

Volunteers spread hope and gospel CDs throughout El Paso

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EL PASO—River Ministry volunteers from around the state and Mexico joined students from the University of Texas at El Paso Baptist Student Ministry to distribute more than 4,400 Texas Hope multimedia compact disks containing gospel presentations and access to the New Testament in more than 300 languages.

Osvaldo Lerma, a river ministry coordinator and pastor at Iglesia Bautista filadelfia in Brownsville, labels Texas Hope 2010 CDs that he and the other 27 volunteers from the Valley and Matamoros, Mexico, delivered to El Paso residents during Labor Day weekend.

These efforts are part of Texas Hope 2010, an attempt to share the gospel with every Texan by Easter 2010 and place Scripture in all 8.8 million Texas homes. Daniel Rangel, director of River Ministry with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said the event grew out of the groups' desire to be obedient and share the gospel.

"When you do something like this, you reflect who God is because God loves the whole world and wants everyone to know him," Rangel said. "You are obedient to God's word. When you seek God, you seek his will, and you reflect his attributes of love and mercy."

In an attempt to share their faith and hand out the Texas Hope CDs, Chris Smith, director of the UTEP BSM, noted the university students used a

school event as a platform to engage the community.

On Friday night before Labor Day, the BSM hosted a soccer kick at Minerpalooza, a pep rally with food, games and music attended by 22,000 El Paso residents and UTEP students to celebrate the start of school and the first Miner football game of the season.



A member of the Baptist Student Ministry at the University of Texas at El Paso hands out Texas Hope 2010 CDs at Minerpalooza, a city-wide pep rally hosted by the university. The group handed out more than 2,500 CDs at the event. (PHOTOS/Rand Jenkins/BGCT)

“As part of Minerpalooza, we have a booth to try to take opportunities to reach the campus and the community,” Smith said. “Our goal for the BSM is to share the gospel with the students here so that they can hear the truth of God’s word. We want them to be impacted eternally for what is going to happen in their lives.”

While Minerpalooza was taking place, a group of River Ministry volunteers arrived in El Paso and prepared for CD distribution the next morning. A few volunteers arrived early on Friday and began distribution that afternoon. Many volunteers came from various places around Texas and the Valley, but 17 came from the Matamoros area of Mexico as a result of River Ministry partnerships and a vision that began a year ago.

“Last year at our coordinators’ meeting, we were talking about coming to El Paso for Texas Hope 2010, and they all said they would like to come and bring a team from their area so we would have people from Brownsville, from the Weslaco area, from the Eagle Pass area and from Matamoros on the other side of the river,” Rangel said. “We decided on Labor Day

because they would have an extra day to travel over here.”

John Roman, co-chair for the El Paso Texas Hope 2010 CD distribution, asked the group to partner with Southwest Cowboy Church, a congregation launched in January. The long-range goal is to deliver CDs to 10,060 homes by Easter 2010 in the predominately Spanish-speaking area of Socorro where the church is located.

During the Labor Day weekend emphasis, the group was able to deliver CDs to 1,900 homes, about 20 percent of the area. Under Roman’s direction, members of Southwest Cowboy Church will take the lead in delivering the remaining CDs over the next six months.



University of Texas at El Paso students look at a Texas Hope 2010 CD given to them by the BSM. The BSM handed out 2,500 CDs at Minerpalooza, a pep rally attended by 22,000 El Pasoans and UTEP students.

“We are participating in the project because we know that the people really need Jesus Christ,” said Gloria de la Pena, a volunteer who drove eight hours from Piedras Negras, Mexico, to help with the effort.

“We came because there is so much need. The people need hope. And we can share with them that we have Jesus in our lives and be able to help them.”

Oswaldo Lerma, pastor at Iglesia Bautista Filadelfia in Brownsville and a River Ministry coordinator, sees the CD distribution as a way to spread the gospel among El Paso area residents, as well as minister to believers who may have experienced repercussions from the violence that has occurred in Juarez, Mexico.

“We hope that the seeds get planted and that a lot of people will get to know Christ through the message on the CD and the visitation of the church who is hosting this group,” Lerma said.

“We came to do this here because we can see that in the churches here, some of the members may have families or relatives who have gone through violence and need some encouragement and support.”

A couple of weeks prior to the Labor Day distribution, Roman and some El Paso churches came together to mail 84,000 Texas Hope CDs to a few areas of El Paso.

“The CDs were mostly mailed in ZIP codes that we weren’t able to recruit a captain or to a ZIP code without a church or one where the residents are scattered,” Roman said.

All 250,000 Texas Hope CDs the BGCT sent to El Paso have been given to the ZIP code captains, Roman said. Now the captains are in the process of partnering with churches and individuals to deliver them to homes in their area.