iServe Mobilizes Church Members in Serving Their Community

What does it take to mobilize a congregation of over 1,200 people to serve its community? A great big God and a whole lot of planning. What started out as a mere discussion in 2014 became a three-day weekend of serving within the local community.

Some leaders at Cool Spring Baptist Church in Mechanicsville wondered what it would look like to get the congregation to jump in and move beyond the church walls. Dr. Brad Hoffman, pastor, along with Bryan Dupuis, Missions and Discipleship Minister, began brainstorming with other Teaching Team staff members. Hoffman wanted to tap into the hearts of all church members, wherever they are on their spiritual journeys. With the Spirit leading them, he and the team designed a serving event called iServe to engage the community for the weekend of May 1-3, 2015.

At the beginning of the year, Cool Spring assembled a team to explore potential partners with whom the church could engage. They identified 46 partnerships, generating over 80 serving projects with varying skills levels and age levels required. Each team had a project captain to coordinate details and upload pictures to Instagram as the day unfolded. Dupuis said there were a variety of opportunities, including ones that did not require much walking. There was even one on-site group of eight women who painted birdhouses for Habitat for Humanity and packed snack bags for the Hospitality House. Three of the ladies were over 90 years old.

The largest group included 80 people, whose task was to clean up East End Cemetery. Dupuis said that because the property was so

Church members stayed busy during the weekend, including doing lots of yardwork.

Church members stayed busy during the weekend, including doing lots of yardwork.
overgrown, several headstones could not even be seen. “It looked like a forest,” he said. They were only able to clear a portion of the location that day, but the group has future plans to help finish the work.

The planning team had estimated there would be at least 500 people who would sign up to serve, but they knew they were reaching people’s hearts when the number of participants grew to over 600. The momentum continued until at least 1,227 people registered. “People pledged to serve, and they showed up ready to make a difference,” said Dupuis.

There were no church services that Sunday morning, as the weekend was blocked out for iServe. The planning team treated participants with a Sunday afternoon BBQ featuring fellowship and story sharing.

“This was a very moving experience for all of us,” Hoffman said. “The most exciting piece of the weekend was to hear the stories that lit a fire into people to serve,” he added.