

# ETBU students participate in 2025 Serve Day

April 15, 2025

MARSHALL—In spite of cold, rainy weather, more than 250 East Texas Baptist University students spent a recent Saturday serving churches, outreach centers and nonprofit organizations throughout Harrison County.

The ETBU Baptist Student Ministry sponsored the annual Serve Day event on April 5. Students served through various ministries and community service as part of the university's mission to spread the love of Christ through acts of service.



Student athletes and other volunteers from East Texas Baptist University worked at various churches and nonprofits in the Marshall area on Serve Day. (ETBU Photo)

After breakfast, fellowship and prayer at Ornelas Student Center, organizers assigned students to various groups based on service locations.

ETBU student athletes, Student Foundation, leaders and campus organizations served at local churches, the Mission Marshall food pantry, the First Baptist Church of Hallsville Outreach Center, Reunion Inn Assisted Living and other sites.

Projects included painting, cleaning, food pantry assistance, setting up Vacation Bible Schools and spending time with residents in an assisted living facility.



East Texas Baptist University students (left to right) Mia Lila, Chloe Brockway and Madison Queen write notes of encouragement during Serve Day. (Photo / Faith Pratt)

Some students wrote letters to local first responders and educators, showing the variety of service opportunities Serve Day offered.

“I learned that a lot of organizations need more help than what it seems,” junior psychology major Kaitlyn Huzy said. “We are called to serve in different ways, and I think Serve Day does a good job of covering that there are different ways to serve.”

A small group of ETBU students served alongside the baseball team at the Cypress Valley Bible Church, helping to clean up the children’s play place

and various rooms inside the facility.

Staff expressed their gratitude to ETBU students for helping clean up the area.



Russ Perry from Cedar Valley Bible Church expressed appreciation for the work of student volunteers from East Texas Baptist University on Serve Day. (Photo / Faith Pratt)

“We have lots and lots of children that come to our church, and as you can imagine, it really dirties things up—not only the chairs they sit in, but the playground equipment,” said Russ Perry, head of adult ministry at Cypress Valley Bible Church.

“All of you guys here at ETBU have helped us really big to keep that not only looking nice, but safe also. It’s a really big deal that you guys came out to help us. We are really, really grateful.”

The Serve Day experience allowed students to support ministries that

directly influence local communities, families and children.

Serve Day also allowed for strong fellowship among ETBU faculty and students and encouraged servant leadership opportunities that may not have been available otherwise.

## **‘I love serving’**

Junior nursing major Chika Obi, who helped with VBS setup at Port Caddo Baptist Church, reflected on her experiences.

“I love serving. I feel like with my personal time, I don’t have enough free time to allocate to volunteering. ... So, I feel like Serve Day is a nice way of bringing everyone together,” she said.



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“It wasn’t just the student foundation ... all of these different clubs, sports

teams, everyone was brought together to serve, and I love that.”

In addition to service opportunities and fellowship, ETBU’s Serve Day allows students to strengthen their servant leadership skills and reflect on how their faith influences their desire to serve.

“I want to serve more. God has put it on my heart to serve where I am, to ‘grow where I’m planted.’ Serve Day helped me to live out that conviction,” senior biochemistry major Graham Parmelee said.

“We seek to lead our students to serve. It’s part of what we do at ETBU,” said David Griffin, dean of spiritual life.

“We encourage every student to serve. ... It really is amazing to see so many students step up and ... serve the community. It’s a beautiful thing. Hopefully, it’s nurturing a heart of service in them that is going to inspire them to serve for the rest of their lives, not just now.”

*Faith Pratt, a student at East Texas Baptist University, is serving as an intern with the Baptist Standard this semester.*