

Free from debt, Breckenridge now free to focus on ministry

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Baptist leaders
applaud the
burning copies of
the note for
Breckenridge
Village of Tyler,
signifying the
facility for adults
with
developmental
disabilities finally
is debt-free.

Joining in the
ceremony are (left
to right) Kevin
Dinnin, president
of Baptist Child &
Family Services;
Charles Wade,
executive director
of the Baptist
General
Convention of
Texas; Paul Powell
of the Rogers
Foundation; Pastor
David Dykes of
Green Acres
Baptist Church in
Tyler; Keith Bruce,
director of
institutional
ministries with the
BGCT; and Linda
Taylor,
development
director at
Breckenridge.
(Photos/Craig
Bird/BCFS)

Free from debt, Breckenridge now free to focus on ministry

By **Ken Camp**

Managing Editor

TYLER—Breckenridge Village faced the greatest challenge in its challenge-filled history, but it got by with a little help from its friends. Make that \$3.7 million worth of help in 12 months and friends ranging from the Baptist General Convention of Texas to a Jewish family foundation.

[Breckenridge Village](#), a residential community for adults with mild to moderate developmental disabilities, recently retired its building debt in dramatic fashion—offering a new lease on life to the Tyler facility and lifting a burden from the shoulders of its parent agency, [Baptist Child & Family Services](#).



Rosie Simmons (left), who coordinates many of the activities at Breckenridge Village at Tyler, helps Breckenridge resident Deborah with a project.

Breckenridge—built on donated land with volunteer labor provided by Texas Baptist Men—has [struggled financially](#) since it opened its doors nine years ago. Baptist Child & Family Services agreed to take on the ministry at the BGCT Executive Board’s request after a study committee determined the need for a Christian agency to care for mentally retarded adults.

But the original business projections “grossly underestimated the cost of care,” said Kevin Dinnin, president of the agency. Changes in governmental regulations—including requirements that Breckenridge be licensed as an assisted living facility, with a low resident-to-staff ratio and a registered nurse on duty—compounded the problem.

“While Breckenridge Village of Tyler has operated in a financially prudent manner, it has proven impossible to service the capital bond debt through operating revenue,” Dinnin explained.

“Historically, without the burden of capital debt, (Breckenridge Village) has been able to operate in a balanced budget position, exclusive of the non-cash item of depreciation. Tuition paid on behalf of the residents and fundraising for scholarships has proven to generate adequate income to provide for the care of those who call (Breckenridge) home.”

At a recent noteburning ceremony, Texas Baptist officials applauded the commitment of Baptist Child & Family Services to provide an important ministry to an often-forgotten segment of the population, in spite of financial challenges.

The celebration marked the successful completion of a yearlong fundraising campaign. The Rogers Foundation in Tyler had offered Baptist Child & Family Services a \$1 million challenge grant on the condition Breckenridge Village could raise \$2.7 million by May 31.

After receiving \$1.05 million from Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler and many other smaller gifts, the campaign received a \$250,000 grant from the

Meadows Foundation in Dallas two weeks before the deadline. But it still lacked nearly \$1 million to meet the goal.

A San Antonio donor gave \$200,000, and the BGCT Executive Board approved \$350,000 from an estate gift. Then on May 31, a Jewish family foundation in East Texas gave the final \$450,000 that allowed Breckenridge to receive its challenge grant and retire its debt.

“We believe Breckenridge Village can be a financially viable entity now,” Dinnin said.

Four years ago, he brought a significantly different report to the BGCT Human Welfare Coordinating Board—the body that related to Texas Baptists’ benevolence institutions.

At that time, the BGCT allocated additional funds beyond the budget just to keep Breckenridge Village afloat. A shortfall in Cooperative Program giving, combined with the high cost of resident care and new state-imposed standards, had created a critical situation for Breckenridge. Baptist Child & Family Services had to lay off more than 15 employees and dismiss the executive director at Breckenridge.

“Baptist Child & Family Services was a different agency then than it is today,” Dinnin explained, pointing to its expansion in the last four years, both within Texas and internationally. Fifteen years ago, the agency’s annual budget barely topped \$1 million. Next year’s proposed budget exceeds \$20 million, he noted.

He also pointed out Baptist Child & Family Services has benefited financially from mineral rights on property in the Texas Panhandle, where two producing wells have provided significant income in recent years.

Four years ago, Dinnin told the coordinating board the long-term future of Breckenridge Village depended not only on increased Cooperative Program

giving by Texas Baptist churches, but also the creation of a \$5 million endowment.

The endowment stands nowhere near that goal yet, but with the debt on Breckenridge Village retired, the residential community now has a stability that should make it much more attractive to potential donors, Dinnin noted.

Already, several friends of Breckenridge Village have included the ministry in their estate plans, he said. The debt-retirement campaign gave the residential community an unprecedented level of positive visibility in the Tyler area, and it opened doors to new donors in the East Texas business community.

Breckenridge Village Executive Director Charles Dodson underscored the same theme.

“Eliminating our indebtedness will take pressure off of meeting debt service expenses in our operating budget,” Dodson said. “It will enable us to concentrate development initiatives on building our general scholarship fund.”

Roughly 95 percent of residents receive some scholarship assistance. Current cost of care is \$3,200 a month for each resident, but \$500 of that has been applied to debt service.

Debt retirement also allows Breckenridge to expand its ministries, including both its day-care program, teaching life skills and vocational skills to developmentally challenged Tyler-area residents, and its residential services.

“We will be able to open a sixth house and move our capacity from 40 to 48 residents,” Dinnin noted.

While he hopes the BGCT Cooperative Program allocation will be increased

for scholarship assistance, Dinnin believes Breckenridge Village has moved beyond the point where the BGCT will have to step in to provide over-and-above financial assistance, as it has in the past.

“I do not anticipate any emergency kind of funding requests for Breckenridge. Never has our financial trouble been greater than our debt service. Without that concern, it should be financially viable,” he said, adding the institution has “weathered the storm.”

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