

Beach Reach marked new high in professions of faith

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Ten days of intensive ministry to college students on South Padre Island yielded the highest number of professions of faith in Christ for any Beach Reach event in recent memory.



Beach Reach volunteers offered free pancake breakfast to students on spring break—and prayed for those who allowed them to do so. (Photo / Texas Baptists)

Through Beach Reach, a spring break outreach ministry organized by Texas Baptists, 1,256 volunteers provided van rides, served pancakes and prayed for the spiritually lost. As a result, 276 individuals accepted Jesus.

The number of gospel conversations and shared prayers also increased over the previous year, said Joe Osteen, Beach Reach coordinator and Baptist Student Ministry regional director for East Texas.

Osteen attributed the increases to the Spirit of God and preparations made.

“We just really saw God move and students be available and ready and willing,” Osteen said.

“We’ve been working to grow and establish an evangelistic culture statewide. We’ve been working to have some shared tools and language, prioritizing personal evangelism.

“I think that was on display at Beach Reach this year with how prepared our BSM students were.”

Forty-four groups consisting of BSM students and leaders, churches from across Texas and beyond, and ministry partners like Texans on Mission—formerly Texas Baptist Men—converged on the island to support the two-week effort.

‘Shine the light of Jesus in a dark place’

Osteen noted students gather on the island each spring for various reasons, including to relax, blow off steam and party. He described the environment in which Beach Reach volunteers minister as dark.



More than 1,200 Beach Reach volunteers offered free van rides to spring break partiers on South

Padre Island, and used those rides as occasions to start spiritual conversations. (Photo / Texas Baptists)

“We serve pancakes right outside one of the biggest clubs on the island. We get to meet them where they are and shine the light of Jesus in a dark place,” he said.

“Meeting them where they are provides such great opportunities to share the gospel.”

Undergirding the entire Beach Reach effort is an intentional student-led prayer ministry held in the sanctuary of Island Baptist Church. The South Padre Island congregation has provided facilities and supported Beach Reach for years.

As volunteers give van rides and serve pancakes, navigators in those vans share prayer requests through social media accounts. Students in the church’s prayer room read those requests and lift them in prayer from 8 p.m. to 3 a.m. each day.

Osteen said the Beach Reach training stresses the importance of prayer.

“We see in Scripture the tremendous priority Jesus places on prayer,” Osteen said. “What we have found at Beach Reach is the more we can pray while others are going, how powerful that is.”



Prayer and worship undergirded Beach Reach on South Padre Island. (Photo / Texas Baptists)

Across the two weeks, Beach Reach participants prayed with 9,198 people.

Volunteers provided 16,027 safe van rides, served 15,362 pancakes, held 11,795 gospel conversations and reported 94 recommitments. Island Baptist Church and Beach Reach leaders also baptized 79 individuals on the beach.

Osteen, who first led a BSM team to Beach Reach in 2013, was grateful to see the highest volunteer turnout since he began providing coordination for the spring break outreach four years ago.

“It’s a really beautiful picture of God meeting people where they are by sending his people to go and meet them,” he said.

“We get to communicate our Father’s heart to these people. We get to see people and love them well, get them home safe. For many, it’s a conversation about a different life, about hope in Jesus.”