

Portsmouth Blvd

Bless

PORTSMOUTH

Partnering With Compassion



Pastor Allen McFarland



On November 10, 2018, in conjunction with the SBC of Virginia's Annual Homecoming, over 300 volunteers from 19 churches converged on Portsmouth and Seaford, VA to serve together in various Gospel and compassion ministries. The event was the third of an annual Crossover event seeking to share the love of Christ through Gospel compassion in cities near Annual Homecoming sites.

"Bless Portsmouth was born out of a desire to see SBC of Virginia churches partner together with and for the city," says Brad Russell, SBCV's team leader for Mobilization. "Continuing partnerships have been created since 2017's Bless Petersburg event, and our prayer is that similar partnerships between

churches, schools, and organizations will grow out of Bless Portsmouth, all for the purpose of the Gospel being shared, disciples being made, and churches being planted."

The process began with leadership from six host churches from around Portsmouth gathering for prayer and to strategically reach the city, specifically working through schools and community outreach. In response to this new and growing partnership, Pastor Allen McFarland of **Calvary Evangelical Baptist Church** in Portsmouth shared, "It's a blessing because we are not alone."

Volunteers showed up on a blustery Saturday to serve through 10 projects around the city of Portsmouth. Thirty volunteers

even came all the way from Martinsburg, WV. Ethan Kerns, the student and young adult pastor of **Westview Baptist Church** in Martinsburg, explained that they came to Bless Portsmouth, “hoping that this [would foster] a desire within the congregation to do this more and to be mission focused.” Projects during Bless Portsmouth included providing a meal at a women’s shelter, evangelizing door to door, painting at schools, doing yardwork, delivering snacks, and praying with first responders.

A new initiative for 2018 was a large-scale meal-packing event held at **Seaford Baptist Church** (Seaford, VA) in partnership with Send Relief (NAMB) and Meals of Hope. Church and community members gathered for meal-packing shifts to measure, weigh, and pack nearly 70,000 meals to be used in SBC of Virginia Hunger Ministries, in Disaster Relief settings, and as far away as Puerto Rico.



“Events like this are more than events,” shared Michael Howard, senior pastor at Seaford. “They are truly Gospel partnerships. It’s encouraging to local churches to be able to work alongside other congregations and see that we are not alone in advancing God’s Kingdom.”

For the second year, churches partnered with Send Relief (NAMB) and the Red Cross to install smoke detectors in homes. Cal Myers, campus pastor of **DC Church’s West Portsmouth Campus**, led the Home Fire Prevention Campaign and was encouraged by the Gospel witness they were able to have. “Sometimes in doing activities like this, you feel stymied in talking about Christianity and your church. This was absolutely not the case with our event. We were able to meet a tangible need in Portsmouth and talk about fire safety. Additionally, we were able to share about our church and our Christian faith.”

Through this Gospel partnership, not only were people fed, schools supported, and homes protected, but three people came to faith in Jesus through the witness of SBC of Virginia churches.

James Taylor Jr., senior pastor of **The Village Church** of Portsmouth, may have said it best: “When the SBCV comes together as a team...it helps to promote the Gospel.”

“Our hope,” said Russell, “is that we will see ‘Bless’ partnerships pop up all over the Commonwealth—that we won’t wait for the next event but that churches will see this SBC of Virginia partnership as an opportunity to bless our neighborhoods and cities and, ultimately, to see lives eternally changed.”