

Texans on Mission volunteers help Hill Country families

July 16, 2025

John Vlasek stands in the middle of his home, stripped bare of furnishings, walls, ceilings and flooring. Even his rock fireplace is gone.

Buckner honors orphans who fled Vietnam 50 years ago

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Buckner International hosted a reunion July 12 honoring Vietnamese orphans who fled Vietnam 50 years ago, arriving in Dallas after a two-month journey on June 12, 1975.

Recently, seven of the orphans from Cam Ranh with their families returned to Vietnam marking the 50th anniversary of their journey.

Representatives from Buckner International joined them on the trip to Saigon and Cam Ranh, which for some was their first time back in Vietnam.

The trip to Vietnam included a return visit to the site where Cam Ranh Christian City Orphanage once stood. While there, they distributed shoes to children in need.

During the reunion ceremony, Albert Reyes, CEO of Buckner, noted the words of James, Jesus' half-brother, inspired founder R.C. Buckner to begin

the organization.

James 1:27 says “religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Reyes told reunion attendees that was the driving passage that he saw and from the very beginning those two groups are the “focus of our work—care for children and senior adults.”

“Your experience and your story is woven into the larger Buckner picture that now stretches all around the world,” Reyes said.

The Buckner reunion event gave the orphans a chance to reflect on five decades of impact and changes—in their home country and in themselves.

To conclude the reunion, Buckner dedicated a bench as a memorial to honor Pastor Nguyen Xuan Ha and Pastor Jim Gayle for their efforts in caring for the orphans at Cam Ranh Christian Orphanage.

The orphans’ journey, 50 years ago

During the final days of the Vietnam War, 69 Vietnamese orphans traveled across South Vietnam. The children spent two days on a broken boat on open seas until they made it to the United States and eventually were transferred to Buckner Children’s Home in Dallas on June 12, 1975. Their arrival in Dallas garnered [national attention](#) as the largest single group of refugees from Vietnam.

North Vietnamese military forces were sweeping through south Vietnam in the spring of 1975. The city of Cam Ranh began to collapse, leaving the Cam Ranh Christian City Orphanage with the difficult choice of fleeing.

Thirteen caregivers and their children fled with orphans, accompanying

them as they boarded busses bound for safety.

When Saigon fell, the group made their way to the South China Sea on a leaky boat that failed two days into the voyage.

They were rescued and towed into Singapore where they waited five days without food or water before Southern Baptist missionaries intervened.

The group flew to the United States and made it to Buckner Children's Home where about half of the children eventually were adopted.

Those who were not adopted remained on the fourth floor in the children's home dormitory, where they were given English lessons to prepare them to enroll in Dallas Independent School District.

The group has remained close through the years.

Sam's salvation story

Sam Schrade (Sang Nguyen) a toddler at the time, was one of the orphans. Years have passed since the day he arrived at Buckner Children's Home.

He now runs a media company covering sports for ESPN and Fox Sports in Houston where he resides with his wife and children.

"I was able to go back for the first time in 50 years two weeks ago. My dad was an American soldier. My mom was Vietnamese ... I wasn't very wanted. They did not need me. And I was amazingly scooped up by the Cam Ranh Christian Orphanage," Schrade said.

Schrade reflected on the trip he made back to the place he once called home. He considered how far God brought him and the rest of the orphans.

"It is hard to know how far we've come in life when we don't know where we started. And for this trip, for me, it meant seeing where we started.

Now I know how far we've come," Schrade added.

"We were transferred here. I was three years old. The fact that Buckner facilitated Christian homes changed my life. My mom led me to Christ in fourth grade. I became a Christian and all of us in the group have a lot of gratitude," Schrade concluded.

Buckner International Communications contributed to this story.

Brothers immersed in disaster response after flood

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The Wheat brothers are well-known as ministers in this part of the Texas Hill Country. Robert serves as director of missions for Hill Country Baptist Association, while his brother John is pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Kerrville.

Texans on Mission chaplains care for flood survivors

July 16, 2025

Seven Texans on Mission chaplains are ministering to people dealing with

the aftermath of the deadly Hill Country flash flood on July 4.

Baylor grant decision draws support, disappointment

July 16, 2025

More than 60 Texas Baptist pastors and church leaders endorsed an open letter of support for Baylor University's decision to return a grant for the study of the "disenfranchisement and exclusion of LGBTQIA + individuals and women" in churches, while the grant-issuing foundation issued a statement expressing disappointment.

Students serve families affected by storms in Southeast Texas

July 16, 2025

About 60 students and sponsors from churches across Texas showed up in Nederland to volunteer with Bounce, a student disaster recovery ministry.

Middle and high school youth gathered at First Baptist Church in Nederland where they were housed, fellowshiped and participated in nightly worship services.

“They have been so gracious to open their facility for us. They have played a significant role in the recovery efforts. We appreciate their partnership,” David Scott, director of Bounce, said.

The teens spent multiple days divided into multiple job sites to make repairs on homes that suffered damage from previous storms. Students and leaders teamed up with 4B Disaster Response, South Main Baptist Church in Pasadena and Texans on Mission.

“People are still living in Harvey-affected homes,” Scott said. “It’s been almost seven years. We are delighted that there are so many highly motivated students who are giving a portion of their summer vacation to serve these people who have such great needs.”

High school student Uriel Moctezuma participated for the first time in Bounce with his team of seven youth and three leaders from The Crossing Baptist Church in Mesquite.

“I’ve been on a mission trip before, but I never worked in a big group of seven people. I’m really excited. I have experience with repairing houses damaged from natural disasters. I really want to help where I can,” Moctezuma said.

Siblings sent to serve

Lydia, high school student and member of The Woods Baptist Church in Tyler came to Bounce with three students and four leaders. Two out of her group are siblings, high schoolers Joseph and Mary.

The siblings worked together to shift furniture around a home to make room for replacing and installing new wood flooring.

“We felt led to go on a mission trip this summer because we were trying to figure out summer activities. We wanted to do something local, but outside

of our city, something out of our comfort zone. We want to help people,” Lydia said.

Joseph came to Bounce with years of experience ranging from remodeling bathrooms to building storage nooks like bookshelves.

“It is always a great opportunity for everyone to learn about the Lord and to be able to do what God told us in the Great Commission,” Joseph said.

The background on Bounce

Bounce—a ministry of Texas Baptists—was created to engage middle, high school and college students in mission work from church planting to disaster recovery.

Chris Liebrum, former director of disaster recovery, consulted with Scott to launch the ministry in 2013. In 2014, they gathered their first crew of students to start ministering to people in West.

“We were in West in June of that year doing recovery from the fertilizer plant explosion. We spent two weeks there,” Scott said.

Scott added Bounce was the first ministry integrating student ministry and volunteer service together for community service ever to do disaster recovery.

Ron Zimmer, construction coordinator for Bounce, makes sure the projects are prepared for the volunteers to learn onsite and start projects.

“My responsibility is to get everything ready for the kids, so when they get here it is a meaningful experience for them. Most of my job is done months and weeks ahead of a project. I work with the agencies like Jefferson County Long Term Recovery. We’ve done a lot of projects with them. They embrace us,” Zimmer said.

With supervision and training, the students are prepared to spend each day installing bathroom vanities, replacing baseboards, repairing roofs and installing floors. The goal is to help each student understand the importance of sharing the gospel and serving communities.

“We’re here to minister. God needs us here to minister to people, and that’s our first and foremost goal. We do that through loving on the neighbors, the residents, and do some work too,” Zimmer continued.

Bounce plans for Hill Country flood disaster recovery

Scott and his team are reaching out to churches and ministries within the Hill Country in preparation for disaster recovery from the tragic floods that overwhelmed the community along the Guadalupe River.

While there are preliminary conversations between Kerr County officials and local ministries, the decision at this time is to wait until emergency response is completed.

“They are not ready for us at this point in time. They’re still in that first phase of disaster work. We’ve reached out to a couple of people in the area and a couple of the churches to see what their role is going to be and how we might partner with them to mobilize students,” Scott said.

Bilingual VBS week a ‘kingdom movement’

July 16, 2025

BRYAN (BP)—Desiring to reach kids with the gospel no matter their language or background, First Baptist Church in Bryan hosted two Vacation Bible Schools this year—a daytime VBS in English and a concurrent option for Spanish-speakers in the evenings.

In their second year partnering for the event, kids pastor Jay Miller and Spanish pastor Teo Cisneros continue to see an opportunity to reach families by taking a multi-cultural approach to VBS.

“Between the two events, we had over 1,100 people a part of VBS this year including kids and volunteers,” Miller said.

More than 75 kids made decisions for Christ during the week, and the church has plans to offer additional events this summer to continue connection with the families who attended.

“My favorite part of VBS is two-fold,” said Laura Bauer, who has been volunteering to teach in the children’s classes since 2020.

“On the leader end, it is a sweet picture to see the sacrifices adults are making to have an eternal impact on the next generation. It is the greatest gift to have the opportunity to love on kids and show them what it is like to be loved and known by Jesus,” Bauer said.

Julie Hamilton has been participating in First Baptist Bryan’s VBS for 26 years and has seen a lot of changes along the way. She said one of her greatest joys is knowing that the church is focusing on kingdom-building work through breaking down language barriers.

“It is a great outreach opportunity,” Hamilton said. “Over the years, my children and I have invited so many kids to VBS who may not go to church. It is a wonderful opportunity to invite unchurched kids. I love to see how God uses and brings together so many people to put together an amazing week.”

The church wrapped up its VBS celebration with a swimming party at a community pool that brought more than 500 people.

“Our VBS week is really focused on being one event with everyone working together for a common goal,” Miller said.

“I’m so thankful to have a Spanish pastor who creates a bridge into the church for English and Spanish speakers, and this is not a one-off event, but a representation of the ministries already in place,” Miller continued.

Cisneros has been leading the Spanish congregation at First Baptist Bryan since 2019.

For churches considering putting together multi-cultural outreaches like this one, Miller offers insight and encouragement. Each year, they review and listen to feedback while coming up with new ideas. The pool party wrap-up was one such idea for this year.

“VBS is a launching point for growth,” Miller said. “Identify people in your church who are passionate about reaching people and who have an evangelistic heart and are passionate about kids having a multi-cultural experience. We really want to be careful not to have kids from other backgrounds trying to conform to our style or traditional way of doing things.

“Kids will be inviting their neighbors and friends from sports and dance teams, and we wanted to clearly communicate the gospel, so we really wanted to utilize gifted leaders who understand different cultures. We want

families to feel welcome and feel like they are part of a family, whether they are English-speaking or Spanish-speaking.

“This isn’t a singular movement. This is a kingdom movement, and our desire is to benefit other churches as well, to build the kingdom and glorify God as we reach these kids with the gospel.”

Miller said First Baptist Bryan’s VBS offers a glimpse of what heaven will be like.

“Even a couple of years ago, statistics showed that in 10-15 years that we wouldn’t have a majority ethnicity in our state, because Texas is a beautiful melting pot,” he said. “The church should look more like heaven with all the nations represented, and that is certainly being reflected in our community.”

Longtime Texas Baptist pastor David Dykes died at age 72

July 16, 2025

David Dykes, longtime pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, died July 3 after a brief time under hospice care. He was 72.

Texas Baptists respond to deadly Hill Country floods

July 16, 2025

Texas Baptists responded with prayers and support when flash floods July 4 led to a devastating loss of life and substantial damage.

Grant to Baylor Social Work spurs questions (Updated)

July 16, 2025

Baylor University recently announced a grant focused on the study of the “disenfranchisement and exclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals and women” in churches.

Liderazgo y gratitud destacan Convención 2025

July 16, 2025

Los asistentes a la reunión anual de la Convención 2025 se reunieron en FBC Duncanville para celebrar a los líderes de larga data, a los nuevos

líderes y a las bendiciones financieras.

Texas Baptists celebran la educación superior hispana

July 16, 2025

Texas Baptists honraron a estudiantes y líderes educativos hispanos durante un banquete en la Primera Iglesia Bautista de Duncanville.