

# State fair ministry reaps rich rewards

*By Lindsey Williams*

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The week of the 2023 State Fair, Oct. 5th – 15th, 142 Mississippi Baptist volunteers shared the good news with over 2,520 fairgoers, of whom 269 received Christ Jesus.

For fun, food, and fanfare, a variety and diversity of people from Mississippi's rich, rooted cultures crowd the midway of the State Fair every year. For the last three years, MS Baptists have taken on this open opportunity to reach our state with the Gospel, partnering with Don Lum, Director of Evangelism at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), to make disciples of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

"It was in 2021 when we had our first opportunity to come to the State Fair following the COVID times," Lum reflected. "We were invited to come to be a part of the State Fair ministry. We can definitely see the rewards of it in the time that we've been there in a number of ways. First of all, this year we shared Jesus with 2,524 people, and that's the people that filled out cards, that doesn't include the number of times we talked to people who chose not to fill out a card."



Becky Watson (left), a member of Pinelake Church, Brandon, and Don Lum (right), director, Evangelism Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, are shown with a security officer during the Mississippi State Fair in October. (Special to The Baptist Record)

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“We shared Jesus with a lot of people who didn’t fill out cards. We had a lot of good Gospel conversations with folks outside the tent,” said Lum. “Of course, any time we started talking with them and they then began to take the lead in the conversation or start asking questions, that 3 minutes can

turn into much longer because they initiate that extra time.”

“One of the neat things that we had going for us this year was that we had so many volunteers who knew how to do what we were doing when they arrived. They had done it before, they knew the process, and they came with an understanding and a desire to be there and share Jesus.”

“We also had several groups that were new. We had one church that brought a large number of teenagers to come and work, and it was really neat for them to begin to understand what we were doing... One of the groups came from Launch (a youth event held on August 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> at Camp Garaywa) and said, ‘We would like to come to the fair, but we don’t know what we’re doing. Would you train us?’”

“They were tremendous,” Lum noted, as he was pleased to prepare them for the ministry ahead. Prior to the fair, he visited their church and trained the eager group of students.

Starting small has led to growing impact. “We’ve seen some churches that started with one or two people, and they have gone back and recruited more volunteers and have just continued to build a team to make disciples.”

With those who have made confessions of faith, the objective of the Evangelism Tent ministry is to connect these new believers to a local church. Linda Burris, the Evangelism Ministry Assistant, makes follow-up possible as she organizes the contact information from those who have received Christ Jesus into their lives and re-connects them with the volunteers who led them to the Lord. Burris then sends the new believers booklets and salvation tracks, while Lum contacts local pastors to connect with these new disciples and invite them to churches where their faith can grow.

“Fair ministry is a unique laboratory because we have an opportunity to say, ‘If you’ll come work at this tent, you

will learn how to share your faith,'" said Lum.

"Folks at the fair are very receptive to us coming. Even if they don't want to listen or don't have time to listen, they're Mississippians – they're *nice* people. So it's a great place for pastors to take the lead in saying, 'We're going to use this as an opportunity to train our people to share Jesus.' And we can do that. Then they can take it back and use it in their formats. We've had some volunteers take what we've done here and take it back to where they are and use it to make a difference in local communities."

To learn more about evangelism and how you and your church can impact your community with the Gospel, contact Don Lum at [dlum@mbcb.org](mailto:dlum@mbcb.org) and 601-292-3280, or the Evangelism Ministry Assistant, Linda Burris, at [lburriss@mbcb.org](mailto:lburriss@mbcb.org) and 601-292-3278.