volunteers helped at the church, and the church served as a host site.

"Those volunteers were a good example of service to us. They planted the missions seed in our congregation," she said. "When FamilyFest came to our area, we knew it was the perfect opportunity for us to give back. The appeal of this particular missions trip was that it was aimed for families."

Cooke's three children worked alongside her and her husband, Brian, throughout the week. Eleven-year-old Shelby Cooke and her dad joined the youth group to paint hallways and stairwells.

“Dad, I bet the church people are surprised when they see this,” Shelby said, while painting the stairwell a vibrant red. “I think they will feel loved just like we felt loved.”

*With additional reporting by Shannon Baker*