

Carrollton kids on wheels raise TBM disaster relief funds

November 17, 2022

CARROLLTON—Almost 30 years ago, kids at First Baptist Church at The Fields began riding in circles once a year to raise money for Christian missions through Texas Baptist Men. A new generation is keeping the practice alive, recently raising \$2,801 for TBM disaster relief in one evening.

The annual Wheel-a-Thon in Carrollton involves children obtaining pledges for laps they make around a church parking lot. Eight laps equal one mile. Participants can ride anything with wheels—bicycles, in-line skates, scooters—or they can walk.



Children involved in missions programs at First Baptist Church at The Fields in Carrollton participate in the Wheel-a-Thon on the church parking lot.

More than 35 children participated this year, with one boy riding 62 laps on a bicycle in 50 minutes, said Mark Forester, church Royal Ambassadors

director.

RAs is a mission discipleship organization for boys in grades 1-6. It promotes growth by developing biblical character in all aspects of life. RA leaders use activities to help boys learn about God's mission and understand how they are part of it.

The Wheel-a-Thon was not just about raising money, Forester said.

"It gets the kids thinking about something else outside of themselves, ... about helping other people in Jesus' name," he said.

Savion Lee, TBM state RA coordinator, said the Carrollton event is "special because it connects the RAs with their local church body." It helps church members learn about RAs and the group's missions involvement.

Lee and Ryan Lenamon, TBM director of donor relations, spoke to the children the following week about TBM's varied ministries to help people in need and to share the good news of hope through Christ.

"Discipleship events such as these are critical to our youth," Lenamon said. "These are the future leaders of our country and our world. Discipleship matters. If discipleship doesn't come from the church, it will come from somewhere else."

Long history of missions support



In 1993, Mark Forrester (right) presents a replica check to TBM Executive Director Bob Dixon indicating the \$477 raised for TBM disaster relief.

Forester started the Wheel-a-Thon in 1993 when one of the RA leaders, the son-in-law of then TBM Executive Director Bob Dixon, recommended the money raised be given to TBM disaster relief.

After the event, Dixon attended a RA chapter meeting to receive a cardboard check representing the amount raised. The church has held the event every year since, except for 2020 during the COVID pandemic.

The Wheel-a-Thon used to be exclusively for boys in RAs. Since moving to a new church location in 2019, Girls in Action members joined in, and the younger boys and girls in Mission Friends joined in this year. One of the Mission Friends boys raised \$500 for the cause, Forester said.

The RA and GA leaders also added some competition to the mix this year. Lainie Applegate, the GA director, got a pie in the face Nov. 9 because the boys out-raised the girls by \$100.

“I am so thankful that our boys and girls had the opportunity to learn about TBM and how to support their mission efforts,” Applegate said. “I love teaching children that hard work and serving others can be fun.”

As for the RAs, a team of several men lead the Carrollton group, Forester said. He noted “things have changed with RAs” through the years.

“You have to adapt, he said. The boys are “no longer into the book work, because they do book work all day.”

Instead, the RAs focus on activities such as campcraft and archery.

“There is a spiritual application with anything we do, and that is what the boys remember”—application linked to activities, he said.