

Dixie National ministry 'a training center' for evangelistic outreach

*By Lindsey Williams
Writing Specialist*

Throughout early February's roller-coaster temperatures, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) Evangelism tent invited Dixie National Rodeo attendees and vendors to stand in the shade and hear a three-minute Gospel presentation. A total of 79 volunteers from 20 Mississippi Baptist churches traveled to the fairgrounds in Jackson, uplifting hearts, planting spiritual seeds, and witnessing 22 decisions for Christ.

Don Lum, MBCB Director of Evangelism, reflected on 10 years of rodeo ministry. "The State Fair Commission have been very gracious to let us be a part of it every year, and we're excited to see what God's going to do with it next.

"About two years ago, we looked at the ministry and just felt like what we were doing had a shelf life," continued Lum. "A lot of the people we share the Gospel with come down every year, so the crowd is mostly made up of the same people. But what we've learned since then, and particularly this year, is that folks like us being there. The first day we were setting up, some people drove by on a golf cart and told us, 'We kept wondering when y'all were going to get here!' And others would walk by just to tell us they were glad we were here. I felt sure that they knew who we are and what we are about."



A Mississippi Baptist volunteer prays with a family outside of the MBCB Evangelism tent at the Dixie National Rodeo in Jackson. (Photo credit: Bart Lambright)

Un
li
ke
th
e
di
ve
rs
e
cr
ow
d
of
th
e
an
nu
al
st
at
e
fa
ir
in
wh
ic
h
th
e
MB
CB
Ev
an
ge
li
sm
te

nt
al
so
ma
ke
s
an
ap
pe
ar
an
ce
,
a
ty
pi
ca
l
da
y
at
th
e
Di
xi
e
Na
ti
on
al
Ro
de
o
se
es
a
sm

al
le
r
gr
ou
p
of
do
wn
-
to
-
ea
rt
h
fa
rm
er
s
an
d
th
ei
r
fa
mi
li
es
wh
o
vi
si
t
ev
er
y
ye

ar
.
Bu
t
th
e
mi
ni
st
ry
no
t
on
ly
ev
an
ge
li
ze
s
to
wi
ll
in
g
ea
rs
,
it
al
so
in
sp
ir
es
be
li

ev
er
s
—
bo
th
yo
un
g
an
d
ex
pe
ri
en
ce
d
—
to
sh
ar
e
th
ei
r
fa
it
h
mo
re
.

“On the first day,” Lum shared, “three boys, who were between 8 and 12 years old, stopped by our tent and knew we had those Little Bibles because they had been there years before. They got some Bibles and took off to hand them out to people around the fairgrounds, and came back two or three times for more.”

For one volunteer, Thereisa Sorrels, evangelism is no unaccustomed concept. In her second year to volunteer, she expressed, "Last year, my husband, Penley, and I loved it so much that we thought, 'Why not come back this year?' I love telling people about Jesus. I do it at Walmart. When nobody is behind me, I talk to the cashier. One young woman accepted the Lord and so then I told her about a Southern Baptist church near her in Greenville to try, and she was so receptive. Wherever she decided to go, I just prayed that the Lord would send her to a Bible-teaching church."

When asked if she held any apprehension toward presenting the Gospel in three minutes, Sorrels responded, "No, but you do have to grow into that because it can be scary at first. But when I take that first step, the Holy Spirit just takes over."

Working alongside faithful examples such as this encourages young volunteers to be bold, and the easy-going nature of the Dixie National Rodeo attendees creates a relaxed atmosphere for churches seeking to train new evangelizers. Even visitors practiced sharing their testimonies.

"We had two sisters and their children come by," recounted Lum, "and as they were walking up smiling and happy, I could tell these were good folks. One of the ladies came up and said, 'My daughter wants to tell y'all about Jesus.' So we had a great time listening to her little girl tell us about Jesus."

“On our last day as we were reclosing up



, MBCB Evangelism director Don Lum (right) shares the Gospel with a rodeo attendee. (Photo credit: Bart Lambright)

had another woman, working as a vendor or

,
wh
o
ca
me
ov
er
an
d
to
ld
us
he
r
da
d
is
in
vo
lv
ed
in
pr
is
on
mi
ni
st
ry
. Sh
e
sa
id
,
'I
'v

e
se
en
al
l
th
e
Li
tt
le
Bi
bl
es
an
d
tr
ac
ts
yo
u
ha
ve
an
d
wo
nd
er
ed
if
th
er
e
wa
s
an
y
po

ss
ib
il
it
y
of
me
ge
tt
in
g
so
me
of
th
os
e
fo
r
my
da
d
to
us
e?
,
Of
co
ur
se
we
sa
id
ye
s,
an
d

no
w
th
os
e
wi
ll
be
us
ed
to
sh
ar
e
th
e
Go
sp
el
el
se
wh
er
e.

Participation in the Dixie National Rodeo evangelism ministry is an opportunity for Mississippi Baptists to see firsthand the Cooperative Program at work.

“I am grateful for the many MS Baptists who have taken this on as a part of their ministry,” emphasized Lum. “We would love for you and your church to come and be a part of it. Your Cooperative Program dollars are at work here. We rent the space, the tent, and put all the resources out there with Cooperative Program gifts. And then MS Baptists come from all across the state to tell people about Jesus.

“This ministry is a training center, an opportunity to train

groups who have never evangelized like this to come and learn what we do and how to use that simple Gospel presentation in their daily lives. The Dixie National is a great place to learn for two reasons: firstly, it's not as crowded as the state fair so it's less overwhelming. Secondly, it's a laidback crowd at the Dixie National."

Looking ahead to the next time the MBCB evangelism tent will make an appearance, Lum invited Mississippi Baptists to join in sharing the Gospel during the Mississippi State Fair.

"October 3-13, it will be our fifth year down at the fairgrounds for the state fair. We would love for churches and pastors to start planning how they can be a part of that. We want to share Jesus, we want MS Baptists to learn how to share Jesus, and we want to embolden them to look for opportunities to share when they go back home."

For more information on Evangelism ministry at the Dixie National Rodeo or Mississippi State Fair, contact Linda Burris, ministry assistant of the MBCB Evangelism department, at lburris@mbcb.org or 601-292-3278.