

More than 1,000 students volunteer at Beach Reach

March 26, 2015

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND—During the three weeks covering spring break for various schools, 1,060 volunteers from 39 Baptist Student Ministries shared the gospel during Beach Reach on South Padre Island.



Tabetha Ayers, a student from West Texas A&M University, was one of 53 students baptized in the Gulf of Mexico during Beach Reach. (PHOTO / Kalie Lowrie)Volunteers engaged other young adults in 11,765 spiritual conversations in a variety of settings. As a result, 110 new believers prayed for salvation, and 32 people recommitted their lives to Christ.

Van drivers like Kyle Crim, campus missionary intern at Angelo State University, logged countless hours along the three major streets on the island, providing safe, reliable transportation for spring break partiers and giving student volunteers opportunities to share the message of Jesus with passengers.

“I was able to hear the gospel from every mouth of our students on the van,” Crim said. “Driving allowed me to take a step back and realize it’s not about me. This is the most joyful I’ve been at Beach Reach—to see everyone share their faith.”



Texas Baptist Men volunteers at the Island Baptist Church served pancakes every morning. (PHOTO / Kalie Lowrie)The navigator of each van also played an important part, staying in touch with a hotline for free rides and receiving instructions about where to pick up the next group of waiting passengers. Meanwhile, BSM students in the back seats looked for ways to engage each rider in a spiritual conversation.

Bridgette Kelley, a student from Angelo State University, was nervous about van rides initially, but she spent most of her week on South Padre Island in the vans.

“It’s ironic and a total God-thing. The part I was really scared of is all I’ve done,” Kelley said. “It’s been such a comfort to tell people about the grace and compassion God gave me.”

At Island Baptist Church—headquarters for Beach Reach—students and leaders staffed the hotline during the day and into the wee hours of the night, responding to thousands of calls for rides.



Randy Hoffman, a volunteer from Florida, created sand sculptures each day on the beach to provide an opportunity for spiritual conversations. (PHOTO / Kalie Lowrie)The sanctuary served as an around-the-clock prayer room during Beach Reach. Volunteers strung Bible verses, prayers and pictures across the worship center on rope. A live Twitter feed displayed at the front of the sanctuary showed prayer requests in real time. As students and leaders gathered in huddles, or sat in a quiet place, they prayed for safety and strength for volunteers, and they asked God to prepare the hearts of young people who would hear the gospel.

Pancakes also provided a huge ministry opportunity for students to engage spring breakers in spiritual conversations. Texas Baptist Men volunteers from Tarrant Baptist Association cooked and served pancakes from 8 a.m. to noon two weeks. One week, disaster response volunteers from First

Baptist Church in Plains and Monterey Baptist Church in Lubbock served pancakes from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. outside a popular island bar.

John Hooser, leader of the Tarrant Baptist group, said his volunteers found the time so rewarding, he had to turn people away from serving when his team roster filled this year.

“I see these young people from BSMs all over the state, and it tells me that the church is in great shape,” Hooser said. “By us serving, not only are we sharing the gospel, but we are also keeping these kids safe. Spring breakers are getting food, but they are also being cared for physically and spiritually.”

At the end of the second and third weeks of Beach Reach, hundreds of students gathered on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico for a celebration—the baptism of 53 new Christians.

“I pray this is not the end of your endeavor in missions,” Buddy Young, Beach Reach coordinator and BSM director at West Texas A&M University, said during worship one evening. “I pray that your heart will be so stirred by the lost that you will go where they are, that this week will dramatically change who you are and how you relate to people.”