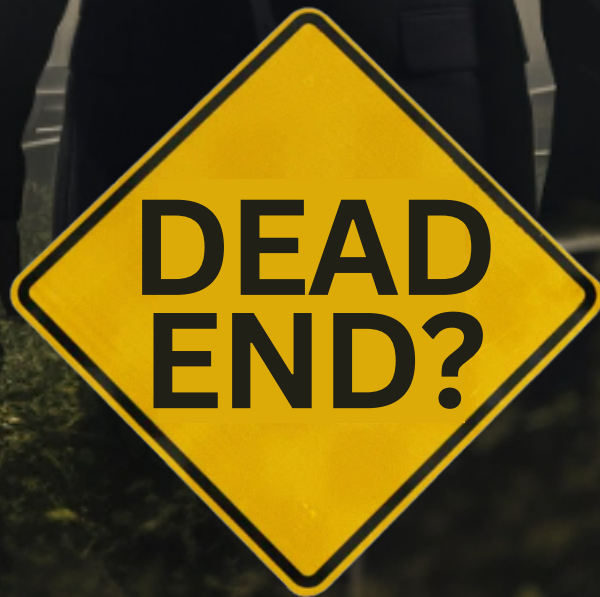


TIME





Is This the End of the End?

By [Jasmine Rebuke](#) / Turner Falls, Tex.

Mitch Carter, photographed in November standing in the pool structure where he was killed five months ago. [Laura Chang](#) for TIME

DECEMBER 11, 2023 7:00 AM EDT

The definition of “unseasonably warm” has shifted in recent years even for East Texans accustomed to cracking wise about waiting 15 minutes for the weather to change, but it’s cool enough under the canopy of towering cypress trees that Mitch Carter zips up his brand-new Carhartt jacket with a shiver. At a stringy six-foot-four, Carter’s always a little bit cold even on days like today, when highs in Gallum County, about 100 miles northeast of Dallas, are expected to hit the low 80s in mid-November. Carter’s new chill is a welcome change from what was, once upon a time, his natural

tendency to run hot, which he jokes made him a bad fit for the construction gigs he's taken — and inevitably abandoned — for most of his life, working just long enough to bank a couple months' rent and beer money before “going on sabbatical.”

But after a life-changing injury this summer, practically everything is different for Carter now. This morning, he's making the rounds at his new job as a site supervisor for the biomedical start-up RevTech, doling out handshakes and high-fives to a hive of workers who look to be straight out of a sci-fi blockbuster's central casting fever dream. Three women in bright white paper coveralls sip coffee from disposable cups while leaning over a clipboard detailing the day's tasks, which will include “mucking out” medical waste containers the size of Volkswagen Beetles. Nearby, another woman zips up a hazmat suit, getting help sealing her helmet from a young guy wearing a black RevTech-branded t-shirt and elbow-length rubber gloves. The scrub-clad nurses at the station labeled “Med Check-In” appear normal enough until I realize they're not just taking the names of a dozen patients lined up for blood draws, but also scanning their wrists using handheld devices emitting cheerful beeps.



BRANDED CONTENT

This is the improbably located main hub of what has become the world's most-watched, and most controversial, company: a teeming tent city nestled in the heart of a nondescript trailer park in the town of Turner Falls, redder-than-red rural Texas. Here, RevTech visitors must check in with armed guards at an unmarked entrance off a dirt road that floods when it rains and generates an incredible amount of dust when it doesn't. No digital devices are allowed; I'm told to leave my smartphone in a locker at the guard station and can carry in only a notebook and microcassette recorder. TIME's photographer has been permitted inside on the condition that she shoot exclusively on film.

After we've been thoroughly frisked and scanned, we're loaded into an all-terrain cart and driven another quarter-mile into a warren of heavily insulated canvas structures known as the “nerve center.” It is behind one of these fluorescent flaps that RevTech's elite team of surgeons, scientists, and bioengineers are meant to have done the impossible, even the fantastic: resurrected two men from the dead. One of them is our guide, [Mitch Carter](#). The other was — [and to many, still is](#) — Rudolfo “Rudy” Ruiz, [the president of the United States](#).

TIME is the first publication to get an officially sanctioned look behind the scenes of an operation that has been both celebrated and condemned in equal measure. “RevTech” is shorthand for “revival technology,” and its admirers have lauded its miraculous potential while critics have derided its promises as near-apocalyptic human folly. Still others regard RevTech as an elaborate hoax engineered not by a mad scientist, but by a mad billionaire — a 21st century villain writing the next chapter of a story that began two hundred years ago with Dr. Frankenstein, or maybe two thousand years ago with Lazarus, or perhaps even earlier, somewhere deep in the pyramids of Giza or with the bog mummies of the Mesolithic.

If I’d had them to begin with, the elaborate negotiations that preceded my trip into the RevTech “nerve center” would have disabused me of any illusions that this carefully curated experience might reveal anything that its elusive and erratic founder, Carron Nielsberg, wouldn’t want revealed. But the sheer scope of RevTech’s reach — from the ramshackle, blue-collar Treetops Trailer Community all the way to [Pennsylvania Avenue](#) — made the opportunity for a glimpse inside a more-than-tantalizing prospect.

As it turns out, I did find some answers down that dirt road, including an explanation for how RevTech ended up not in a tech mecca like Silicon Valley or Austin, but in sleepy Gallum County. I also turned up many, many more questions, not just about a medical advancement that has forever changed our definition of “science fiction,” but about what it means to be alive when death is no longer an inevitability.



Mitch Carter swings open the door to the pool house where he died six months ago with a flourish: “Ta-da!” The single-room concrete-block building boasts a new roof, replaced after the Independence Day storms that tore through Treetops last summer. Lined with shower and toilet stalls, the space smells strongly of chlorine and vaguely of urine.

It was here where Carter and two dozen of his neighbors took shelter on the evening of July 4th, though Carter’s memories of that night are vague to the point of being practically non-existent. Just about all he remembers is hearing tornado sirens go off while the Treetops residents — around these parts, “Treetoppers” — were gathered around their community pool. The rest of the story he’s pieced together from talking to his neighbors and to the RevTech staff whose faces were among the first he saw, hours later, when he returned from an unprecedented journey of both body and soul.

Carter climbs atop a sink counter and mimes looking out a vented window near the ceiling; during the tornado, he’d been keeping a lookout for any “visible twisters, because that’s how you know you’re in the real [expletive].” When he spotted the funnel cloud that hit the pool house, Carter yelled for his neighbors to duck and cover, but he wasn’t fast enough to join them. An 18-inch length of rebar dislodged from the roof, ramming through Carter’s neck and sending him plunging to the ground.

“They said I took about two breaths and — bam — conked right out, right here,” says Carter, monkeying down from the sink and taking a new position, face-down on the gray tile floor. Carter’s neighbors, including a registered nurse, tried to stabilize him, but were unable to staunch the profuse bleeding from his wounds.

According to his medical documents, Carter died at 9:58 p.m. An incredible series of events followed, beginning with what appears to be a remarkable coincidence: A small cadre of RevTech scientists were already at Treetops on July 4th, hosting a “medical fair” for locals. Had they not been on the ground, Carter would have become just another storm fatality, his death perhaps lost entirely in the news frenzy around the plane crash that killed President Rudy Ruiz a little over an hour later.



The now-restored Treetops pool and pool house took a direct hit from a tornado in July. [Laura Chang](#) for TIME

But RevTech’s presence at the trailer park that night may not be so coincidental in light of one important and previously unreported connection between the company and Gallum County: Natalie Donaldson, the 22-year-old daughter of White House chaplain [Pastor Kathy Donaldson](#). Natalie Donaldson also the goddaughter of President Rudy Ruiz, though she’s kept a low profile since her days as a teen darling of the right-wing LibertyNow! Movement and graduated last spring from Stanford University with a degree in bioengineering. Donaldson’s first job out of school: assistant researcher at RevTech.

Donaldson declined to speak with TIME for this story, but RevTech confirmed her employment in a brief statement, saying the company is “very pleased to have a number of bright young minds on our staff, including Natalie Donaldson.” The company also confirmed that Donaldson was key in establishing Treetops as a pilot location for RevTech’s “First Partners” affordable health care program — the reason for the July 4th medical fair.

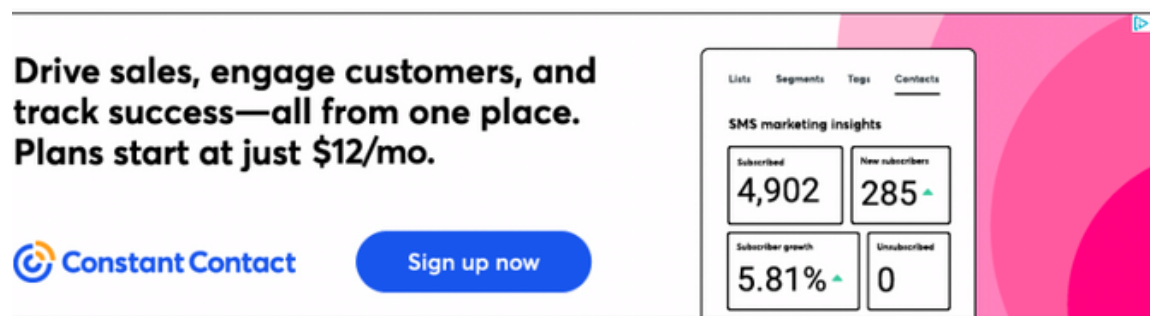
It’s not clear whether Donaldson knew the full extent of RevTech’s capabilities in July, though the company had already begun advertising itself as a “local leader in regenerative medicine.” But no one could have predicted the deadly storm, and ultimately, none of that matters to Carter. He’s just glad RevTech was there to “work their magic” after he was impaled in the pool house.

“They drug me right out of here and pumped me full of the good juice,” says Carter. Exactly what the “good juice” is made of, he’s not quite sure. RevTech is highly protective of details around how revival technology works, saying only in a handful of public statements that they are able to “reverse mortal events.” RevTech’s [promotional pamphlets](#) are also light on specifics, though they advertise giving patients the ability to “turn back the clock” and “find out what forever feels like.” For Carter at least, “forever” includes going in for weekly chemo-like infusions that have the unfortunate side effect of giving him an almost rancid, acidic body odor. Apart from that he’s just fine, though he says he often feels “pretty run down” in the day or two before his appointments.

While Carter plays possum on the pool house floor, I find myself asking a delicate but essential question: Is he sure he died on July 4th? Couldn’t his injury have simply been very severe, but not deadly? His answer: “No way.” His medical records seem to bear this out. Carter’s X-rays from that night, which TIME reviewed with medical experts and pathologists, show fatal trauma.

“If the film I reviewed is indeed imaging of the injury sustained by Mitch Carter on July 4th, 2023, I would not expect him to be alive today,” says Dr. Hannibal Clark, the director of emergency medicine education at the UT-Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. “Indeed, I would not expect any individual to have survived more than an hour or two with such an injury.”

What [happened to Carter](#) was not a cardiac event that might have been treated with defibrillation. It was not akin to losing consciousness after drowning and being revived by CPR. He was clinically dead not for minutes, but for nearly two hours. And he refuses to discuss what, if any, experience he had during that time, alternating between claims he can’t remember anything at all and brush-off jokes about not “going toward the light.” He woke up in his own trailer on the morning of July 5th feeling “like coon piss on a live wire.” But he was alive.



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Now, he’s more than a little excited to show me what that makeshift set-up has become today: a fully outfitted medical compound, complete with pediatric and adult clinics, on-site pathology labs, and an inpatient care tent for those who require supervision or prolonged treatments. There’s even a cafeteria serving fried catfish and, on Fridays, barbecue brisket. It’s all located just a hundred yards or so beyond the pool house where Carter may or may not have met his maker, behind a towering metal fence with a triple-reinforced gate. He uses two different security cards and a “bio-reader” that clocks the RevTech chip implanted in his wrist to trigger open an almost invisible, nearly seamless door.

“Who gives a [expletive] if old Mitch Carter lives or dies?” he muses, leading us through to the RevTech nerve center. “Hell, who cares if some politician gets raised up like Jesus H. Christ? The real miracle is right through here.”



Eight-year-old Brian Rincomb, a RevTech “First Partners” program participant. Laura Chang for TIME

Everybody gets a turn to squeeze “Little Dolly,” a miniature stuffed animal named for the [famously cloned](#) Scottish sheep who made her world debut in 1997. Little Dolly is a particular favorite of the local kids whose parents have enrolled them in RevTech’s “First Partners” program, which provides no-cost medical care to Treetops residents of all ages and, in some cases, compensates participants in cash for agreeing to certain tests and exams.

“She’s a comfort to anybody who comes in squeamish,” says Carter, handing the toy to Brian, an asthmatic eight-year-old being prepped for bloodwork inside one of RevTech’s canvas-walled clinics. He gives the kid a wink and adds: “Not that you’re scared, bud. I know you’re a pro.”

The convenience of seeing a doctor not just nearby, but practically next door, really is something of a miracle for the folks at Treetops, who are among millions of rural Americans who have seen their health care options [dwindle to near-nothing](#) in recent years with the [shuttering of local hospitals](#) and exodus of family medicine providers. Even before the Supreme Court struck down the Affordable Care Act in 2020, options were few and far between for those who’d managed to enroll, and costly enough for those who had. As First Partners members, Treetoppers no longer have to worry about basic medical bills or tracking down a clinic that’ll take Medicaid or [CHIP](#), the children’s state health insurance program whose budget Texas lawmakers have cut by more than 50 percent in the last three years while lowering the eligibility cut-off from 18 years old to 11. Gone are the days of driving an hour or more for check-ups in Tyler or Paris, or waiting until things get dire enough to join the scrum at Gallum County’s sole emergency room.

Brian's stepmom, Beverley Rincomb, is here to usher him through a morning of tests in hopes of getting help for a variety of complaints that she says have gone unaddressed by pediatricians as far away as Texarkana. She nods enthusiastically when asked whether RevTech has changed things for the better for their family.

"I'd drive two, three hours with him, only to get 'We don't know, lady, try some Robitussin,'" says Rincomb. "That's a day off work for me, school for him. For nothing except money down the drain."

RevTech has largely opted not to publicly promote First Partners until now, though it would seem an easy way to earn goodwill with skeptics, of which there are more than a few. Even Mitch Carter [initially expressed](#) complicated views about RevTech, feeling early on after his revival that he'd been erased from his role as the company's patient zero in the [hubub over the reappearance of President Ruiz](#) at a GOP presidential debate in August. But with the offer of full time work on site at RevTech, Carter's feeling much more generous about the company these days, saying that "they made it right."

Now, one of the program's most vocal critics is a woman living in RevTech's own backyard — or, to put it more accurately, a woman whose own backyard has been taken over by RevTech. Linda Lyle is a registered nurse — the same one who tried to save Carter's life during the Independence Day storms — who has lived at Treetops since the early 1980s and owns a number of properties in the community. I [first spoke](#) with her about RevTech four months ago, when she reached out to express concerns that her neighbors were being offered "bribes" in exchange for providing medical information and biological material.

Today, Lyle says all she can do is "sit and stare" from her porch as her neighbors avail themselves of medical services on the other side of the towering fence that now abuts her property.



Linda Lyle sits on the porch outside her home in Turner Falls. Laura Chang for TIME

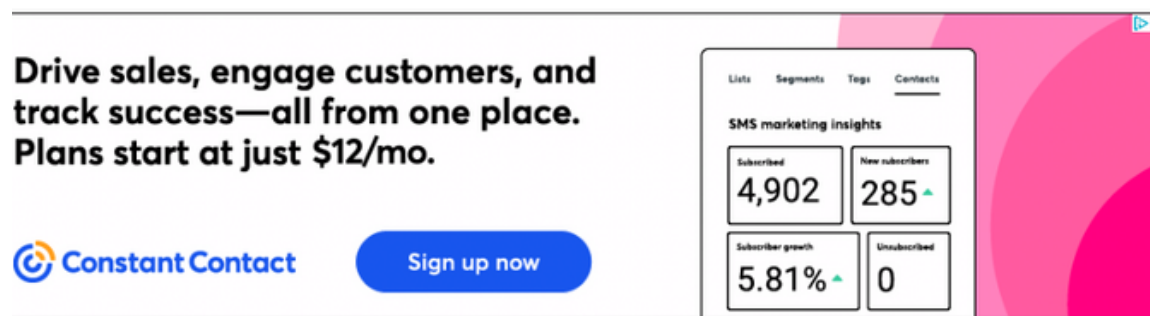
“Wasn’t like there was anything special to look at over yonder before, but at least I could lay eyes on a tree instead of a big old wall,” Lyle tells me when I stop by her trailer for an interview after my RevTech tour. “If they ain’t got nothing to hide, why are they hiding?”

Lyle has waged a campaign against First Partners for months now, showing up to decry RevTech at public meetings in, by her count, at least five counties. She calls this her “raise heck circuit” and keeps a quilted Vera Bradley bag full of what she alleges is documentation of RevTech’s abuses in the trunk of her Oldsmobile, “just in case.”

“As in, just in case I get off work in time to make it somewhere I can holler at somebody about this mess,” she says. Lyle has opened a dozen complaints with entities ranging from the Texas Medical Board to the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Those that have taken Lyle’s complaints seriously enough to conduct investigations have so far cleared RevTech as operating legally and according to established medical standards. But Lyle isn’t convinced, and believes that First Partners participants are being “manipulated” into providing biological information and material to be used in ways they haven’t consented to.

If that’s the trade-off to get free health care for Brian mere blocks from their home, Rincomb says she’ll take it. “It’s whatever to me,” she says, lighting a cigarette on the fresh gravel pathway outside the RevTech children’s clinic. “That little boy feels better. That’s all I care about.”

Seeing RevTech’s Treetops operation firsthand and through the eyes of locals like Beverley and Brian Rincomb — and even Linda Lyle — puts a kind of gaussian blur over the broader conversation around revival technology. Almost everything the public knows about RevTech is rooted in speculation fueled by the characteristic hyperbole of its most famous ambassador-patient, Rudy Ruiz, and its manic founder, billionaire entrepreneur Carron Nielsberg.



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At first glance, the conservative firebrand and the wealthy futurist make unlikely allies, occupying seemingly opposite ends of the contemporary cultural zeitgeist. One made a career of harkening back to an America unsullied by abortion rights, voter protections, and multiculturalism. The other, a proud atheist, has refused to look any direction but ahead, focusing on the potential of technology to perfect and shape not just the American experience, but the human race.

The former, of course, is President Rudy Ruiz. To his supporters, Ruiz is a hero who returned the U.S. to its Christian roots, a God-fearing nation where the Ten Commandments are displayed in over 90 percent of classrooms. Others have criticized him in the strongest possible terms, with some likening Ruiz to a modern-day Adolf Hitler, citing the proliferation of immigrant internment camps along the southern U.S. border and the official deputization of armed citizen militias, efforts he first championed in Congress and realized during his short tenure in the White House.

Ruiz's backstory is legendary to the point of being apocryphal. He first rose to fame as a college football star at Texas A&M University, parlaying a historic Rose Bowl win into a friendship with another fellow Texan, then-president George W. Bush. He developed a taste for politics, riding the Tea Party wave into the U.S. House of Representatives in the early 2010's and exploding the already fired-up Republican base with his youth-focused LibertyNow! movement. By the time Donald Trump took office, Ruiz was the American Right's handsome, charismatic heir-apparent, perfectly poised to take over the presidency when Trump died of COVID-related complications three years ago.

But Ruiz, of course, also died. A lightning strike [took down the private plane](#) he had borrowed from his hometown church leader, Pastor Kathy Donaldson, as storms moved over Northeast Texas late on July 4th. We can now surmise that, through Donaldson's daughter Natalie, Ruiz — or, at least, his body — was connected with RevTech, treated, and resurrected. Thanks to the advent of revival technology, Ruiz has since waged a campaign to retake the White House not by reelection in 2024, but [through the courts](#) at any moment, via the 25th Amendment.



RevTech CEO Carron Nielsberg speaks at the SXSW AI conference in 2022. Vera Looshe for TIME

Then there is Carron Nielsberg, about whom we know much less. Still, the sometimes shifting story he's woven about his life contains similarly cinematic elements, including an early peak that he translated into a lifetime of Teflon-like successes despite criticism for expressing what detractors say are eugenicist views. In early 2021, Nielsberg commented on a TikTok health influencer's anti-COVID-vaccine post, writing that "more than survival of the fittest, human benefit [sic] from the fall of the weak." The comment drew widespread condemnation before the video was removed. Nielsberg never issued a retraction and has only gained popularity with the tens of millions who follow him online and regard him as a visionary.

The now-billionaire came from humble origins. With little else to do growing up in rural Finland, a young Nielsberg developed a knack for computer programming and watched the 2000s tech boom and bust from afar as an adolescent. He made his first million at just 12 years old when he sold the code to what would become the international mobile gaming phenomenon PetsBonk to a nascent Google. He then dropped out of school and traveled across Asia, where he climbed the ranks at start-ups and legacy tech outfits alike. He resettled in the West in his late 20's and styled himself a bridge-builder between hemispheres, connecting an increasingly immigrant-skeptical NATO alliance with monied venture capitalists from Russia, China, and Indonesia. He kept a low profile as one of the world's less bombastic billionaires until the now-defunct news outlet ProPublica connected Nielsberg to a variety of campaigns across the political spectrum. Even then, his political donations might have gone unnoticed had he not outspent heavy-hitters such as the Koch brothers and George Soros by many orders of magnitude.

Throughout it all, Nielsberg has been difficult to pin down ideologically. But RevTech's revival of Rudy Ruiz would seem to put his current priorities in sharp focus. Cynics say that Nielsberg has hitched his wagon to the rightest of right-wing stars out of pure self-interest. True believers say that, at last, the stars have aligned to create the perfect marriage of funding and political acumen, ushering in an era presaged by Biblical texts.

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Both men declined interview requests from TIME, but I [spent an unusual evening](#) with them together at the end of July, here in Turner Falls. When we met at a local business park, Ruiz told me he had “enjoyed glorious hours in the arms of the Lord Jesus,” but had been returned to earth with “a lot of work to do.” Nielsberg implied then that Ruiz and RevTech would make their grand public debut within a matter of days, during the Sunday service at the New Life Church of Turner Falls. It's not clear why that plan was scrapped, but Ruiz waited another month to make his shocking reappearance [during a nationally televised GOP presidential debate](#).

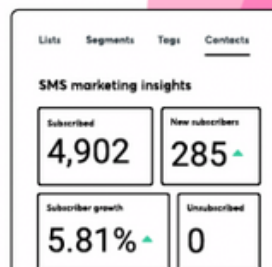
As far as anyone knows, Mitch Carter and Rudy Ruiz are the only two people to have been successfully treated after experiencing, as RevTech's terminology puts it, “mortal events.” But the celebrity death cycle has changed forever, with practically every newsworthy loss [bringing calls](#) for Nielsberg to resurrect the likes of [Dianne Feinstein](#), Henry Kissinger, and even Lisa Marie Presley — or, of course, her father. But we don't know how far revival technology can work backwards; it seems unlikely that those dead for years or decades could benefit from even the most powerful “regenerative” advancements. But then again, the concept of resurrection itself would have been considered a fantasy, even delusional, six months ago.

Some everyday Americans are now themselves [risking their lives](#) in the hope of making it to the other side and back with RevTech's help. It's a new landscape, or perhaps heavenscape or hellscape depending on who you ask. Tobacco use, vaping, and drunk driving are on the rise nationwide according to industry lobbyists and law enforcement officials, while first responders, hospitals, and medical associations are reporting a sharp increase in incidents of self-harm.

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But while RevTech’s First Partners program offers free health care to a small group of Turner Falls locals at the Treetops Trailer Community, Nielsberg has not indicated that he intends to make revival technology available widely or affordably. His advertised plan for RevTech involves profit, rather than charity. If Ruiz supporters who leap off bridges and run into traffic wish to have resurrection in common with their president, they will need to pay. Pamphlets advertising RevTech’s services include references to payment plans, “pay-as-you-go” options, and “refer-a-friend discounts for high-potential persons.”

In the RevTech pitch Nielsberg made to me in July, he claimed that his medical experts are able to “relieve the troublesome stress of existential limitations on the human body.” What he has never expanded upon is exactly *how*, though we may find clues in RevTech’s association with the New Life Church of Turner Falls and its politically connected, highly influential leader: Pastor Kathy Donaldson. After leading a December pro-Ruiz rally in which she [called on Americans to “make ready”](#) to reinstall the president using violence if necessary, Donaldson lost her White House chaplainship under former Vice President, now-President Ashleigh Grantham.

These days, Donaldson has a new title: Chief Spiritual Officer at — where else? — RevTech.

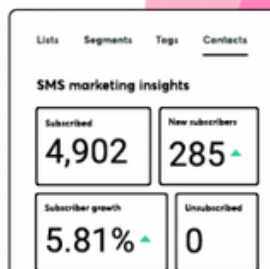


Pastor Kathy Donaldson leads services at the New Life Church of Turner Falls in November. Laura Chang for TIME

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“I have as much faith in revival technology as I do in the Lord Himself, and y’all know that’s a *heck* of a lot,” says Kathy Donaldson, surrounded by an elite group of New Life Church lay leaders at a recent Wednesday night gathering. Donaldson is radiant in her signature cerulean blue, which she says brings out her eyes and “drowns out the Botox.”

The megachurch pastor built the New Life congregation up from just a few dozen attendees under her father nearly 50 years ago to a membership of millions today, spread between the flagship campus in Turner Falls and satellite locations around the world. As a fellow Turner Falls native, I’ve been friendly with Donaldson and her family for years. This is why, she says, she’ll reluctantly agree to let me tag along while she works her “wacky Wednesdays,” which begin at 6 a.m. and end well past midnight.

The weekly lay leaders meeting in one of New Life’s vast, cream-spangled conference halls is among Donaldson’s most important, but even she is circumspect about the extent of her involvement at RevTech with her closest confidantes. Tonight, some members resurface concerns that RevTech uses stem cells to regenerate human tissue, long a no-go in evangelical and “pro-life” circles. Donaldson responds with just a hint of frustration in her voice, saying RevTech wouldn’t “use anything like that.” Before anyone else can press, she pulls out the trump card:

“Y’all can question me all day long, but surely you know President Ruiz would never align with something as demonic as stem cells.” This closes off the matter to further discussion, but I can’t help but push her on it later.



President Rudy Ruiz rallies supporters in South Texas in early 2023. Hyde Nathan for Reuters

What does Donaldson think about the New Life lay leaders getting hung up on stem cells, rather than what seems to many theologians to be the thornier dogmatic issue: whether the revivals of Rudy Ruiz and Mitch Carter devalue the spiritually unique nature of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? New Life's answer to this question has caused a significant rift in the American evangelical community, causing administrators at Bob Jones University and Liberty University — historically, Ruiz-supporting strongholds — to make acceptance of the “presidential resurrection” an explicit barrier to enrollment at the schools.

Bilford Thomason, an associate dean at Liberty, tells TIME that New Life has “gone far, far astray in the quest for earthly power.” He believes Donaldson has been “hoodwinked by the Devil, or whoever that man claiming to be Rudy Ruiz is.”

Bob Jones and Liberty's rebuke of the broader evangelical movement's support for the resurrected Ruiz has dealt a massive blow to their public profiles and, of course, their fundraising capacity. Students have disenrolled in droves, with many taking to conservative social media sites like PatriotWire to post films of their dramatic exits.

This, says Donaldson, is evidence that it is the universities, not New Life, who have strayed from the Lord's word. “They're all forgetting Lazarus,” she says. “No offense to Mitch, he's a sweet guy, but he's nobody special. He's got that in common with Lazarus. And the Lord raised them both up.”

She goes on: “Men rescued from the jaws of death by the hand of God — and RevTech is using the hand of God — are blessed and sanctioned by Him. It's as simple as that.”

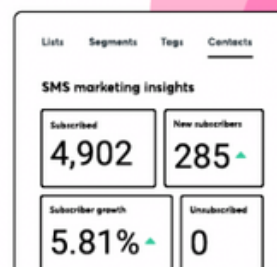
To emphasize this point, New Life recently installed a nearly forty-foot living mural depicting the story of Lazarus of Bethany outside one of its four sanctuaries on the Turner Falls campus. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus resurrected Lazarus after he'd been dead four days. (Much longer than Mitch Carter's 87-minute experience on the other side, though we still don't know how long Ruiz was deceased.) Live actors staff the scene, playing out the Gospel story every hour on the hour between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, and on the half-hour every Sunday between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Many of the Lazarus actors are also in the lay leader program, and Donaldson has called them together tonight after the last performance of the day to discuss “spiritual dividends,” a loyalty program connecting New Life members to RevTech's treatment options at a reduced rate. It goes like this: folks can pay in just a fraction of RevTech's usual fees if they recruit other “Godly Christians” who are “ready to prosper for eternity.” Before anyone can ask, Donaldson heads off the obvious question: “This isn't a multi-level marketing operation, and it certainly isn't a pyramid scheme.” Members don't buy or sell products from each other or to recruits; they simply grow the RevTech patient base and benefit from referrals.

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The living mural of Lazarus at New Life includes live performances from lay leaders. Laura Chang for TIME

“When that time comes, and the Lord tests you with a terminal diagnosis, you’ll be able to say: ‘God, Jehovah, He Who is Most On High, I’m ready for revival,’” says Donaldson, gesturing to the heavens with a heavily bejeweled hand.

Afterwards, the lay leaders express a kind of optimistic dubiousness, uncomfortable with New Life’s connection not to RevTech, Rudy Ruiz, or even the potentially heretical concept of non-divine resurrection, but to Carron Nielsberg. One member, who asked to remain anonymous, told me they’ve been attending New Life since the “original Pastor Donaldson days,” a reference to Kathy’s father.

“I know Rudy Ruiz is doing God’s work here on earth, and I trust Kathy with my own life,” they say. “But [Nielsberg] has denied the Gospels, denied God, denied it all.”

When I raise this with Donaldson, she brushes it off, saying she’s working to convert Nielsberg to Christianity and he knows it as well as she does. Their relationship is at least mutually beneficial, and, in Donaldson’s view, will end up being an overall win for Nielsberg when he finally accepts Jesus Christ as his savior.

“I tell Carron I’ll hound him to whichever, to heaven or hell if I have to,” Donaldson says with a laugh. “Of course, we may end up in a game of chicken here on the mortal plane.”

I ask her if this is an admission that she intends to avail herself of revival technology when her number comes up. In response, she pinches my elbow and gives me the slightest of winks, adding: “I’m ready for anything.”

She is especially ready for the restoration of the Ruiz Administration, for which she prays at every opportunity, including at the lay leaders’ meeting, which often runs late. Near midnight, she and her congregants stand somber-faced under the New Life front portico while a janitor locks the doors behind them.

Donaldson invites the group to bow their heads, gives thanks, and asks God for guidance. In closing, she implores God to “bring Rudy Ruiz all the way back.”

Whether God will grant that particular prayer remains to be seen. The [exhumation](#) of President Rudy Ruiz's grave was supposed to put questions about the rightful occupancy of the White House to rest. Instead, it was itself a resurrection of sorts, spawning a court battle that has raged for over three months.

Ruiz has sued his former vice president, Ashleigh Grantham, claiming that the 25th Amendment entitles him to resume his role as America's chief executive. Grantham has responded by calling Ruiz an imposter and a scam artist, refusing to acknowledge that the person he's fighting in federal court is even the man Rudy Ruiz. But Grantham has also [reportedly visited](#) the Treetops Trailer Community himself to tour RevTech, further tangling the web that seems to center on this tucked-away corner of Texas.

"Makes plenty of sense to me to set up at Treetops," says Mitch Carter, as we wrap up our time at the RevTech enclave. "We got an insular community here, and they want that same kinda thing. Private. Quiet."

I watch as a follow-up thought takes root in Carter's mind and his face lights up: "If you think about it, it's kinda a match made in heaven."

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