

# Brother Bill's offers poor in West Dallas a helping hand

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DALLAS—For decades, West Dallas residents have known when they need a helping hand, they can count on Brother Bill.



After their parents are finished shopping at the “grocery store” at Brother Bill’s Helping Hand ministry, children are allowed to select a book to take home. In the late 1940s, Bill Harrod began preaching at Eagle Ford Baptist Church in West Dallas. He recognized a need to help the impoverished in the area, and he developed a food pantry.

Nearly 70 years later, his rich legacy lives on in the form of a community center in the area he served until his death in 1976, 15 years after his ministry became a registered faith-based nonprofit organization.

[Brother Bill’s Helping Hand](#) seeks to enrich the lives of men, women and children in West Dallas by empowering through learning, encouraging through relationships and ensuring the essentials of life.

It acts as a one-stop shop for residents of West Dallas, an 11-square-mile community, where more than two out of three families live below the federal poverty line.



Brother Bill's Community Clinic provides healthcare for many low-income West Dallas residents. Proof of residency in the 75212 ZIP code is the only requirement to receive the wide range of services Brother Bill's Helping Hand provides.

Twice a week, the ministry opens its doors to more than 300 families who "shop" for groceries at the center. Each household registered with Brother Bill's comes twice a month to receive up to 40 pounds of free food. The [Texas Baptist Hunger Offering](#) helps provide food for the store. Brother Bill's also buys food from the [North Texas Food Bank](#) and receives donated food from local churches.

But residents also receive other necessities at Brother Bill's "grocery store."

"A lot of basic hygiene items aren't covered on food stamps and are

expensive for a lot of our neighbors,” said Adair Neely, assistant director at Brother Bill’s.

While parents shop for food and hygiene items, children interact with other neighborhood children at the center. Volunteers provide a craft project and assist the children in reading. Before children leave, they may choose a donated book to take home as their own.

The average Pre-K child in West Dallas knows around 2,000 words; a child of the same age in more affluent Dallas communities boasts a vocabulary of at least 5,000 words, according to information posted on the Brother Bill’s Helping Hand [website](#).

Brother Bill’s Community Clinic provides healthcare for many West Dallas residents. Staffed by a full-time nurse practitioner, three medical assistants and a plethora of volunteer doctors and nurses, the clinic offers free family care, eye care, pediatrics and oncology.

Maria Garcia, who has lived in West Dallas since 1981, said the clinic is the primary reason Brother Bill’s is so special to her. She praised Executive Director Suzanne Griffin for organizing consistent medical care at the facility.



Dallas Baptist University students volunteer at the “grocery store” Brother Bill’s Helping Hand

ministry offers West Dallas residents. “Suzanne does her best to have her clinic there,” she said. “She has always tried her best to see the people there, Monday through Friday.”

After only offering limited medical care several years, Brother Bill’s opened a full medical clinic after it moved to a bigger building in April 2012. Because of space and machinery, Brother Bill’s does not offer dental care on-site. However, a couple of licensed dentists have partnered with Brother Bill’s to give free dental care to registered neighbors of the organization.

Volunteers lead English classes, Bible studies, computer classes and health classes every week at Brother Bill’s. Garcia recently completed a course on diabetes prevention. Her two daughters participated in Brother Bill’s six-week job-training course for women, and both are working now.

### **A heart to serve**

“Part of our organization is just people having a heart to serve,” Neely said. “We have a really faithful volunteer base, which is absolutely why we are able to serve so many people.”

In 2012, Brother Bill’s served more than 1,300 households and nearly 4,500 people, or 18 percent of West Dallas.

In addition to its weekly services, Brother Bill’s hosts a variety of ongoing and short-term programs. When children have a birthday, Brother Bill’s takes care of the party planning for the parents. The ministry provides a birthday party in a bag for the child, full of everything needed for a festive celebration. Supplies include cake mix, candles, icing, cups, plates and decorations in a party-themed birthday bag.

Party planning by Brother Bill’s lifts the burden off the parents, and they are able to provide their child a memorable birthday experience, Neely said.

“It’s something simple, but it can be such a blessing to a family who wouldn’t be able to celebrate a birthday in that way otherwise,” she said.

### **Fighting childhood hunger**

In August, Brother Bill’s served as the Dallas site for Arby’s Hungry for Happiness mobile tour to fight childhood hunger. The fast-food chain provided food and games for the annual back-to-school carnival. Brother Bill’s served about 600 children and parents on that day and gave out 300 school supplies kits for West Dallas children.

Every December, volunteers spend most of the month wrapping gifts for West Dallas children distributed at Brother Bill’s annual Children’s Christmas Celebration on Christmas Eve. The ministry has provided up to 5,000 gifts a year.

All programs and events at Brother Bill’s have one thing common—the motivation behind them, Griffin said.

“We consider (programs) opportunities to build a relationship to share Christ with someone,” she said. “The real reason why we are here is for eternity. ... My prayer is always that everybody who walks in the building will feel God’s love through us and through our actions and what we say, because that’s why we are here.”