

Mission ‘stay-cation’ brings missions home

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First Baptist Church in Waxahachie has a long history of robust mission action, but it’s been a while since the youth have participated in a mission trip.

NextGen Director Whitley Shaw said she knew the church’s youth needed to take on a more intentional mission project, but she thought, “We weren’t quite ready to go off anywhere.”

Last fall, Buckner International President and CEO Albert Reyes spoke at the church, piquing her interest in the many ways Buckner serves people.

Shaw said she reached out to Buckner not long after Reyes spoke at the Waxahachie church to schedule a tour of the Buckner campus and learn more.

She learned about the [Healthy Housing](#) remote build projects on the tour and “immediately thought that was something our church could do, because of the talent we have in our church and the way our kids are excited to serve.”

Idea leads to action

But, it was Chet Haynes, worship pastor, who first mentioned Buckner as an avenue to a “mission trip.”



Whitley Shaw, NextGen director (behind), and

Belle Winn help sort shoes at Buckner. (FBC Waxahachie Photo)

At his suggestion, Shaw connected with Chris Cato, missions director for Buckner International—to begin to plan for a remote build project—and with Laina Wells, volunteer engagement coordinator for Buckner Children and Family Services to discuss the other pieces of the service week.

Wells “gave the go-ahead” to plan for a group from First Baptist Waxahachie to hold a backyard Bible club the next summer for the kids who are served through [Family Pathways](#) and Foster Care—as a part of the “mission trip” idea beginning to take shape, Shaw explained.

She said it was exciting to partner with Buckner. Collaborating and bouncing ideas off Cato, Wells and others encouraged her confidence to follow where God was leading.

“God has really ordained every step of this,” Shaw said, “opening doors.”

“Even when we started talking about the backyard Bible clubs,” she continued, the Buckner response was: “Nobody’s ever done something exactly like this. Can you tell me more what your idea is?”



First Baptist Church Waxahachie students bring a section of framed wall to the subfloor for installation. (Photo / Calli Keener)

In addition to the remote build on the First Baptist Waxahachie campus and backyard Bible clubs for the Family Pathways kids, the mission week also included a day for both the build team and the Bible club team to work together at Buckner. They processed shoe donations for [Shoes for Orphan](#)

[Souls](#) and spent a day serving locally in Waxahachie.

While there's not a "Buckner mission week package," Buckner is in First Baptist Waxahachie's "backyard," Shaw noted. So, partnering with them in several areas of ministry offered the church's NextGen ministry the mission stay-cation Shaw hoped to achieve.

Trust God's plan

While fewer kids than the church had hoped to serve participated in backyard Bible clubs, Buckner and the church team still found the partnership meaningful.

Wells commented, while things didn't always work out the way they were planned, "The lesson in this is also that God will still meet the one and leave the 99." The kids who were there were supposed to be there and got what they needed, she said.

"To be honest," she said in an email, "as staff were dropping in, I feel like *we* were more blessed than the kids because the intentionality and presence was SO FELT. Jesus was truly in the room and working through each and every one of them."

She explained their central theme was "leaving room for God to do what He wanted despite our plans, trusting that it's enough, and we do believe the impact was made."

Shaw said 25 youth and 20 adults served in at least one aspect of the mission trip during the week. Adults who didn't help with Bible clubs or building prepared and served meals.



Assembling framing by sections. (Photo /
Calli Keener)

Some of the skilled builders who helped oversee the youth on the construction team and teach them building skills, which most did not have going into the project, are active Texans on Mission volunteers.

Texans on Mission loaned the church a shower truck for the youth, who stayed on the church campus all week, to supplement single locker room shower stalls, increasing the kids' knowledge of this valuable ministry, too.

Passing on skills and missions-mindedness

"It's really cool, too" Shaw said, "because some of our, essentially, master builders who've come and helped—they could've knocked it out in two days and been done, but it's really cool to see our adults teaching and showing, and the kids did it."

The church raised \$17,000 of the funds for the \$45,000 estimated cost of the build from a cake auction in the spring, which paid for the framing materials, food, transportation to Buckner in Dallas and a fun Friday activity for the kids.

The adult builders who participated had most of the tools needed, so that cut down on estimated build costs, as well.

The rest came from the church mission budget, approved by the mission team.

Steve Garrett, whose professional background is in project management, served as project manager for the build. He and his wife, Amy, also helped oversee students, staying on campus as sponsors all week.

Garrett explained despite coming to understand the full scope of the remote build project as they went, the project worked well for First Baptist Waxahachie, "because we were able to build a part of the home here and involve the kids.

“But then also go down to the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas and finish building the home with a group of adult volunteers, and then actually meet the family [who is receiving the home].”



Volunteers and other church members dedicated the build with scriptures on the framing. (Photo / Corbin Keener)

Blessed in the blessing

Those additional volunteer groups would go to the Valley the week following the remote build youth mission week to reassemble the home and rough-in plumbing and electric under the supervision of contractors in the Valley.

Then the next week, contractors in the Valley will complete the installation of plumbing and electrical and get everything ready for the last volunteer group to come finish out the build, Garrett explained.

Excluding planning, First Baptist Waxahachie will have worked on the project for four weeks. That includes the week before the remote build—when the builder heavy weights came to cut materials to specifications and set up for youth and supervisors to assemble—the NextGen mission week and the two weeks in the Valley when adult volunteers will work to complete the build.

“It was pretty evident that the enemy did not want this week to go over,” Shaw mentioned, with thing after thing going wrong. But, the “kids have been amazing, just their attitudes and encouragement to one another have been great.”

“We’ve only cried a few times,” she said, “all happy tears.”

Calli Keener is a member of First Baptist Church in Waxahachie.