



Photo by Payton McCormick



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volunteers, completed several other projects at each of the homes. They dove deeper into the service project than expected when roof repairs grew more and more severe as construction progressed. Hauling trash from the sites became an overwhelming burden that could have prevented the project from advancing.

"The cost to haul of the trash from the first house alone was about as much as it cost to fix the roof," Sally Curtis, Ethan's mother said. "The other homes were bigger projects and had more to haul."

Fortunately, the community pooled its resources and through the help of a local electrician and churches, more work was completed and some major expenses were handled.

Curtis was accepted into Vocati a second time in the summer of 2017 and focused on a second project during his senior year of high school.

Vernon Independent School District is fortunate to enroll such upstanding, young students and continues to provide a positive environment for those students to grow, learn, and develop into servants and leaders that make Vernon what it is today.

Holiday Spirit Meals Served Since 1987

Vernon residents who serve

By Payton McCormick

In December 2016, Ethan Curtis, a junior at Vernon High School, said he received a calling from God.

Curtis is not your typical teen. Yes, he can be found daily attending school, honing his athletic skills on the tennis courts or spending time at church, but at a ripe young age he says God placed a mission on his heart. A mission to serve his community and give to those who have less than him.

Curtis was accepted into Lubbock Christian University's Vocati Institute: A Missional Youth Theology Institute.

The Vocati Institute is a year-long program that enables students to build upon intensive experience they receive after a one-week residency with ongoing support, guidance, and connections with the Institute and the students' congregational nominating sponsor.

LCU awards a \$1,000 scholarship to all participants who complete the full one-year program.

In December, Curtis asked his youth minister at Wilbarger Street Church of Christ, Timothy Gibson, for ideas for a service project to complete his Vocati program.

Gibson, and the preacher at Wilbarger Street Church of Christ, Dave Winn, suggested repairing roofs for families in need.

Curtis ran with the idea and asked for suggested families to help. A member of the church provided Curtis with a list of five potential homes that were dire need of roof repair.

He then set out to inspect the homes and came across Alvarro and Jaunita Martinez.

A humble couple who work tirelessly to make ends meet. Alvarro works at Tyson Foods Inc. and Jaunita runs a small store "La Tiendita" when she is able.

Jaunita suffers from a brain tumor and surgery on her neck and leg. Her store does not have a heating system which means she can only open when the weather is favorable.

"I have depression," Juanita said. "My husband tells me, 'Don't cry my dear, God will provide.'"

The couple does what they can to keep things running but Alvarro said "I know we need a new roof badly but, by the time I can save up the money for the materials, I cannot afford the labor, or I cannot afford to spend the time needed to fix the roof."

On his most recent visit to the home, Curtis was greeted with open arms and chants such as "Oh my God, my angel!"

Juanita instantly became an advocate for Curtis and called him a gift God.

Curtis and his family sat down and calculated the approximate cost to repair a roof with just materials and volunteer labor. They estimated \$1,500 per roof and have set a goal of three roofs and \$5,000. As of this week, Curtis had raised nearly \$7,000 towards his project.

"If we raise enough money I will try to pick an additional house," Curtis said. "It really just boils down to time. If I can't find a free weekend to fix another house, I will use the extra money to make the three homes I have chosen even better."

Since that time, Curtis has done more than repair a few roofs around town... he has connected with families that he may never have known if he hadn't been called to serve.

He was able to complete three roofs as he had hoped and with the help of all

By Joyce Ashley

The Thanksgiving meal is served on Thanksgiving Day from 12 noon to 2 p.m., in the Empire Room of Wilbarger Auditorium. Those wishing a meal delivered may call 552-9436. Deliveries are made from 11 a.m. to 12 noon on Thanksgiving Day.

The event, which offers free meals at both Thanksgiving and Christmas to all who wish to attend, was begun in 1987 by Vernon residents Pat and Glenna Bryant as a way of saying "thank you" to the community for their livelihood, their health and that of those they love. Since then, records show over 37,000 meals have been served to the community.

In 2016, the Bryants passed the responsibilities for the meals program to Sharon and Billy Goins.

"We've loved doing this, but now it's time to pass it on," Glenda Bryant said. "They are younger and have new ideas. They know a lot of people, and we're confident they are the perfect ones to continue this."

Sharon Goins noted that she and her husband, Billy, have been involved in the program over the years by helping to deliver and assist in the kitchen.

"We feel blessed to be able to do this," Sharon Goins said. "My son, Brantley McCarty, was the first one in the family to get involved way back when Jerry Lou Schmoker would come get him to help. Then we started helping. Now we're stepping it up even more."

Goins said she and Billy want to make sure the program continues.

"It's something that needs to go on," she noted.

The Holiday Spirit Meals began the Thanksgiving of 1987. So many people wanted to assist when the news spread, that donations started coming in, and the Bryant's opened a special account. As it turned out, there were so many donations and assistance that the special account was untouched that first year.

Since 1987, the attendance and deliveries have continued to grow, as well as the volunteers. Some volunteers have been with the Holiday Spirit meals since the beginning, some have passed on, and new volunteers show up every year.

"Every part of this effort is a large part," Goins said. "There are no small parts because it takes everyone to make it the success that it is."

Goins said it is a good feeling to see someone there to eat with the crowd, rather than be at home, alone for the holidays or to see the twinkle in a small child's eyes when Santa gives them a small toy for Christmas.

A lot of work goes into the preparation for each meal.

"There is bread to be crumbled, bagged and frozen for the dressing; cornbread to bake, eggs to be cracked; beans and gravy to make, tables to decorate the day before each meal, toys to gather and organize for Santa to hand out at the Christmas meal, desserts to cut and plate.... Just think about what your Grandmother and Mother have done for your family get-together's at your homes and multiply that times a lot," Goins said.

The Thanksgiving meal will include the traditional turkey and ham along with dressing, giblet gravy, red beans, green beans, corn, cranberry sauce, fruit salad, pickles, onions, bread, dessert, tea, coffee or water. Fresh fruit will be in place of a dessert for delivered meals.

Those eating at the auditorium will have the opportunity to visit with others and enjoy the fellowship of Thanksgiving. Carry-out meals will also be available.