

TBM volunteers bring hope to storm-damaged areas

October 23, 2019

The Weesner family was enjoying a relaxing Sunday evening together in front of the television. The Dallas Cowboys were leading the rival Philadelphia Eagles. Everything was good—until it suddenly wasn't.

"We were watching the Cowboys game like most people," Jay Weesner said. "Our friend called and told us to take cover, so we pulled out our weather app. That's when someone called and said, 'I think it's on your street.' We grabbed our socks, shoes, batteries—we even put on bike helmets—and went to the center of the house."

An EF-3 tornado with winds up to 140 miles per hour—one of several that ripped through North Texas on Oct. 20—blasted the Weesners' Richardson home moments later. It sounded like a "freight train," Weesner said. Then he and his wife heard pieces of their roof being pried off bit by bit.

Within minutes, everything was silent again. Darkness surrounded them, preventing them from seeing all the damage.

'These guys show up when there's trouble'

Only in the morning did they realize the full extent of what happened the night before.

Even before Weesner saw neighbors' homes that had been devastated by the storm, he noticed a crew in bright yellow shirts.



TBM chainsaw volunteers respond the morning after a tornado hit northern Dallas County. (TBM Photo)

“I see [Texas Baptist Men](#),” he said. “This is serious. We have major devastation, because these guys show up when there’s trouble.

“Then I looked up and down the street and saw houses destroyed.”

TBM’s rapid-response chainsaw team began clearing his street shortly after sunrise and had most of his family’s yard cleared by lunch. After that, they began working on the homes of the couple’s neighbors up and down the block.

Fallen trees—some of them 70 feet tall—along with overturned sport utility vehicles and all kinds of debris filled nearly every yard of the Weesners’ neighborhood.

‘Tore a hole in our hearts’



TBM volunteers removed fallen trees and other debris after a series of tornadoes hit North Texas. (TBM Photo)

Between sawing and moving 100-pound logs, volunteers visited with homeowners to help them process what they experienced. TBM team members prayed with people affected by the storms.

“The Dallas tornado tore a hole in our hearts as it ripped through the city,” said TBM Executive Director Mickey Lenamon. “It rocked people’s world. This morning, we’re providing help, hope and healing in Jesus’ name to people and families affected by this tragedy.”

The volunteer rapid-response team marked the first wave of TBM ministry after the tornado. It was followed by a second chainsaw team, as well as the activation of its rapid response food-service team to work in the Bachman Lake area of northwest Dallas.

Collaborating with Buckner at Bachman Lake

TBM collaborated with Buckner International on Oct. 22 to provide lunch to more than 200 children and their parents served by the Buckner Family Hope Center at Bachman Lake. Volunteers served warm, healthy meals to the families at Jose “Joe” May Elementary School, many of whom live in a nearby apartment complex.

“We got a call from Buckner about 7 a.m. and we have the rapid-response unit we use in Texas that feeds good, hot meals. So, we put together a meal of hamburgers, beans and rice,” Lenamon said. “It’s a high-protein meal because this is the only meals these kids may get today.”

Marcela Dominguez, youth and children specialist for the [Buckner Family Hope Center](#), said the area already was in need due to poverty.

Buckner has been serving the Bachman Lake community three years, and the agency officially will open the Buckner Family Hope Center at Bachman Lake facility in early 2020.

The Hope Center provides programs and services like GED and ESL classes, financial empowerment and family coaching to 4,000 families in the Bachman Lake area.

“These are children who normally rely on free school lunches but are without due to school closures from the tornado,” Dominguez said. “Many of these families are without power, and many had homes damaged by the storm.”

Jumpstarting the recovery process

Lenamon noted the severity of damage in the Bachman Lake area.

“I watched it on Sunday night on television, but we have cleaning crews and chainsaw crews out in the area right now and it’s serious. And, since this neighborhood is more economically challenged, there’s more need,” he said.

TBM teams jumpstart the recovery process for each homeowner they help.

“When these guys show up and get out and they are able to share this ministry—we’re talking about hard serious labor here, this is big time ministry here,” Weesner said.

“They’re here to build up the joys and live through the sorrows. I can’t thank them enough.”

TBM disaster relief ministry is supported by financial gifts. To donate, [click here](#).

With additional reporting by Russ Dilday of Buckner.