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SPECIAL SOUTHEAST TEXAS EDITION

Buckner

Today

The magazine of Buckner International | Spring 2020

Chat with the Executive Director

Celebrating 50 years



Laura May
Executive Director
of Buckner in
Southeast Texas

This is an exciting and monumental year for Buckner Children's Village in 2020. We will be celebrating Buckner being a part of our community for 50 years! We started in Beaumont with a focus on taking care of our children in a residential setting, with the emphasis on making it a home for the children in our care. We have walked alongside thousands of children over the years and our hope is always that they began a time of healing with us and that they felt loved and welcomed into our Buckner family.

This July, we will have our alumni reunion that takes place every five years. The alumni will come home to visit - bringing their family with them to be a part of enjoying the memories of their childhood time spent at the Village. It is such a blessing to see where they are in life now and greeting them with open arms.

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ALSO INSIDE:

- One church's youth group is setting the standard
- Volunteer opportunities

Volunteering that stands the test of time

Story by Emily Keller

For over 20 years, the relationship between Buckner and Chevron Phillips Chemical Company in the Beaumont area has continued to blossom. What began as seeking a way to serve the community has become a strong collaboration for both teams.

Since 1990, the Chevron Phillips team has been an integral part of serving vulnerable children, families and senior adults. Each year, they host a golf

tournament in Beaumont that has netted 3.4 million dollars.

"It's not a requirement, or even an expectation, for our employees to serve Buckner with us," shared Craig Lemons, Port Arthur plant manager. "But the passion exhibited by both Buckner folks and Chevron Phillips makes it so special. The golf tournament is a pretty big undertaking, but we don't have to ask for volunteers more than once."

(continued on inside cover)



Celebrating 50 years (continued)

We still provide temporary shelter and assessment services for children on campus, but now three of our homes have foster families living in them so a smaller number of children can experience a closer-knit home environment.

We have expanded more services to our Southeast Texas community over the years, adding transitional care for youth aging out of foster care. This program provides case management services to help with entering college, tech school or the job force. We have a home near Lamar Campus, the FYI Center, that provides a place to receive services, a computer lab, life skills classes and activities to help them stay connected.

We continue to provide foster care and adoption throughout our local communities. We have been blessed to see an increase in children finding forever homes through adoption. We love being there to help strengthen our families in the community by providing free services to them through STAR, which assists families during times of crisis to build communication among children and parents, parent skills classes and groups for youth on topics such as self-esteem building, anger management and helping them cope with stress at school or within the family.

More recently, we have added our Project HOPES program, working with families that have children birth to 5 years of age. Staff work on helping them hit developmental targets and prepare them for entering school. We are also excited to announce we have just added a fatherhood program to work on strengthening the father's role in families and involvement with their children. We know dads are a very important part of their children's lives and we want to support them in doing that.

Our mission is to transform the lives of vulnerable children and build strong families through Christ-centered values. Thank you, Southeast Texas, for your continued support in making life better for the lives of our children and families. Your support makes a tremendous difference! ■



CoverStoryContinued

The teams in Orange and Port Arthur, Texas are both committed to whatever it takes to financially support through fundraising, as well as dedicating their time and gifts to supporting Buckner's mission.

Andy Woods, Orange plant manager, is encouraged by the amount of good he sees come out of each volunteer opportunity.

"You see the results over the years and know that you're doing something good, and the community is doing something good – it's very rewarding and worth every hour we spend," said Woods. "It's important to us to be good members of our community and to give back. We feel that if we can do well, we can help others do well."

The legacy of service they have created lasts much longer than any employee's tenure. Both plant managers have enjoyed seeing their team members choose to spend time during retirement serving with Buckner.

"It surprised me how many of our retirees continue to work with Buckner long after they've left Chevron Phillips. That speaks to me how good the people are – and how well we all work together," said Woods.

The employees of Chevron Phillips see Buckner as a family – and likewise. Rhonda Robichau, Buckner senior events manager of Southeast Texas, is overwhelmed at the

continued dedication these volunteers show.

"We have had employees make donations, give their time – tutor and mentor in our programs. We've even had interest in foster and adoption spark through these opportunities."

Vicki Dereze, community relations representative for Chevron Phillips Port Arthur/Orange, has had the opportunity to be a part of the relationship the whole way. As the chairman between Chevron Phillips and Buckner, she has seen that this is more than just a corporate volunteer program.

"The golf tournament was the roots to this tree – and it continues to branch out. I believe our work together is truly a God thing," shared Dereze. "Every time we have new volunteers, engineers or contractors, they immediately want to step in and get more involved. They are always looking for more ways to jump in and serve."

While Chevron Phillips has served alongside Buckner for more than 20 years, they're looking to make 2020 the biggest year yet. "That it will be bigger and better than ever before – Andy and I are personally committed, and I know our folks are committed," said Lemons, Port Arthur plant manager. ■



'No matter how young you are, you're serving the Lord' One church's youth group is setting the standard

Serving doesn't come with an age requirement. Grace Community Church believes serving begins at any age and they put those words to action each month. Justin Horsley, Grace Community Church's student pastor, teaches his students to see ways they can serve the community around them.

"My wife and I have this mentality of the rule of three – you serve, you worship and you fellowship," he said. "I want these kids to learn that in today's society we're very privileged, and let's take some of that and see we're not as bad off – and how can we help others?"

The youth group was given the opportunity to serve at the Buckner Children's Home in Beaumont for the first time in 2017 after the original group backed out. Typically, adults had filled this role, but Justin knew his students could step up to the plate. He laid out the expectations and they prayed – and every student was begging for the next opportunity to serve with Buckner.

Within the past three years, the Grace Community Church youth group has served Thanksgiving dinners, managed the toy run and more. These middle and high school aged students serving creates a special opportunity for the children at the children's home.

Laura May of Buckner Children and Family Services of Southeast Texas, has loved seeing the

younger kids come and pour encouragement into the children on campus.

"It doesn't matter that you're 14 or 12, you can still make a difference. It's so important for teenagers and young people to know what they do can influence people now," she said.

Each time someone comes to help these children with their homework or play on the swing with them is an opportunity to pour healing into previous wounds.

"The more healing moments we can give these kids the better," said May. "Telling them they are important, showing them they're special and these young adults are doing that for these kids."

At every event, the young volunteers stick with children they have bonded with over the many serving opportunities. Through the consistency, they have found an ownership and responsibility for the kids at Buckner. From eating a Thanksgiving meal together to helping them ride a bike, the bonds continue to deepen and the Grace Community Church youth group are eager to head to Buckner every chance they get.

Justin has instilled a desire to serve within these young students founded on Scripture. "It's our calling – our calling is beyond the church walls.

1 Timothy 4:12 is our verse. No matter how young you are, you are serving the Lord, and that's what they do." ■



Buckner Volunteer Opportunities

During this season of uncertainty, many of our volunteer events and opportunities are on hold or have been canceled to maintain healthy social distance to stop the spread of the coronavirus. However, there are still ways you can support Buckner safely from your home, and more coming soon!

Here are a few examples of ways you can support Buckner in this new season:

- Write an encouraging note to a senior adult or a foster family. We are accepting letters both digitally and through email. For information on where to send your note, check out our volunteer page on the Buckner website.
- Pray for the vulnerable children, families and seniors in your community. Pray for health, safety and protection.
- If you are passionate about helping families struggling due to implications of COVID-19, we are accepting financial gifts to support them in this season.

As the situation progresses, we are continuing to update our website with ways you can volunteer and serve throughout this time. To check out the most up-to-date ways we are continuing to serve our Buckner families (and how you can help), visit buckner.org/volunteer.