

Heart of the City in Lewisville focuses on people

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LEWISVILLE—When COVID-19 hit North Texas in March 2020, Northview Baptist in Lewisville already was prepared to minister to its community's needs.

In large part, it was due to Executive Pastor Rob Veal's foresight in launching [Heart of the City](#)—a people-centered ministry he believes other churches could replicate.

Both Veal and Senior Pastor Kenneth Wells are long-time residents of the area and know its people well. Wells has been pastor at Northview Baptist Church since 1981, and Veal has four decades experience in ministry.

"Although we understood the needs of the people, it wasn't until 2009 that God made me aware of addressing the social concerns of our community while we still share the gospel," Veal said.

At that point, Northview became more intentional about meeting community needs.

In years that followed, Veal saw the value in developing Heart of the City as a nonprofit corporation, and it was granted that status in April 2019. By October 2019, Heart of the City was operating a food pantry on an ongoing basis.

Five months later, the pandemic forced businesses to close—some for a few weeks, others permanently. Store shelves that had been full were emptied. Many people were unemployed.

However, Heart of the City already was in place and experienced at

meeting needs.

Focus on people, provide a model for ministry

Two factors make Heart of the City distinctive, Veal said. First, its primary focus is on people, not on providing resources. Since its beginning, the ministry has connected with 2,700 families.

“Food and clothing are only tools that we use to begin relationships with those we serve,” he said.

Second, Heart of the City was developed with an eye toward serving as a model that could be replicated by other churches in their own communities, he noted.

“One reason this program is so successful is that Northview teaches, trains, equips and provides oversight for any and all interested churches. We feel it is a laboratory to practice what Baptist churches have been teaching their members for decades,” Veal said.

While Heart of the City will adapt as needs change, it currently provides food, clothing and life skill coaching.

As a partner agency with the North Texas Food Bank, Heart of the City’s Farmers’ Market Food Pantry offers a wide selection of nutritious food to residents of South Denton County. A fresh-food patio serves the homeless and the working poor.

The ministry has given away more than 670,000 lbs. of food since opening in 2019.

Neighbors are encouraged to tell others that have a need for free food, Veal

explained. They help each other by passing the word.

Primarily, the food pantry provides an avenue to talk to people about Jesus, he stressed.



Heart of the City offers a “totally free clothing” ministry where local residents can shop in person or even make an online request.
(Courtesy Photo)

Heart of the City also offers a “totally free clothing” ministry. Local residents can shop in person or even make an online request.

The “Thrive” program provides life skills coaching. Volunteers work with people who need help in life issues, finance, parenting, marriage, and spiritual matters. Private sessions are available by appointment.

Heart of the City receives support from the [Texas Baptist Hunger Offering](#), and it also has received funds through a [Community Care Grant](#) from Texas Baptists’ Christian Life Commission.

Depending on volunteers

Heart of the City’s main campus is open six days a week, and the ministry relies heavily on volunteers.



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"Whatever the interest, there is something to do—warehouse labor, truck driving, shelf stocking, personal shoppers, clothing sorting and hanging, one-to-one talking with those we serve, marketing, grant writing, program administration, social media editor and others," Veal said.

"Our volunteer support is very strong. Maybe they have never taught a Sunday school class or sung in the choir, but they can volunteer."

Northview Baptist continues to provide financial, prayer and volunteer support for Heart of the City.

"As God continues to supply our needs, there is no burden on the church," Veal said.

As executive pastor at Northview, Veal has significant administrative responsibilities.

He appreciates the opportunities his work with Heart of the City provides for hands-on ministry, demonstrating God's love to people in need.

"I can sit across the table from people who visit Heart of the City and really listen," he said, noting it provides a tangible way to fulfill the biblical

commands to love God and love others.

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