

Miss. Baptists hold Christ high at Fairgrounds events

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Mississippi Baptists are becoming a fixture at the Mississippi State Fairgrounds in Jackson, witnessing to participants and attendees at the Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo in February and the Mississippi State Fair in October.



Lum

“F
or
th
e
Fa
ir
an
d
th
e
Di
xi
e
Na
ti
on
al
co
mb
in
ed
th
is
ye
ar

,
we
sh
ar
ed
Ch
ri
st
3,
13
9
ti
me
s
an
d
sa
w
25
2
pe
op
le
gi
ve
th
ei
r
li
ve
s
to
Ch
ri
st
,"
re

po
rt
ed
Do
n
Lu
m,
di
re
ct
or
of
ev
an
ge
li
sm
at
th
e
Mi
ss
is
si
pp
i
Ba
pt
is
t
Co
nv
en
ti
on
Bo
ar

Volunteers from Mississippi Baptist churches have staffed an evangelism tent at the Fair for the past two years and at the Dixie National for seven years.

“The Rodeo and the Fair are literal mission fields,” Lum said. “Many, many people come by our tent because of where we’re located. At the Fair, there’s a gate right by us and we’re near attractions like the children’s area and the biscuit barn. We’re hard to miss.”

There’s a place for everyone, Lum said. “Many of the volunteers are better at one role than they are another. Some are phenomenal ‘catchers,’ who make the initial contacts outside the tent and encourage people to come in and hear the Gospel. Others are more comfortable sharing inside the tent.

“What’s so encouraging is that these volunteers have a heart for ministry. While they’re witnessing, you can see the light come on. They say, ‘I can do this. I can talk to someone about Jesus. I didn’t know I could.’

“That’s just one great outcome. Volunteers who are just starting out – maybe this is their first experience sharing their faith – have the opportunity to watch somebody else in action, listen to someone else, and learn how to witness before they do it themselves,” Lum observed.

Fo
ll
ow
-
up
is
a
cr
uc
ia
l
pa
rt
of
an



Y COMING TO CHRIST – Volunteers pray at the Mississippi
eVBaptist Convention Board’s evangelism tent at the
anMississippi State Fair in October with fairgoers who made a
geprofession of faith in Christ during their visit to the
lMississippi State Fairgrounds in Jackson. (Photo credit:
smTony Martin)

ef
fo
rt
,
he
po
in
te
d
ou
t.
“W
e
tr
y
to

fo
ll
ow
up
th
re
e
wa
ys
. Fi
rs
t
of
al
l,
we
se
nd
ev
er
y
pe
rs
on
on
wh
ic
h
we
ha
ve
in
fo
rm
at
io

n
Go
sp
el
ma
te
ri
al
s
fr
om
th
e
co
nv
en
ti
on
bo
ar
d.

“Secondly, when one of our volunteers leads someone to Christ we send contact information to them so they can do follow-up. Thirdly, we try to connect the tent visitors with a local church in their home area. Hopefully, in one of those three ways we can maintain contact with them so they can be disciplined,” Lum said.

One highlight of the Fairgrounds volunteer opportunities is that every person isn't necessarily required to use just one uniform method to share the Good News, Lum said. “All we ask the volunteers to do in their presentations is to bring people to a point at which they can ask, ‘Would you like to give your heart to Jesus?’”

Lum thanked Andy Gipson, Mississippi's Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce and overseer of the Rodeo and Fair,

for his support. Gipson is a former Mississippi Baptist pastor.

Lum stressed that the Fairgrounds ministries return dividends to local churches. "So many of our pastors have discovered that these two opportunities encourage evangelism development in their churches," he said. "It can bring the volunteers to another level in their walk with the Lord.

"As pastors and church leaders come to understand what we're doing at these events, they see that this is literally a laboratory for learning how to share our faith."

For more information on how to get involved in Fairgrounds ministries, contact Lum at dlum@mbcb.org. Telephone: (601) 292-3278.

Due in large part to the success of the Fairgrounds ministries, Mississippi Baptists have been invited to partner in a similar project with the Wyoming Cowboy Ministry at the National Finals Rodeo Dec. 1-10 in Las Vegas.

"This is the Super Bowl of rodeos," Lum said. "Average attendance over the last four years has been around 250,000, and we'll be there to share the Gospel with as many people as we can."

For more information on volunteering for the National Finals Rodeo evangelism effort, contact Linda Burris at lburris@mbcb.org. Telephone: (601) 292-3278.