

Faith in Action from Madison to Texas

By **Phil Haslanger** - September 4, 2017



Channele Shields and Patrick Jackson (both in green) stand with Betty Thomas, a survivor of Hurricane Harvey. (Photo by Phil Haslanger)

Michael Johnson, the CEO of the [Boys and Girls Club of Dane County](#), put this quote on one of his many Facebook posts during the extraordinary journey he led to bring supplies from Madison to the hurricane-ravaged people of the Texas coast and then to bring seven of them back to Madison:

“So too, faith by itself, if it is not complemented by action, is dead.” (James 2:17)

There was plenty of faith in action over the last week. Not everyone who helped with this massive effort from Madison did it because of their faith, of course, but for some churches, ministries and followers of Jesus, it was faith that motivated their actions.

Take Patrick Jackson and Channele Shields, for instance. They are part of True Worshipers Community Church in Madison, where Patrick’s uncle, Larry Jackson, is the pastor.

They drove one of the vans down to Texas and back. On the way, they posted a video of the two of them singing along to music, but added these words:

“Before we speak on anything we want to Thank God first for making us Available, and positioning everyone in the right spot to follow out His plans.

“Second! We hope this video brings some smiles, and sheds a positive light on any and everybody who is in need of it.

“Third It is truly a blessing that we still do have good hearted people out there in the world who took time out, whether it was bringing donations to the Boys and Girls Club, or just simply acknowledging this horrible disaster that has happened!”

Patrick said he was helping out at the Boys and Girls Club last week when he saw Michael Johnson looking worried and he asked him what was wrong. Johnson said one of the people who had planned to drive could no longer make it. “I need a driver,” Johnson said. “You’re talking to the driver,” Jackson replied.

As Jackson stood in the parking lot at the Boys and Girls Club offices on Labor Day morning at the end of the journey where he had driven all of the approximately 2,500 miles, he explained, “God has a place in all of that while we’re pushing mountains.” Shields added, “God’s always in there. He put us in the position.”

But it was not just individuals propelled to action by their faith.

Next Step Ministries, a Madison-based organization that runs short-term mission trips in a dozen cities around the U.S., one in Guatemala and one in Haiti, and has responded to several natural disasters, heard about the effort at the Boys and Girls Club.

Brian Diebling, a local partnership coordinator at Next Step Ministries, has worked with Henry Sanders at Selfless Ambition and learned that one of the needs for the trip was van.

"We have certain assets – vehicles – that our ministry is blessed with and our goal when we are not using them is to help other ministries and other people and other non-profits utilize them to glorify God," he said.

So Next Step Ministries gave the Boys and Girls Club the use of a van for the trip – and a credit card to buy gas along the way.

Mt. Zion Baptist Church organized efforts to gather supplies for the people in Texas, as did Blackhawk Church. Folks from Covenant Presbyterian were on hand to help gather and sort things as they came in. They were among about a half dozen churches in Madison that helped on the front end, according to Johnson. And once they got to Texas, he said, "more that a dozen churches were involved through the Austin relief Network."

And in Texas, after a day of unloading supplies and taking some families shopping and coordinating rescues of seven people, the crew of volunteers from Madison and some of the families they helped gathered in a dry spot for food and drink and conversation. As the Madison crew was getting ready to head off for the night, they formed a circle and there were moments for prayer.

"God, we ask for strength, understanding and guidance through this terrible time we had," one man prayed. "God, just please give us guidance, please hold us in your arms."

And then Michael Johnson closed out the evening with these words, "Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, I ask that you give these folks strength. They have lost so much, but what they didn't lose – they didn't lose each other...I have no doubt in mind that the God that we serve will protect you, will support you and that this community will rally behind you."

It was all a glimpse at what faith in action looks like.



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