

THE WEBSTER PROGRESS-TIMES

Youth group returns to Mission Arlington

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By Gwen Sisson

First Baptist Church of Eupora's Student Minister Kevin Barnette said, as a student, Mission Arlington trips were pivotal in his view of local missions, and it is an opportunity he wants FBC Eupora students to share.

"It was life-changing for me in the fact that things we do there are essentially things that we can do in our community," Barnette said. "Mission Arlington isn't a magical place where they are doing some secret program. They are just normal people, like you and I, that are following God's command in reaching their community. Sometimes we have to think simply in order for God to use us in a mighty way."

FBC Eupora students and volunteer leaders will make the trip Saturday-June 13 to Mission Arlington in Arlington, Texas, where they will be conducting a mini-Vacation Bible School in different apartment complexes around the area. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in various service projects around the city, including everything from passing out flyers for local churches, working in the food pantry or clothes closet, or picking up and delivering furniture to families in need.

"As most of you know, there is a lot that goes into making a VBS run," Barnette said. "It's no different at Mission Arlington. Each student has a specific job that he or she is responsible for. Whether it is memory verse leader, song leader, puppet master or recreation, they all have to come up with ideas and/or follow curriculum to make things run smoothly. So, as a team leader, it's an awesome experience to see students grow as spiritual leaders for a younger generation."

Students will be leading evangelistic programs in the apartment communities and other neighborhoods ministries and supporting the benevolence programs. Teams minister in more than 300 apartment complexes, mobile home parks, community centers, playgrounds, laundry rooms and wherever people will gather throughout Arlington. On any given Sunday, more than 5,000 people attend Mission Arlington congregations in their own neighborhood.

This will be the second summer FBC Eupora has sponsored a mission trip for students to go to Mission Arlington. Many students are returning this year, but several will be experiencing Mission Arlington for the first time.

"I believe that this is an important trip for our students because it gives them an opportunity to follow Christ in his command when he says, 'you will be my witnesses in both Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth,'" Barnette said. "We are not only to serve here in our community, but we should have a desire

in us to spread the gospel in our state, country, and world wide. If that desire isn't in us, odds are we aren't following Christ' commands for our life!"

Mission Arlington began in August 1986, when Tille Burgin and her family returned home from serving as missionaries in South Korea. According to Burgin, a persistent question kept coming to her mind and heart during this time: "If we could do missions in Korea, why can't we do missions in Arlington?"

During the past 25 years, the ministries at Mission Arlington®/Mission Metroplex continue to evolve in response to the needs of the community. Mission Arlington is "an evangelical ministry functioning in partnership with most of the local churches in Arlington from across all denominations, to begin Bible studies which over time grow into church in neighborhoods, mostly in low-income apartment communities throughout the city, and they also meet a variety of physical needs through free 'benevolent' programs like medical clinics, food pantries, after-school tutoring and more."

"Mainly, what I hope the students get out of the trip is a deeper love for the God who gave it all for their sake," Barnette said. "There is no greater desire of mine that our group would have a fire set in them that burns uncontrollable for the sake of the Gospel. This would ultimately lead them to shouting from the rooftops of Eupora that Christ is truly King and Lord of all!"

Bre Hunter went to serve at Mission Arlington last summer and is looking forward to "just seeing what God has in store."

"It's a very eye-opening trip," she said. "It really makes it real to you how important sharing God's word is and how important living a life reflecting him is. Because being around those kids they're going to be just as serious as you are about the situation."

One of the special benefits of taking this mission trip as a group, has been the special bond that has grown among the students at FBC Eupora.

"My favorite part of mission Arlington was how the youth group grew together spiritually, and how everyone had to make adjustments to do what needed to be done," said Clayton Mixon. "At first it was a bumpy road then we all just sat down and talked and some of the people there I probably would have never talked to, but I learned IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU! The most important thing you need to know about mission Arlington is that it's not about you!"

Anita Russell served as a volunteer leader with the group last year and can't wait to go back again this summer.

"I'm so excited to be returning to Mission Arlington for the second year," Russell said. "It was a wonderful experience to watch the youth of our church serve others by stepping outside their comfort zone and without thinking about their own comfort. I'm excited to see what God is going to do through our group this year."

Russell said she has heard about Mission Arlington for years and was so excited when Barnette allowed her to go with them last year.

"I have talked about it so much that my husband is going with us this year," Russell said. "God has used that special place to help so many and I know He will continue to do so."

For more about Mission Arlington, go to missionarlington.org. For more information about the student ministries at FBC Eupora, contact Barnette at 258-3491 or go to fbceupora.com.



Micah Gray holds a baby girl at one of the Arlington apartment complexes where the FBC Eupora team was helping deliver furniture to a needy family last summer.