

» EAST COAST BELIEVERS CHURCH

If community service is one of your core values, you'll fit right in at East Coast Believers Church (ECBC). When the pandemic brought upheaval to Central Florida last year, members and leaders at ECBC's two campuses in Oviedo and Lake Nona went above and beyond to take care of their community.

Last March, ECBC started working closely with Seminole County Public Schools to provide groceries for families in need. The church also donated supplies to several youth homes including Orlando's House of Hope. Since then, ECBC has *adopted* close to 35 senior citizens around the community, helping them pick up prescriptions, taking them to doctors' appointments, making trips to the grocery store, or simply calling to encourage and pray with them.

More recently, the church worked with the local government to become a COVID-19 vaccination site for Seminole County. By March of this year, more than 600 people had come to the church to get vaccinated, says ECBC Outreach Pastor Jim Lynch.

"Senior citizens in their 80s came in crying, saying, 'What a miracle this is because you opened up your church building. I haven't been out of my house in a year,'" Jim says.

But the outreach highlight of the year was the church's annual Love Our City event, during which volunteers went out into the community and served in various ways. Although 2020's event



on October 24 was a little different due to COVID-19, ECBC still saw a great turnout of its members to support 20 local projects. A few of those included handing out free gas cards at a gas station on Alafaya Trail, giving away 300 meals, passing out 50 sandwiches and care packages to homeless men and women in Sanford, and cleaning up senior citizens' properties in the Palm Valley retirement community.

"All we did was make ourselves available," says Jim. "And that's what we do. We try to make ourselves available to the community with a purpose. Not to build our church – just to further the Kingdom."

Jim says he's heard many stories of how the church's Love Our City events and other outreach programs have impacted local families. He recalls one woman this past March who saw ECBC's food giveaways as a direct answer to prayer.

"One of my team members and I were knocking on people's doors and handing them boxes of food," Jim remembers. "One of the women who answered the door was in tears and said, 'I just got a new job and I'm not getting paid this week. I just prayed and asked God what to do about food, and you knocked on my door with a box of food!'"

Stories like these are certainly an encouragement, but they're not the main reason ECBC serves its community. Neither is their goal simply to grow the church's membership. In fact, ECBC financially supported struggling churches in the area so they could stay open. Outreach isn't just another ministry or growth strategy for ECBC – it's part of the church's DNA.



That was the first thing that struck Caleb Woolbright when he joined ECBC's staff as Creative Pastor.

"It's all outreach," Caleb says. "The most freeing thing for my family when we first started working here was that it was never about the return on investment. We knew the Heavenly reward."

Caleb says ECBC's attitude about outreach starts with its Lead Pastors, Norm and Dina DuBois. Despite leading a congregation of at least 2,500 members, Norm and Dina are always willing to serve, whether that means babysitting for a couple who needs to take a date night or going grocery shopping for at-risk individuals.

With that same attitude to serve, ECBC continues to love the city of Oviedo and beyond through blood drives, free gift cards, and free backpacks and school supplies for underprivileged students. The church is constantly working with local commissioners, council members, and other government officials to learn how it can serve best.

"This is just the beginning," Caleb says. "Our outreach is expanding like never before."

If you want to link arms with believers who are passionate about serving their community, ECBC is the place to do it. For more information about the church and its Sunday services, visit EastCoastBelievers.org.

– Jenny Rose Spauldo