

Children's home party a Christmas tradition for layman

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By Miranda Bradley

Texas Baptist Children's Home

ROUND ROCK-Norris Duncan, 84, has spent half his life celebrating Christmas with residents of Texas Baptist Children's Home.

"This is the start of my Christmas season," Duncan said, adding the children's home "is a ministry that reaches in and gets at you if you let it."

The children's home captured Duncan's heart when Max Davis, a charter board member, appealed to a Bible class at Second Baptist Church of Houston to start the Christmas party in 1950-soon after the home was established.



Norris
Duncan
(back left)
stands next
to TBCH
house
parents
Brenda
"Mom" and
John "Pop"
Toner with
the group
from Alief
Baptist
Church that
has been
sponsoring
their
cottage for
Christmas
for more
than 20
years.
Norris has
been part of
the TBCH
Christmas
celebrations
43 years.

At the time, the campus was made up of three cottages that housed a little more than 60 children. From the moment Duncan set foot on campus, he

was hooked. "If you go once, you'll go back," he said. "I've seen very few people who have made only one trip."

Duncan later moved to Sharpstown Baptist Church and then to Alief Baptist Church in 1981, where he encouraged involvement in the children's home Christmas party. Alief Baptist soon partnered with house parents John and Brenda Toner's cottage, and have been their Christmas party sponsor more than 20 years.

"It really speaks about a person's commitment when they continue to come year after year like this," Mrs. Toner said.

Duncan and fellow members at Alief Baptist have seen the children's home campus life program grow to six cottages and its family care program to seven cottages, each housing five families of single mothers with children. In the last five years, the children's home also added the HOPE-Healthy Opportunities that Protect and Empower-program to reach out to needy families in the community.

"Change is all for the good," said Duncan. The children's home "has expanded quite a bit, but we all know it will continue to reach more children and families."

Duncan's relationship with Texas Baptist Children' Home and the Toners runs so deep he recalls being present for their daughter's first Christmas.

He often calls throughout the year to check up on them and simply to chat.

"We're very fond of Mr. Duncan," Mrs. Toner said. "We look forward to his visit every year."

Duncan recalls former clients with fondness, as though they are part of his own family.

"I remember a girl that was about the same age as my daughters," he said.

“They hit it off so well, she would spend holidays and weekends with us.”

One man's crusade for a Christmas party has grown to include 11 churches, with Alief Baptist being the only remaining Houston-area church among them.

“It's great to see the kids grow up and become successful in life,” Duncan said.

“I know that is all due to their being at Texas Baptist Children's Home. That has made the difference.

“It's made a difference in my life. You just get great joy in fulfilling a need.”

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