

Bridging churches for a stronger community

BY LINDA FAUSZ

Matoaca's Community Day event held last month was the vision of one person who wanted to bring churches together to celebrate God's love and have a totally free event that would lead people to Christ without feeling pressured.

"Our goal was if one person gets saved, then the whole thing was worth it," said Louise Vaughan, event coordinator and member of Matoaca Baptist Church.

Community Day brought six churches together, an olive branch of sorts, not



LOUISE VAUGHAN

to preach the Gospel, but an opportunity to bring the community together. Nearly 900 adults and children enjoyed the day-long event which furnished a free lunch,

inflatables, games, snow cones, and popcorn. Everything in the yard sale was free, so folks could pick through items they may need at home, and articles of clothing to add to their wardrobe. Folks who wanted to enter the free raffle to win one of 50 gas cards, restaurant gift cards, a vacuum cleaner, microwave, to name a few gifts, signed in upon arrival. Walgreens furnished 1,000 backpacks to be filled with various pamphlets provided by vendors attending. The Gideons gave out 250 Bibles, and 34 church members from the six congregations wearing T-shirts with the message "Can I Pray for You" were available if anyone needed to talk.

"You can't cage people and force them to hear about Jesus," said Vaughan. "We wanted [those attending] to see love in someone. Sometimes seeing love in a person, you have to wonder that that love has to come from somewhere, and if they have a burden, divorce, financial problems, issues with their children, we were there for them if they wanted to talk about

anything."

"Louise was the inspiration behind all of this," said her pastor, Donald Joyner. "The vision, the inspiration, the driving force; without Louise, Community Day would not have happened."

The vision for Community Day came after Vaughan was in a church meeting with their music director, Kerry Boyce, and Ashley Sessums, director of Child and Youth Ministry. Boyce had shared a book he had just read, "Comeback Churches" by Ed Stetzer. The book detailed how over time most churches plateau and then eventually decline. "This laid heavy on his [Boyce's] heart," said Vaughan. "Our church was not declining, but we have plateaued."

Members of Matoaca Baptist held a meeting to see where they fit in Stetzer's message and why they were at a plateau. Vaughan said they develop several teams and started with the team's having a day of prayer. "I was in charge of the events team," she said. "I had a long list of possibilities, and I asked God to help me with the kind of event that would lead people to Him. Help lead us to an event that He would want us to do."

Vaughan kept thinking about her dad being a country boy and how, as a kid, she always enjoyed the large barbeque's he would have. After a few days, she could not quit thinking about those days and felt like it was God talking to her. She visualized a Matoaca Day.

Her first order of business was to

reach out to all the churches to come together. "I called a lot of churches, black churches, white churches, other nationalities, left notes... did not get a lot of response, but I tried."

Eight



churches showed up to the first meeting and six decided to participate. Each church donated \$500 for the free event. One of the churches that did not wish to participate had a member who wanted to and she raised \$250 to donate. The churches participating with Matoaca Baptist were New Hope Baptist, Oak

Lawn Baptist, Community Christian Fellowship, Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, and event host Matoaca Christian Fellowship. It was to be a fall event, but with three rain-outs, they held it over until spring. Vaughan said they would like to see it happen again and look forward to a Community Day in 2018.

Ryan Atchison, Pastor of Matoaca Christian Fellowship for 25 years, thought Vaughan did a fantastic job. "The vision she presented, moving forward – this is just the beginning of the churches coming together," he said. "Three churches participating broke off from Matoaca Baptist. The olive branch was really big. It put us all together where there is something for everyone. It is a great beginning, a great way to start a relationship [between the] churches. This is only the first installment of things we will be doing together. God is really doing some great work."



The Rock Church of Petersburg will present the moving passion play:

IT IS FINISHED, on Friday, April 14th, Saturday, April 15th and Sunday, April 16th at 7:30pm each night.

The performance includes special effects, and lighting, Biblical costumes and music/dance to lift the heart. This play will remind us again about the greatest event in history:

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

There is no charge for the play.

For more information please call: 804-733-3973



THE GIDEONS GAVE OUT 250 BIBLES DURING COMMUNITY DAY.