

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

First Friday offers kids activities, parents time off

SUBMITTED STORY

Inspired by words from their congregation's statement of faith, members of First Presbyterian Church Richardson launched First Friday Parents' Evening Out six years ago as a means to serve families.

On the first Friday evening of the month, community children ages 2 and older are embraced by a cadre of FPCR volunteers for an evening of fun, learning activities, snacks and a movie, while their parents have an evening off to shop, dine, do errands, see a movie or just relax.

Each month's activities feature a theme involving science, history, the arts, sports, hobbies, imaginative play, holidays or other activities. Special guest presenters have enhanced many chosen themes, such as MARK-9 Search and Rescue dogs, a live raptor demonstration from Blackland Prairie Raptor Center, a beekeeping presentation from Texas Honey Princess Shannon LaGrave, giant telescopes shared by members of the Texas Astronomical Society, emergency preparedness pointers from City of Richardson's Mistie Gardner, and even "The Bubble Lady." An annual swim party at nearby Terrace Pool has become First Friday's August tradition.

From its kickoff in April 2009 with 19 children through grade six, First Friday has grown to an average registration of 86 children per month, often with a waiting list. As the original children grew older and wanted to continue participating, "First Friday X-treme!" was launched in September 2010, for grades six through nine. The FFX youth enjoy extended activities, including overnight lock-ins and



Photo submitted by BECKY LORMOR

A MARK-9 Search and Rescue team holds a demonstration for children attending First Friday at First Presbyterian Church Richardson.

off-site field trips. In 2014, this included a backstage tour of the Eisemann Center before a ballet performance, and a WhirlyBall outing. Recently, FFX prepared 50 emergency hygiene kits to send to a Church World Service disaster warehouse in Arkansas.

About 45 adults volunteer to facilitate First Friday each month in roles such as activity leader, snack preparer, escort, shepherd, story reader and exit monitor. To further serve the community, First Friday participants typically donate two canned goods per child, which FPCR donates to Richardson's Network of Community Ministries. The tally to date is more than 3,000 cans donated.

Advance registration is required to participate in First Friday or to be placed on the waiting list. Go to fpcrichardson.org/firstfriday for more information.

Becky Lormor submitted this story on behalf of First Presbyterian Church Richardson.