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April 4, 1989

89-52

Baptist students
preach on beach

By Thomas J. Brannon

F - Texas

PADRE ISLAND, Texas (BP)--About 150 volunteers from Baptist Student Unions on more than 10 Texas campuses ministered at South Padre Island during spring break to thousands students from across America.

Sixty-eight professions of faith in Christ were registered during the first week of spring break.

Meanwhile, a 40-member BSU team spent March 18-23 witnessing on the beach of Mustang Island at the invitation of First Baptist Church of Port Aransas, Texas.

The student volunteers shared the plan of Christian salvation with more than 450 people, enabling 22 people to make professions of faith and 12 others to rededicate their lives to Christ. The week before, another group of BSUers from Texas and Oklahoma led five people at Mustang Island to Christ and saw 17 make rededications.

"There are more students here than I've seen in a long time," said Buddy Young, coordinator of Beach Reach on Padre Island and BSU director at West Texas State University. "The problem is we don't have enough students and laypersons to provide the kind of ministry that's needed here. Our student teams are spread so thin because of the month-long extended spring break this year."

But the spirits of the student workers who were providing ministries -- ranging from a 24-hour hotline, to serving breakfast to about 400 people each morning, to sports activities, to Christian concerts -- didn't seem hampered by the mammoth task.

The hotline was one of the popular ministries provided by the students. They gave rides to 4,000 students who called on the hotline. "Every call provides an opportunity to share the gospel, and we made certain that no person gets out of one of our vans without being confronted with the gospel," Young said.

A souvenir Padre Island card was presented with every personal contact. The card carried the 24-hour hotline telephone number. The card also carried the scriptural plan of salvation.

The Padre Island ministry was headquartered at Island Baptist Church. The beach ministry is like a shot in the arm for the congregation where at least one-fourth of the members are involved in the work, said Pastor Charlie Arnold.

"The majority of our work through this ministry is not building up our own church, but feeding other churches," Arnold said.

A sunburn station was another popular tool the students utilized to reach fellow students. More than 700 people were helped each week.

Rich Batchelor, BSU director of Pan American University in Edinburg and co-coordinator of the South Padre beach ministry, said cooperation makes the beach ministry possible.

"This year the Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Unit has made it possible to serve a free breakfast daily to hundreds of students," Batchelor said. The disaster relief unit was staffed by Baptist men from churches throughout the Rio Grande Valley and was coordinated by Tommy Dulin of First Baptist Church of Harlingen, the Texas Baptist disaster relief coordinator for south Texas.

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Woman's Missionary Unions from area churches also have provided hundreds of meals and other services for the student workers, Batchelor said.

"Churches across Texas have provided funding to send the students to work in the beach ministry," Batchelor said. "The Rio Grande Baptist Valley Association and the Island Church have contributed so very much as have other churches throughout the valley. And Texas Cooperative Program (unified budget) funds invested in the beach ministry made this an effort of all Texas Baptists."

The student workers had a specific plan of follow-up for people who accept Christ through the beach ministry. Before he retired for the night, a BSUer who led a student to Christ that day wrote a personal follow-up letter to the new Christian. A letter also was sent to a local church in the new convert's home or college town advising the pastor of the decision. And the local BSU director also was advised for follow-up.

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Christians can become
mental health supporters

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-10
(OK'd)

Baptist Press
4/4/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--One in five families has a family member with a diagnosed mental illness, according to mental health workers.

Being diagnosed means that the person is seeing a mental health professional and receiving treatment. Considering undiagnosed cases, families with a mentally ill family member may be as high as one in three.

Church members are not immune to those statistics, cited by Thom Balmer, counselor for the counseling-education center of Grady Baptist Association in Oklahoma.

How do churches handle such situations? In most cases they don't.

"Many times the mentally ill person and his family do not feel embraced by their local congregation," Balmer said.

People's first reaction to a person with mental illness is fear, said Bill Carpenter, director of pastoral care at Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City.

"For most of us, there's a part of us we're not sure about either, and we're afraid that just might come out," Carpenter said.

Also, people are afraid they will say something that will make the mentally ill person out of control. But Carpenter said the chances of that happening are "so remote" that is is not a viable fear.

Once such fears are overcome, Christians can become a strong support system for people on the road back to mental health, he said.

One important aspect in ministering to the mentally ill is to "treat the person with kindness, but not difference," Carpenter said. That kind of attitude tells other family members, "This person does not embarrass me."

Visitors should be honest and comfortable, Carpenter said.

"They often will welcome a visit, but may not know how to respond," he explained. "If they pick up that you're uncomfortable, they'll find a way to get rid of you quickly.

"They often have a keen ability to pick up on sincerity, and there's not a lot of trading of social niceties. To say, 'You look nice today' is not appropriate unless you mean it."

Even if a person is visited regularly, it may be quite some time before he comes to church, he noted: "If coming will make him uncomfortable or nervous, he will not come until he will be comfortable. Don't give up on these kinds of things. They come very, very slowly."

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' A key point in ministering to the mentally ill is to understand that "this person cannot will this problem away. Many times the problem is caused by a chemical imbalance and cannot be willed away any more than diabetes can be willed away," Carpenter said.

In addition, "illness of one member of the family should be the signal to rally to the defense of other members of the family," according to "Ministering To Families Of The Mentally Ill," a brochure from the National Association for Mental Health. The stress such an illness causes for the entire family makes the church's support critical.

"Church members need to say: 'We struggle with you. We don't blame you. We still love you,'" Balmer said.

In dealing with families, Balmer said, Christians should "recognize the loss of dreams and added financial burden. If a 23-year-old is diagnosed with schizophrenia, I pay attention to the family and loved ones' rearrangement of future goals and achievements and climbing medical expenses."

Information is one of the key elements in such ministries. When families permit it, Balmer informs church leaders of what to expect from the mentally ill person and how to respond to his behavior. "This disarms the fear and awkwardness that may occur," he said.

Another factor in ministering to the mentally ill and their families is attitude. Mental illness needs to be accepted as a sickness and not a disgrace, the association's brochure said.

"When the clergyman approaches the sick person with understanding and acceptance rather than with condemnation, this fact alone may help immeasurably in restoring a valid sense of self-esteem which is so necessary for health," it said.

One problem that makes churches ineffective in ministering to the mentally ill is that families often do not acknowledge the problem. "Usually family members try to keep it a secret," Balmer said.

It becomes a cycle. Families stop going to church as they attempt to cover up the illness. They begin to feel "abandoned" by their churches, Balmer said, but the church does not know how to minister to the family because it is not aware of the real problem.

Even when a church is aware that one of its members has a mental illness, most people are not trained to deal with it. The Association for Mental Health brochure said: "The fact that so many people consult clergymen speaks eloquently of the potential usefulness of this group in preventive and recuperative mental hygiene. The fact that so many people still need help after consulting a clergyman speaks with equal eloquence of the need for more adequate pastoral training in interpersonal realtions."

A pastor should "set limits for what he can provide" in the way of counseling, Balmer said. Church workers need to be aware of Christian counselors in their area to refer people to for clinical counseling, he added.

While concerned church members do not replace the need for treatment from a Christian mental health professional, sensitive Christians lead the way to healing for the whole person -- body, mind and soul, he said.

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NIMH: Myths can cloud
mental health picture

F-10
(OK/8)

Baptist Press
4/4/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Several myths cloud an understanding of mental illness, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

The myths include:

-- A person who has been mentally ill can never be normal.

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* Fact: Mental illness often is temporary. A previously well-adjusted individual may have an episode of illness lasting weeks or months and then may go for years, even a lifetime, without further difficulty.

-- People with mental illness are unpredictable.

Fact: Some are impulsive and their actions unpredictable when they are actively ill. But once they have recovered, most are consistent in their behavior and are likely to present few surprises to those who know them.

-- Mentally ill people are dangerous.

Fact: Patients who have come through mental illness and have returned to the community are apt, if anything, to be anxious, timid and passive. They rarely present a danger to the public.

-- Recovered mental patients could go berserk at any time.

Fact: Most people who have been mentally ill never went "berserk" in the first place. They are more likely to be depressed and withdrawn than wild and aggressive.

-- Discussion with someone who has been mentally ill is impossible.

Fact: Most recovered mental patients are rational and intelligent, and it is certainly possible to talk with them. Even individuals who are actively mentally ill are likely to be rational in many ways.

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Life's shadows 'magnified'
by problems of mental illness

By Sarah Zimmerman

F- (O
(OKIA)

Baptist Press
4/4/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--"Where's Janice?"

As pastor, Larry Stevens could hardly lie when asked that question about his wife.

"In the hospital," he replied.

Naturally the next question was, "For what?"

That began a litany of questions for which the pastor of Noble Avenue Baptist Church in Guthrie, Okla., had few answers. Thankfully, church members "didn't push for details," he said. "They just asked, 'What can we do?'"

"What can we do?" is an obvious question when someone is diagnosed with a physical ailment. But when the diagnosis is a mental illness, even church members are not always so eager to help.

The Stevenses agreed to share their experience to help others understand that "from time to time, we all need some help."

Mrs. Stevens began seeing a Christian psychologist in September 1986 as an outpatient. By the end of the month, she was an inpatient. She spent six weeks in the hospital, then was dismissed to continue outpatient treatment. From January to June 1987, she was in Rochester, Minn., for specialized treatment. Now she continues outpatient treatment.

Professionals have long names for what she experienced. Stevens said his wife simply was working through things that happened in her childhood. She said she is just "learning to deal with life on life's terms."

"This has made the biggest difference in my life," she said. "Some people are afraid it's a sign of weakness or lack of faith. It's strengthened my faith."

Mrs. Stevens was admitted to the hospital on a Friday night. On Saturday night, her husband and their two children attended a Sunday school social. That's when the questions began.

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Of answering these questions, Stevens recalled: "I tried to say, 'It's not your fault.' It wasn't the church's fault or our family's fault or God's fault. There was just a lot of not knowing."

Perhaps one reason church members repented so well was that Stevens handled the situation openly from the start. "It tested my preaching," he admitted. "I had preached before that it's wrong to ignore your problems or not deal with them. And it was easier to admit what was happening than make up excuses."

In retrospect, he can identify reactions by church members that helped make the best of the situation.

"Prayer was real important part of their ministry," he said, noting that in almost every spoken prayer in a church service, people would intercede on behalf of his family. "It was just so powerful to hear our named in prayer," he said.

Mrs. Stevens also felt the power of intercessory prayer. She said the time she felt closest to her church family was when she was in Minnesota. She received cards and letters from church members. She knew that if they took time to write, they surely took time to pray. And there were times when the strength to make it through the day did not come from herself.

The church also helped its pastor realize other things in life needed attention. "They didn't let me become obsessed with this," he said. "One thing I didn't need was their pity. I had enough of that on my own."

At the time, he was working on a doctor of ministry degree. The work required him to be in Tulsa, Okla., 16 Mondays a year. The church encouraged him to keep working toward the degree, and church members cared for the children while he was gone.

Other students in the doctorate program became a strong support group. As he shared what was happening, "I had a real sense that I'm not in this alone. They were my fellow strugglers," he remembered.

While Mrs. Stevens was hospitalized, he learned what it is like to be a single parent. "Single parenting is ...," he said as he rolled back his eyes and shook his head to finish the sentence. "But the church let me make changes in my routine to pick up the kids from school and to spend more time with them. I wanted this to be as easy for our kids as possible."

One of their fears was what other people might tell their son and daughter about their mother. Would other children taunt their children with cruel jokes? Would other parents tell their children not to associate with the Stevens' children? Those fears were laid to rest though, as "the kids just heard acceptance and love," Stevens said.

Among the most important of the church's reactions was allowing Stevens to feel his emotions. "When I hurt, they let me hurt," he said. "Some people might have been afraid this would tarnish the image of the church. But this says Noble Avenue is doing what the church is all about."

Perhaps the hardest time for Mrs. Stevens was returning to Guthrie after being in Minnesota.

"When she came back, the church's attitude was, 'Welcome back, we missed you,'" he said. "It was much more difficult for her than for the church."

"The church allowed me to ease back into church attendance," she said. "Because of their response when I did come back, I could tell they were genuine."

She remembers that one of the first church activities she attended upon her return was a softball game. She thought people might shy away from her, but she was pleasantly surprised.

Although the last few years have been difficult for the Stevenses -- and the struggle is not completely over -- he said: "I wouldn't trade where Janice is today for where she was two and a-half years ago. Then everything appeared to be OK, but she was a master at swallowing her past. Now she is honest. She's struggling but she's growing."

Beeson Divinity School announces
Graham chair, adds new faculty

N-(CO
(Ala.)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--A Billy Graham chair of evangelism and church growth has been established at the Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

Earlier this year, evangelist Graham gave permission for the chair to be named in his honor, said Divinity School Dean Timothy George.

"The chair recognizes his lifelong commitment to the ministry of evangelism," George said.

The school's benefactor, Ralph Waldo Beeson, has requested that missions and evangelism be given a high priority in the development of the school's curriculum, George noted.

A national search for the first person to hold the chair will begin this spring, he said.

Kenneth A. Mathews and Frank S. Thielman have been appointed to teach in the areas of Old Testament and New Testament, respectively, George announced.

Mathews, a professor at Criswell College in Dallas, is a specialist in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the ancient biblical manuscripts discovered in the late 1940s. A former pastor, he also has taught at the University of Michigan and Dallas Baptist University. He earned a doctorate from the University of Michigan.

Thielman, a professor at King College in Bristol, Tenn., earned a doctorate from Duke University. He has written primarily in the area of Pauline theology.

Both Mathews and Thielman will join the faculty June 1.

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Court refuses to review
clergy malpractice case

By Kathy Palen

N-BIC

Baptist Press
4/4/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to review a dispute that has been described as the nation's first clergy malpractice suit.

The high court's decision, which was announced in a one-line order April 3, leaves standing a unanimous ruling by the California Supreme Court that individuals who are not licensed as counselors or therapists cannot be held legally liable for failing to provide proper advice or for failing to refer their counselees to licensed therapists.

Walter and Maria Nally sued Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, Calif., because their son, Kenneth, committed suicide in 1979 after receiving counseling from members of the church's staff. The Nallys charged the staff members with malpractice for failing to urge their son to seek psychiatric help or to inform them he was contemplating a second suicide attempt.

The couple contended the church did not properly train its counselors and that the counselors who talked with their son discouraged him from seeking further medical help.

The decision by the California Supreme Court overturned two appeals court rulings that the case should go to trial because a reasonable juror could find that the counselors acted negligently and in a way that encouraged Nally to take his life.

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Southwestern students witness
during spring break

F-(CO
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press
4/4/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--More than 1,975 people made decisions for Christ as a result of witnessing and preaching by students from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary during the school's spring evangelism practicum.

The decisions included 500 professions of faith in Christ made as the students led revivals in 35 states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and four Canadian provinces during Southwestern's spring break.

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More than 225 students participated in the practicum, said Dan Crawford, associate professor at Southwestern and director of the program. Students preached 1,284 sermons, led 84 witness training sessions, distributed more than 4,300 gospel tracts and gave away nearly 270 New Testaments.

The students also made 3,700 personal visits before and during the practicum week, he said.

Farmers, hitchhikers, hairdressers, street people, children, teenagers and grandparents all made decisions, Crawford noted: "Those stories are not unusual. For many weeks to come, we will hear stories of lives changed as a result of the week. It's strictly an evangelistic ministry to small churches."

One of those churches was in Belvedere, Ill. With only 12 members and a discouraged pastor, the church saw 31 people make professions of faith in Christ during a revival led by Southwestern student Juvenal Cervantes.

"I attribute all the decisions we had to prayer," said Cervantes, a theology student. "I was able to reaffirm my faith and trust that God does answer prayer."

Before the revival, Cervantes said, the church's pastor was about to resign. The pastor prayed for a sign as to whether God wanted him to stay at the church.

The answer came. "He's got a lot of work to do now," Cervantes said.

Ken McCaskill, another theology student, said the practicum gave him useful experience. Before going to First Baptist Church in Elida, N.M., McCaskill had preached only one sermon. During the week of the spring practicum, he preached nine.

"I gained more confidence about being in the pulpit," McCaskill said. One of the unique decisions of the week for him was seeing a 76-year-old man accept Christ after McCaskill had visited with the man in his backyard earlier in the week.

Ronnie Rogers, a religious education student, went to Little Birch Baptist Chapel in Little Birch, W.Va., along with his wife, Amanda.

Ray Robinson, pastor of the chapel, said God "just sent us the right couple. The Spirit was really moving and still is moving. It (the revival) brought our people closer together. They learned how to go out of the way and how to sacrifice."

Students participating in the practicum received two hours of academic credit. Expenses for the program are paid by churches, foundations, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and individual donors.

Although one of the great benefits of the week is seeing hundreds of people receive Christ, it is also "exciting to see what happens to the students involved," Crawford said.

McCaskill learned the importance of "preaching the gospel with confidence. God will take what you do and bless it and really touch the lives of you and the people."

Crawford agreed that the results of the week are from God. "We feel like we can prepare the students to lead a revival, but only God can send the revival," he said.

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Return to college prepares
retiree for new ministry

By Ken Camp

F-Texas

Baptist Press
4/4/89

TYLER, Texas (BP)--Forty years after he entered Baylor University, a 60-year-old anesthesiologist from Tyler, Texas, returned to college. Today, 14 years later, the lessons Ivey E. Lamberth learned during his late-life school days are serving him well as a member of the Hispanic congregation of First Baptist Church of Tyler.

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In the mid-1970s Lamberth began to think about preparing for his retirement years by developing new interests. A fascination with fine art prompted him to begin taking art classes at Tyler Junior College. When he completed all the available art and Spanish courses there, he transferred to the University of Texas at Tyler.

Lamberth, who received his bachelor's degree in pre-medical studies and religion from Baylor in 1938, earned a second bachelor's in art and interdisciplinary studies at UT Tyler in 1982 and a master's degree in 1986. As a part of his study in Spanish, he also spent time in Mexico during the summers of 1980 and 1984.

At about the same time Lamberth was completing his most recent degree, his church started a new Hispanic congregation as part of the "Mission Texas" emphasis on church planting. Due largely to his new-found interest in Spanish, Lamberth -- a deacon and member of the missions committee at First Baptist Church -- decided to become a part of Iglesia Bautista de Tyler.

"I started attending the Hispanic congregation for purely selfish reasons," he said. "I wanted to go to church where Spanish was spoken so that I could maintain my use of the language.

"I'm not bilingual by any means. When I go to church at the Hispanic congregation, I get the big ideas of the sermon. I usually can give back the preacher's outline, but I miss lots of details, and I miss the punchline of every joke."

Lamberth, who doesn't like to call the Hispanic congregation a "mission" because he says that makes it seem distant and removed from the sponsoring church, considers his responsibility at the Hispanic fellowship to be "general support." That support comes in ways ranging from copying bulletins for Sunday services to greeting visitors to helping a member complete his income tax return.

For several months, he also worked with English and citizenship classes offered as part of the amnesty ministry of First Baptist Church. The classes help people classified as temporary legal residents in the United States gain permanent residency status and become eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship.

Still, Lamberth does not consider his work with the Hispanic congregation praiseworthy, saying: "I don't do anything big. I don't want to be singled out."

In fact, if Lamberth takes pride in anything related to his involvement with the Hispanic congregation, it is that he no longer is "singled out" there.

"The Hispanic people have adopted me as one of them," he said. "They have accepted me as I am."

While the Hispanic congregation was quick to accept Lamberth, he confessed it might have been difficult for him to fit into a group with a different culture and language had he not returned to school at age 60.

"I could not have the relationships I do today in the Hispanic community had I not gone back to school," he said. "It gave me a completely new outlook on life.

"I am no longer isolated in the medical environment of doctor/patient relationships. By associating with people of widely different ages and backgrounds as a student in the same class with them, it enabled me to relate to people with lifestyles different from mine."

Lamberth maintained that his return to college gave him an appreciation for new ideas. He said it taught him to look at things -- including the church -- in new ways.

"My idea of the mission of the church is much broader than it was when I was 55," he said. "Now I believe the church's task is to accept people just as they are and to make it possible for them to be lifted to what they can be.

"Many times cultural differences are greater in appearance than they are in depth. We all have the same needs as human beings -- for acceptance, for friends. We need to help meet those needs."

Miracle of open Bible
leads from occult to Christ

By Orville Scott

F - TEXAS

ATLANTA (BP)--God's miracles triumphed over the power of Satan as 45 people came to Christ during a spring break mission trip to Atlanta, according to Baptist Student Union volunteers from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.

Lamar was one of many Baptist Student Union groups whose members spent their spring breaks sharing Jesus in cities from Atlanta to Chicago to Syracuse, N.Y.

Lamar BSUs recently had experienced God's power, as 23 students accepted Christ through their "Share Jesus Now" ministry in February and March, said Director Clif Mouser.

The goal of Share Jesus Now was to have 89,000 trained witnesses in more than 3,000 Texas Baptist churches sharing their faith with 1 million unchurched Texans in February and March.

Since school started last fall, 43 professions of faith in Christ had been recorded through Lamar BSU ministries.

But Lamar BSU members said that when they arrived on the campus of an Atlanta high school, they began to feel the school, they began to feel the oppressive power of Satan." Many of the high school youth appeared to be involved in the occult or Satan worship, they said.

Kerry Menefee, who led three people to faith in Christ in a grocery store during Share Jesus Now in March, was spit on and kicked by two young men involved in the occult.

"Our group went back to the hotel that night feeling that for the first time they had seen spiritual warfare," said Mouser. "At first they felt defeated, but we began praying and confessing our own sins and lack of preparation."

The next day, 12 high school students believed in Christ. That night Menefee and another BSU volunteer, Jay Givens, were praying for the students who had kicked and spit on her. At the same time the BSUs were praying for them, both young men awakened and were unable to go back to sleep.

One of them decided to go for a walk. On his porch he discovered a Bible. "No one knows how it got there," said Mouser, "but it was opened to John 3:16."

The next day both students who had harassed Menefee went to her and asked her how to become Christians. They and 22 others at the school believed in Christ.

Lamar BSUs also led 21 other people to faith in Jesus as they served on college campuses and with mission churches in the Atlanta area, doing repairs, backyard Bible clubs and surveys.

BSU volunteers from Texas A&M University in College Station led 12 people to Christ in Atlanta as they cleaned homes of elderly people in high rises and did backyard Bible clubs.

Another Texas A&M BSU team said they also experienced "spiritual warfare" -- in Canton, Okla. As they arrived to help remodel a church, do surveys and lead a three-day revival, a man walked up and put his arm around their missions coordinator, Sheri Bryant.

"Satan wants you," he said.

"Satan tried, but we prevailed through prayer," said Bryant. "We grew into a dependence on God and learned how important prayer is."

BSU volunteers from East Texas State University in Commerce did missions and evangelism work in New York City and Syracuse, N.Y.

They did construction at Graffiti Baptist Mission in New York City, distributed food and clothing in Harlem, helped operate a soup kitchen and had church in the park for homeless people.

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"It opened my eyes that homeless people are not just a group but individuals with specific needs," said Shauna Gardner, a BSU student missionary to Las Vegas this summer.

Fifty-one BSUers and staff from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, helped advance missions work in Chicago. They worked with Uptown Baptist Church, doing construction work, helping operate a soup kitchen and putting together a mobile book shelf in the church.

Also, they served on seven Chicago-area college campuses, sites of fledgling BSU ministries.

"It opened our students' hearts and eyes to thinking more about home missions and made them aware that we as Texas Baptists are so blessed," said Laurin Collard, Baylor BSU missions coordinator.