

## **Toccoa teamwork leads to more than 700 GO TELL Crusade commitments**

More than 700 commitments to Christ, including 300 salvation decisions, were made among more than 11,000 who attended the Northeast Georgia GO TELL Crusade at 7 p.m. May 3-6 at the Stephens County High School Football Stadium in Toccoa.

This town has been the location for nearly 30 years of GO TELL Student Summer Camps at the Georgia Baptist Conference Center with two weeks of camps scheduled for late June and early July this year. Thousands of students and their leaders have received Jesus for salvation. Some of those students, now youth leaders, have returned with their students.

During the crusade, evangelist Rick Gage was joined by speakers Scott Camp, Adrian Despres and Steve Payson, worship leader Chuck Sullivan and guest artist Joy Fowler.

A global evangelist for around 25 years, the Rev. Gage said, "The key to the spiritual impact we all witnessed was a result of the many months of God's people praying. Also, there were hundreds of volunteers working for nearly a year preparing for the four-day event and strong leadership who led this evangelistic effort."

One of three co-chairs along with Isaac White, pastor of Hurricane Grove Baptist Church, and Danny Yearwood, Billy Shaw said 51 churches, including at least 10 denominations and more than 500 volunteers, were involved, beginning with the Prayer Team in November.

"Our little town of 10,000 people will never be the same. It's certainly the talk of the town. It just couldn't have gone any better," Shaw said.

"It was a team effort. No one individual gets the credit," said Shaw who knows about teamwork from when he was a Georgia Tech football player and an offensive guard for the Buffalo Bills from 1960 to 1969.

The only member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame who played his entire career in the American Football League, helping to lead his team to AFL titles in 1964 and 1965, Shaw said he has lived with his wife in Toccoa since 1973 and has never seen a crusade of this magnitude.

Shaw said he was asked to be one of the co-chairs by his pastor Andy Childs of Ebenezer Baptist Church. "A group had been talking for several years about a crusade, but it wasn't until October when the Lord let them know the timing was right.

"It was probably more fun than I have had in a long time but a lot of work. Every chairperson did just a marvelous job," Shaw said. "Now our goal is not to let it stop."

The worship leader's wife of The Ark in Toccoa, who works at Shepherds Hill Academy, was able to bring six young men to the crusade. "All six received Christ as Lord and Savior," said GO TELL Outreach Team Leader Jim Howard, senior pastor of The Ark.

"Many came forward for salvation for the first time, and many Christians came to the center of the field and fell on their faces rededicating their lives to Christ. Men, women and teens laying prostrate in the

grass before God, humbling themselves as the Holy Spirit washed over them with love, forgiveness and restoration,” the Rev. Howard said.

Upon the crusade’s conclusion on May 6, the Rev. Howard said there were “countless testimonies of the power and working of the Holy Spirit in countless lives. The fire of revival among believers is beginning to spread as pastors and churches are already planning continued joint events in prayer, outreach and fellowship.

“God has truly opened the door for an awakening in Northeast Georgia. Pray with us that we will continue to have the desire for the Holy Spirit to stretch our vision, break down barriers and shape us into His Church as each pastor and Christian alike deals with the reality of His Truth. It's All About Him! And the Gospel works if we "Go Tell!"

Before the crusade, the Rev. Howard said, “As we have been praying during this GO TELL event, He is drawing the lost by the power of His Holy Spirit. I was able to lead a young lady at my laundry to the Lord this morning.

Also before the crusade, the Rev. Howard recalled, “I am so proud of how the teams were willing to go out in this rainy weather, sharing Christ and inviting everyone to the crusade. God blessed with five salvations and a lot of good ministry. It is so good to see ‘The Church’ come alive by the power of the Holy Spirit with joy, excitement and believing God for boldness to declare their faith, to hear members of different churches of different denominations all sharing how God is drawing the lost and building faith and relationships.”

Again before the crusade, the Rev. Howard said, “We went to a trailer park in the Toccoa area. We shared about the crusade, invited them to come and prayed with two people to receive Christ.”

Also, four more received Christ that day. “God's Spirit is moving mightily because of the prayers and the confession of His Son that are going up in the Toccoa area,” he added.

During the April 29 pre-crusade youth rally, there were 24 salvation decisions.

Shaw said the Rev. Brett Sanders, youth pastor/associate pastor of the First Baptist Church of Toccoa, brought a bus of young people to the crusade and had five receive Jesus for salvation on the bus going back to the church.

As a result of an evangelism class earlier in April, a young lady led an acquaintance to the Lord. “We got to talking, and I started sharing my testimony and witnessing to her. She was in a bad spot and started crying. She had had a few bad experiences with churches at a very young age and had carried hurt for over 35 years. She had never given her life to Christ. I got to lead her in the prayer of salvation! God lifted that hurt off her shoulders. It was so amazing how He spoke through me and used me. Chains were broken. Bondage that was there for so long was broken. It was an amazing experience that words can't describe. She was someone hurt and had so many excuses why not to follow the Lord fully. The Holy Spirit spoke things through me that she knew, without a question of a doubt, it was God. If it wasn't for that class and for us going out that Saturday, I'm not sure I would have had the confidence.”

Kim Finley of Broad River, who helped with outreach and sang in the GO TELL Community Choir, said, "This GO TELL has really impacted my life. It helped me grow in my faith. The outreach helped me learn to witness. Before I was scared to. I rededicated my life on that Sunday. That was the first time I felt God. I let everything to God that happened in my past because it was pushing me away, but now I'm not afraid to take a stand. Thanks to GO TELL."

Also a member of the community choir and outreach group, Sarah Leverett, a lifelong resident of Toccoa who belongs to Tate's Creek Baptist Church, said, "Both were really important groups to me because I love to sing and I love to go and tell others about God and who He is. GO TELL was an awesome thing to be a part of. When I first heard about it, I was all excited. I enjoyed working in it and would enjoy working with the GO TELL Camps anytime it's available. My faith has definitely become stronger in all of this. I love God and my family and friends and would love it to be where everyone has Jesus In their heart. I thought it was amazing for around 700 decisions to be made. I've never been a part of anything like this. It was so amazing for me to see everyone just being saved and being welcomed into the family of God."