

No one in Texas should go hungry

School of Social Work's new initiative says church needed to help end hunger in Lone Star State by 2015

If you had the chance to feed the hungry children in your church community, would you do it?

If you knew that that prepared food would be delivered to your church door, then would you do it?

What if that food also didn't cost your church anything? How about then?

Most congregations probably would say yes to the first question. What the church often is lacking before it makes such a commitment is nuts-and-bolts information. Baylor School of Social Work's Texas Hunger Initiative plans to take care of that.

"There is enough food and assistance available in Texas that no one should go hungry," says Jeremy Everett, director of the Texas Hunger Initiative, a part of the School's Center for Family and Community Ministries. "We are just not communicating with one another, and we're not distributing food efficiently or effectively. We can change that."

The objective of the Texas Hunger Initiative, a collaboration between the Baylor School of Social Work and the Baptist General Convention of Texas,

is to end hunger in Texas by 2015 through policy, education, community organizing and community development. According to statistics, there are 1.5 million people in Texas who do not have enough to eat each day.

In its first year, THI drew more than 250 people to its "Texas at the Table Hunger Summit," which explored new ways to work collaboratively to feed children through the coming summer. Invited guests included representatives of advocacy groups; federal, state and local governments; non-governmental organizations; congregations; and social service providers.

Faith-based organizations, churches and nonprofits are important partners in the summer feeding initiative for children, Everett says. While school is in session, children who qualify receive two free meals a day, but when school is closed during July and August, the food stops.

"Churches could fill this critical gap," he says. "You just need to be willing to host lunches at your facility Monday through Friday. The prepared food is delivered to you. You'll



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need volunteers to serve the children, and you may want to help transport children to your site."

Dan Trevino, pastor of Harlandale Baptist Church in San Antonio, began a food program after finding neighborhood children digging through a Dumpster behind the church for discarded food one Saturday.

"When I realized what they were doing, it broke my heart," he says. "There is no way we can turn our back on that. Children are hungry, and we, the church, can feed them," he says.

For Diana R. Garland, dean of the School of Social Work, the collaboration with the BGCT and its already existing congregational programs to end hunger, makes perfect sense: "Feeding hungry people and developing communities so that families can afford to feed themselves – that's what Jesus called us to do." — Vicki Marsh Kabat

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