

August 2008

Southern District
 LCMS
 Recovery
 Assistance, Inc.
 (RAI)

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 New Orleans, LA 70127

To Donate Go To:
www.RAministries.org

Phone:
 1-888-248-2636
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 1-504-242-5885

Director's Message

Sandy G. lives in New Orleans about a mile from Camp Restore. Her house was flooded by Katrina three years ago. She lost her husband last year, yet continues to rebuild her home with the help of her sons and Camp Restore volunteers. Sandy says that she spent almost three years being mad at God for taking away "her life." Then recently, it occurred to her that she still has a life...a life that God is working in – ever so inconspicuously yet from a new vantage point, in a big way. He's working through the people that have come into her life since the storm. Sandy believes that their presence and their prayers were preparing her husband and her for his fatal heart attack. And God's still there, now providing tremendous comfort and hope.

Sandy is one of thousands of people being helped by God through the efforts of volunteers and church groups associated with Camp Restore and Camp Biloxi. As we mark the third anniversary of Katrina, we offer thanks to God for using us to share the Hope of Christ, and we ask for the strength and resources to continue in this good work!

- Rev. Dave Buss, Director



RAI Director Dave Buss talks with homeowner, Sandy.

Photo by Paula Schlueter Ross

Make August 24th Restoration Sunday!

Steve Smith, youth director at St. John's Lutheran Church in Lombard, IL, has called for LCMS churches around the nation to dedicate August 24, 2008 as "Restoration Sunday." The focus will be to raise prayers, volunteers, and financial support for Recovery Assistance's volunteer camps and ongoing work across the Gulf Coast in observance of Hurricane Katrina's 3rd Anniversary, August 29th, 2008.

Smith, DCE intern Sara Cavey and videographer Grant Weiss, were recently in New Orleans to shoot a video promotion for the August 24 event. "We need to come together from around the nation to help...things are somewhat better, but when I see the devastation that still exists, I am amazed."

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RAI Director of Advancement Kurtis Smith commends the team for helping to tell RAI's story. "It takes people like Steve, Sara and Grant to spread our message. We can't do it alone and look forward to seeing how churches around the nation will take part in this special event."

You can find Smith's video and other "Restoration Sunday" resources online at the RAI Ministries website: www.RAIministries.org. For more information, please call RAI's Advancement Team at 1-888-249-2636.

- Kurtis Smith, REInstitute Director



Lombard, IL video team on location telling the story of work still to be done in New Orleans.

Volunteer Camps to Benefit from Fishing Tournament



The first annual Lutheran Charity Redfish Tournament has selected RAI Ministries' Camp Biloxi and Camp Restore to receive the proceeds of its September 20 competition. Redfish are a popular and exciting game fish, and the tournament being held in the waters around Grand Isle, LA is expected to draw many boats from Lutheran congregations and the public at large.

Fisherman will be competing for significant cash prizes for the three heaviest fish under the 27-inch legal limit, and for many lesser cash and merchandise awards. The awards are largely funded by sponsors and donors. Seventy percent of the boat entry fees (\$100.00 per boat) will go to RAI's volunteer camps, furthering their ministry to hurricane victims.

The tournament is a project of St. James Lutheran Church in Gonzales, Louisiana. Additional information is available by calling 225-644-2432 or emailing stjamesluth@eatel.net.

- Kurtis Smith

Trinity, Panama City, Florida, sends First Mission Team to New Orleans

Why did we choose New Orleans for our first mission trip? Often we can overlook the needs in our own "Jerusalem" and as Acts 1:8 states, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Andy Hamre, Youth Leader -Trinity Lutheran Church, Panama City, FL



www.RAIministries.org



Director: Rev. Ed Brashier
P.O. Box 872668
New Orleans, LA 70187
504-242-2636
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**Go Figure
Thru June, 2008**

23,297

Number of volunteers at both Camp Biloxi and Camp Restore

\$19,953,765

Approximate value of the 1,107,927 hours worked by camp volunteers

900+

Houses gutted and sprayed for mold by camp volunteers

2603

Number of major (>\$1000) home repairs completed by our camps

1783

Number of minor (<\$1000) home repairs completed by our camps

2000+

Homeowners still on our camp lists and...
needing YOUR assistance



Director: John Coyle
1996 Pass Road
Biloxi, MS 39531
228-594-0008
www.campbiloxi.com

Camp Biloxi Celebrates Anniversary and Welcomes New DCOs

As the Gulf Coast observes the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, Camp Biloxi celebrates three years of helping hurricane victims rebuild their homes and lives in the name of Jesus. At the same time, the Camp also welcomes two Director of Christian Outreach (DCO) interns, Drew and Nicole Bradshaw.

Celebrating the past three years, Camp Biloxi and its volunteers have seen changes and improvements both at the camp and along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The work is far from over, though. Today, Camp Biloxi has a waiting list of over 1,500



Drew and Nicole Bradshaw settle into their new Camp Biloxi home.

families still waiting to receive help. Through your prayers and support and with the help of God, Camp Biloxi and RAI Ministries will continue efforts to restore faith, home and community until the Gulf Coast is fully recovered.

Over the next year, DCO Intern Drew Bradshaw will be working with Camp Chaplain Ralph Buchhorn to address the spiritual and emotional care needs in the volunteer camp and community. DCO Intern Nicole Bradshaw will be working with Pastor Eric Hollar and the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd on their congregational outreach efforts. Both interns look forward to their year of service in Biloxi!

- Corrina Hollar, Camp Biloxi

Camp Restore Hosts Southern District Youth Gathering

Two hundred Senior High students and adults traveled from across the Southern District for a weekend of fun, praise, study and service at Camp Restore this summer. These youth and adults used part of their Gathering time to help "Restore Faith, Home and Community to victims of Hurricane Katrina." Some went to a Headstart Childcare facility to work with children. Others spent time with the elderly in a nursing home. Everyone also had an opportunity to assist with the restoration of one of the hundreds of homes on Camp Restore's list.

These young Lutherans were presented with a variety of ways to serve our Risen Savior while participating in the Gathering. The youth did a "tag team" effort on three houses where they installed insulation, hung sheetrock, or painted. Some were sent to Algiers Technology Academy to paint one of the many schools that were trying to reopen after the storm of 2005. Others stayed at the Camp to help keep the facility clean (no small task) and prepare 300 sandwiches for the next days' lunches for work crews.

Gathering Coordinator Kevin Kieschnick enjoyed seeing the youth active and out on the streets, "It was great to see ministry not just for youth but by and from them in service towards others. It meant a lot to this community and I know it impacted the youth as well."

Worship time, prayer walks, and Bible study were also an integral part of the experience. The Gathering band, "Tangled Blue", helped set the tone of the Mass Events for praise and worship, "youth style." Vicar Billy Brath, while on stilts, spoke to the youth about "seeing things from a different perspective". The Gathering finale was the Sunday morning worship service at the Prince of Peace sanctuary with Pastor Jerome Terry of Bethel Lutheran Church sharing his testimony of God's grace during the storm. Young people at work and play are pictured on the next two pages.

Young people attending the Gathering observed:

"This gathering has definitely made a difference in my life and I will change my ways of doing everything..."

"I want everyone to know this experience has been eye-opening and life changing."

"I am restored through Jesus. No matter what I am going through or how hard things get, God will always be there to put things back together."

- Rev. Ed Brashier, Camp Restore Director

Many Thanks to Our Supporters and Volunteers



...and many other organizations, congregations, and individuals!

“Southern District Youth Gathering 2008”





on the
City Rock



Three Years from Yesterday

It has been a long three years since Hurricane Katrina. It feels as if we have been holding our breath waiting to restart our lives. For members of churches in Katrina's path it's often as if the storm was just yesterday. Of the forty churches affected by the hurricane, two New Orleans area congregations, Holy Cross and Bethel, and Good Shepherd of Slidell, LA, are still displaced from permanent buildings.

In April, we celebrated the rededication of Christ Lutheran Church of Chalmette, LA with close to 300 in attendance. The church once again anchors the neighborhood that is now a post Katrina community. In June, children were able to attend Vacation Bible School at Christ for the first time since the summer of 2005. An article about the very successful VBS was featured in the July, 2008 LCMS *Reporter*.

At the recent Southern District Youth Gathering, a youth listed as a high point "seeing so many youth coming to help my city it gives me hope." When asked 'What did you learn?' an adult youth leader wrote "What New Orleans is really going through and how that related to all our disasters in our life – big or small. Our kids are from North Alabama and this wasn't real for them as it was for other kids here". Youth and leaders witness the devastation in the area through servant event experiences. People in the affected area greatly appreciated the help and support being given in Jesus' name.

Through the work of many volunteers from across the country and members of the Southern District, many lives, homes and churches have been restored. If you are reading this newsletter from the comfort of your home of choice, please remember your neighbors across town, across the district or across the nation that may not be as fortunate. Please keep us in your prayers and consider organizing a mission team to positively impact the LCMS Southern District.

- Kathy Wendling - Congregation Restoration Director



Pastor Phillip Miller from Christ and Project Manager Walter Schmudlach who led their rebuild.

Taking Jesus to the Streets

Bethlehem Lutheran Church of St. Louis, MO, came to Camp Restore in July to share a special ministry with the city. "Taking Jesus to the Streets" is a relational street ministry that involves music, skits and crafts that are all centered around a Gospel message specially geared towards the urban community. The group shared their ministry in the streets of New Orleans around Mt. Zion and Epiphany Lutheran Churches.

Five years ago Bethlehem began "Taking Jesus to the Streets" in the neighborhoods around their church in St. Louis. "Since many were no longer coming in to hear the Word on Sunday mornings, we decided to take the Good News to them," said Pastor John Schmidke during the group's presentation to the volunteers at Camp Restore. Mt. Zion and Epiphany church members as well as Camp volunteers joined Bethlehem in spreading the Gospel in the streets of New Orleans.

- Vicar Billy Brath, LINCNewOrleans Intern



Children enjoy the music of "Taking Jesus to the Streets."

Vicar Billy Brath has completed his vicarage year working with REInstitute director, Kurtis Smith, and will be returning to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, to continue his pastoral training.



Prayer Walking From Belize to New Orleans

It's been my pleasure to work for the past several months at Camp Restore with RAI Ministries. One of my assignments was to lead prayer walks, covering the struggling city neighborhood with prayer in order to restore people's faith, homes and community. There are many hurricane survivors who need the reassurance that people do care and to know that volunteers continue to help. Prayer walks provide that type of care.

When our prayer teams hit the streets of New Orleans, they go out in faith knowing that God is going to lead them to the people who need prayer. Prayer walkers do bless the survivors of Katrina, but in many cases it is the prayer walkers that get blessed themselves through the people they meet.

Hazzert and Rita Gillet are one of many families we have encountered that have blessed us through their faith. From the farm fields and simple living in Belize to the flooded lower ninth ward of New Orleans, the Gillets' faith has stood the test



Seth Graham stands in front of the Prayer Walk NOLA wall.

of many trials. Their migration to Louisiana was no doubt an act of faith. They launched a new chapter of their life in 1963, by moving the whole family to the United States because of all the opportunities here. Hazzert practiced a variety of trades and professions in Belize: from a government worker to a fisherman, so he had plenty of options when arriving in America. They were already used to heat and humidity in Belize—as well as hurricanes.

The Gillets had experienced Hurricane Hattie in Belize in 1961, even though they did not stay in their home. Hazzert was in New Orleans in 1965 when Hurricane Betsy struck the area. The couple had experienced many other storms in Belize, although none with the level of destruction brought by Hurricane Katrina.

The couple has always tried to live on faith, knowing that if they were faithful to God than they could make it through anything. When Katrina was barreling down on New Orleans, Hazzert, Rita, and their son decided to stay.

When the hurricane's winds were first howling, the Gillets were sleeping in their bed and they didn't wake up until a window was knocked out in the front of their house. They went back to sleep, only to awake later to a house filling with water. The family lived on the higher ground of the lower ninth ward, near the Mississippi River, about a mile from where the Industrial Canal levee breached very badly. Even with their higher ground and their house raised four feet off that ground, they took on about 3 feet of water. As the water level rose up to her chest, Rita says her husband was there assuring her that God was with them and that He would not let them drown. When rescue teams came, they told Hazzert and his son that they would die if they stayed, but Hazzert knew that God would bring them through those times. Suffering from health issues, Rita eventually left the house with rescuers.

In many ways the Gillets were prepared for this trial. They had food because they had practiced their agriculture skills from Belize. They had gardens with various vegetables, four citrus trees in the yard, and a stockpile of other food. They were able to build fires in their attic space so they could cook any food they needed.

Since they were on higher ground, the water in their house receded within a week, but there was still water in the streets. They were left with a damp house and destroyed furniture, but this did not affect the Gillets' outlook on life. They held on to their belief that God was good, and carried on. Similar to the story of Job, even when things of this world were taken away from the Gillets they would not curse God.

When asked if they fear another storm of this power Rita said, "We've been through too many to worry about another one."

In the Gillets' case, their story blessed and encouraged our volunteers to keep growing in our own faith. Hazzert shared many Scripture verses he has memorized with us, and those verses just backed his faith and his story. The Gillets didn't need

reassurance or hope, they already had it in Christ. But there are many people in New Orleans and across the Gulf Coast who do not have that hope, and that is why we are here. We share the love that Christ first showed us in the hope that it will become contagious. As long as volunteers keep coming, we'll continue sharing Jesus with their help—across the Gulf Coast.



Hazzert and Rita Gillet

- Seth Graham

Seth Graham has served at Camp Restore for the past several months. At the end of August, he will be leaving to attend the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

My First Two Weeks in New Orleans

Beyond Mardi Gras, Jazz Fest, gumbo, crawfish, and all the good stuff, I heard so much about the evil of Katrina and its lingering devastation in New Orleans - even after 3 years. It was difficult to put all the pieces together, until I got here.

My first prayer-walk experience was with a Camp Restore volunteer group from the mid-west. Five of us were assigned to cover a section of the Lower 9th ward. Looking at the devastation and desolate houses around, most would avoid walking around here, but I was overwhelmed by the encounters we had that day.

Everyone was willing to pray with us. The very first was a grandfather trenched in grief over the recent loss of his wife. He was trying to rebuild his house. "Grandpa" was encouraged by our prayer. One of his comments stood out. We were holding hands, ready to pray, and with a meek voice he stopped us and asked, "Do ya'll understand what it means to hold hands for a prayer?" He went on explaining, "When we hold hands, we are defending ourselves from the assault against our circle. Remember this whenever you hold hands and pray."

I felt so blessed to have the opportunity to connect with someone in so much pain. I look forward to getting to know this city better, and the people who call it home.

- Meseret Alemu



Meseret Alemu.



Kristen Wyzard.

RAI welcomes Deaconess Intern, Meseret Alemu and DCE Intern, Kristen Wyzard. Meseret from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is working with Kevin & Christie Kieschnick in LINCNewOrleans. Kristen from Concordia University, Chicago, is working with Kathy Wendling in Congregation Restoration.

"Share Hope Upon Katrina's 3rd Anniversary"

*It's been said that humans can live approximately
60 days without food...6 days without water...6 minutes without air.
It is said that humans cannot live at all without HOPE.*

Recovery Assistance ministries provides HOPE by restoring faith, home, and community to victims of disaster. Please make your commitment today to become a long-term provider of hope by partnering with us:

- Yes! I commit to providing HOPE through regular prayer for Recovery Assistance ministries.
- Yes! I commit to providing HOPE through Recovery Assistance ministries with a...
- monthly gift annual gift
- one-time gift of... \$5000 \$1000 \$500 \$100 \$100 \$50 \$10 Other _____
- Please contact me about volunteer opportunities at Camp Biloxi, MS Camp Restore – New Orleans.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Send to: Southern District LCMS Recovery Assistance; 9301 Chef Mentour Hwy., New Orleans, LA 70127 or go to www.RAministries.org.