

# **TBM volunteers help bring special Christmas to family**

December 16, 2022

WEIR—Christmas came a little early this year for a family in rural Weir, northeast of Georgetown. But, like the first Christmas, it is a celebration that was months in the making and involved a large cast of characters.

The first Christmas story began with an event that affected many people—a Roman census. This Weir Christmas story began with a massive ice storm that affected much of Texas in February 2021.

Most people in Texas bounced back within days or weeks after the big freeze in February 2021. One family finally returned to their home Nov. 19 this year—a year and a half later, just in time for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The home had been in need of repair before the storm. But afterward, it became unlivable. The community responded to the needs of their longtime neighbors, and area Texas Baptist Men Disaster Relief volunteers joined the effort.

TBM Cabinet Builders from beyond the area also pitched in.

**‘We couldn’t walk away’**



Chris Hamilton (right) headed the community-wide effort that enabled David Black and his family to return to their renovated home. (Courtesy photo via Facebook)

Chris and Emily Hamilton spearheaded the community effort. And they had no prior experience with TBM other than knowing it was an “organization that helped people,” Chris said.

Five adults lived in the devastated home—Bill and Lillian Black and three adult special-needs sons. The Blacks had for years made their home a place for caring. They raised four sons and then adopted eight special-needs children through the years.

The Hamiltons learned about the Blacks’ situation through Emily’s parents, who were providing showers for one of the sons in a wheelchair. The Blacks had no water. Time passed, and still no water.

“Emily and I were like, ‘That’s not OK,’” Chris said.

For years, the couple has been involved in performing country music, even though they had “retired” from regular performing in 2019. They can, however, still play and sing. Their March 2021 fundraiser brought in \$4,000 for the Blacks, and it was channeled through a local nonprofit, the

Georgetown Beard Club.

“We were going to fix the plumbing and a hole in the roof,” Emily said, but it ended up going way beyond that. “We couldn’t walk away.”

In the meantime, the Blacks needed a place to live. More fundraisers occurred, including proceeds from the nearby Walburg BBQ Cookoff.

The funds made it possible to buy a “toy hauler” RV. Workers closed in the back of the RV, added a regular door and converted the back ramp into a wheelchair ramp.

As for the original house, a group called Water Mission helped replace all of the Blacks’ plumbing, but the extent of the damage became more clear as work progressed. The entire house needed to be rebuilt, Emily said.

## **TBM and Crestview Baptist became involved**

So, the Hamiltons went through options with the Blacks—tearing it down, building a modular house, even selling the house and land. Like many people who have lived in one place a long time and raised children there, the Blacks preferred to fix what they had.



Charles Baker coordinates Texas Baptist Men volunteers at Crestview Baptist Church in Georgetown. (Photo / Ferrell Foster)

Rusty Ruby, a member of Crestview Baptist Church in Georgetown, got involved and he took Charles Baker to the site. Baker coordinates TBM volunteers at Crestview.

Baker had a history of coordinating volunteers, first as an International Mission Board missionary and then as a TBM “blue cap” volunteer leader.

The Hamiltons remembered when Baker first came to the Blacks’ house. He was just what the project needed—someone to organize all of the people and businesses who wanted to help. And Baker also brought TBM to the effort.

“TBM was really instrumental throughout the whole project,” Emily said. “Without their help, it wouldn’t have been done.”

Chris ticked off specifics of the TBM and Crestview contribution—mold

remediation, reframing the house with headers and doors, exterior and interior insulation, painting the entire interior of the 2,900-square-foot house.



Texas Baptist Men volunteers from Crestview Baptist Church in Georgetown—(left to right) Rick Fedelem, Mike Lovelace, Jerry Michaels and Don Denton—installed cabinets in the Black home. (Courtesy photo via Facebook)

TBM Cabinet Builders constructed all of the kitchen cabinets offsite, and Crestview TBM volunteers installed them. TBM Disaster Relief bought all 14 windows the house needed.

Plus, Emily noted, the TBM volunteers did various “odds and ends, and whatever we needed at the time.”

“When the storm happened, it just totaled everything,” Baker said. “Water pipes burst in the house. The septic system crashed. Everything was just ruined.”

## **A refuge for people in need**

The home had been a refuge through the years for people in need as the family adopted and fostered various children. Members of the Black family

also now serve as IMB missionaries, Baker said.

Bill Black once had been a machinist, but when his eyesight gave way, his work did as well, Baker said. The house, over time, had become neglected.

“Basically the house was gutted completely,” Baker said.



John Black (Courtesy photo via Facebook)

Local businesses provided expert labor for the project, plus some materials.

“Fortunately,” Baker said, “there were some funds TBM had available to help with the project.” Crestview also provided funds.

Volunteers provided the key TBM/Crestview contribution. Most of the more than 20 volunteers are trained TBM disaster relief volunteers.

Terri Hurlbut is one of those who responded to the need.

“It was amazing to see the project progress,” she said. “I only did whatever I could to help.”

Baker “would contact us to inform us of the work needed, and he was there

faithfully with the trailer and tools.”

Then something interesting happened.

“Charles was reviewing our work plans after we had all been tearing out walls and insulation, and I noticed a couple going from their car to the trailer next to the house. I waited until everyone had left and asked Charles if the last name of the family whose house we were working on was Black,” Hurlbut said.

“I didn’t realize I knew the family until then. I admire Bill and Lillian, and I was blessed by Jonathan, Jeffrey, David and Robbie when they were little ones in Sunday school and VBS. They were such happy, loving little ones.”

Hurlbut had known the Blacks when both families were part of Main Street Baptist Church in Georgetown 25 or 30 years ago.

“Isn’t it amazing how you see folks you haven’t seen for a long time, and it’s just like you were never separated? A foretaste of heaven, when we see those who were precious to us during our lifetime,” she said.

The first Christmas involved, of course, Mary and Joseph, but there was also Elizabeth and Zechariah, an innkeeper who provided a stable, shepherds and wise men, and countless others who would have encountered the young couple on their journey.

So many Texans played a part in this newer story. Some of them may not even worship the Christ of Christmas, but at least one group of TBM volunteers came along because of that Christ and brought new hope to a family in need.