

# Southern District Recovery News

Partner's Edition

January 2006

**“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift”** 2 Corinthians 9:15.

God's indescribable gift of Jesus Christ gives hope for dark days, strength in weakness and forgiveness and renewal for every sin and struggle. We rejoice in the love of Jesus Christ demonstrated again and again by his children. The gifts of God's people from around the world are a source of encouragement and strength. We thank God for the ultimate gift of Jesus. We thank God that the love of Jesus working in the lives of people is demonstrating itself so clearly to those in the Hurricane Zone. This newsletter is an update of some of the awesome things God is doing through his people.

Peace in Christ,

David Lewis

Southern District Disaster Coordinator



## The Man from Texas

Carl Bruhl showed up in Baton Rouge at the end of September pulling his RV behind his truck. He headed for Trinity Lutheran Church and told Pastor Dave Buss and DCE Christiane Zoch that he wanted to help people.

Relief efforts were in full swing and volunteers were being coordinated to help with clean up. Two sites had been chosen for Volunteer Camps but progress was slow in getting them up and running. Carl changed all that.

Carl is a retired engineer and project manager from Delta Airlines. Carl quickly became a project manager in charge of Volunteer Camps in Louisiana. Working with volunteer DCE Seth Kaiser and Lutheran Disaster Response Coordinator Jessica Vermilya the project was tackled. Tents were set up, plywood floors laid, electricity and sewer connected. Arrangements were made for a portable kitchen and a shower trailer. An empty field was transformed into a camp to house over 100 volunteers at a time. By the middle of November the camp at Atonement in Metairie was ready to go, but Carl's work wasn't done. He packed up his RV and moved to Lamb of God in Slidell, LA to tackle the same kind of work.

After a short break at Thanksgiving Carl came back to Louisiana this time accompanied by his gracious wife Diane. Together they help get things organized and in place to make sure that the Slidell Camp would be a suitable home for those coming to the area to help. The week after Christmas their hard work was rewarded. Nearly 200 volunteers from around the country were staying at both camps, helping people recover from the losses of Katrina.

Carl isn't new to serving. A member of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Clifton, Texas he serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Clifton Lutheran Home. He came to Louisiana to help people. God used him in a completely different way to prepare places so that hundreds of people coming to help people would be cared for in the months and years ahead. On top of that his joyful, persistent and faith filled spirit encouraged us all. Thank you Carl! We couldn't have got it done without you.

## Christmas Boxes Make an Impact

**FIVE THOUSAND!** That's the number of families that attend the Southern District Churches in the hurricane zone. The question was simple: "What can we possibly do encourage that many families this Christmas?" The answer came in the simplest of Christmas reminders – a nativity set. A small nativity set, devotional books, wrapping paper, scissors, Christmas music and a \$50 gift card to Walmart were a simple reminder to the members and friends of our churches and schools they were not forgotten. Marvelous volunteers helped assemble and deliver the boxes to churches across the Gulf Coast. 300 more boxes were mailed to displaced people across the country. Each box included a letter with these words: "This little nativity set is a reminder, that no matter what life looks like for you and yours this holy season, the love of God the Father for you in Christ Jesus is just as real as it was on that first Christmas day." Here are a few comments received from those getting a box:



*"I just wanted to thank you for all the kindness shown to me. All my life the Lutheran church has helped me. As a child I was in the Bethlehem Orphan Home and now helping me at the age of 75 to overcome the loss of everything through Katrina. The grant and the gift box really cheered me up this Christmas. Thank You. ---- Irma"*

*"Sincere thanks for such a wonderful Katina gift! The Nativity is beautiful and will always be a reminder of Katrina to be passed on for generations. —Sincerely, Joyce"*

*"We just want to let you know how much your generosity has meant to us. This has been a trying time for us, but people like you have touched our hearts.—Jim and Michele"*

Our partnership with the LCMS World Relief, Lutheran Church Charities and Concordia Publishing House as well as fellow Lutherans around the country collecting and sending nativity sets and donations made this project possible and touched the lives of thousands of people with hope of Christ's birth.

## “I’m Sorry, We Can’t Help with That”

Those surprising words came from Kathy Wendling of the Southern District Recovery Office. Heading up the “Family to Family Connection Project,” Kathy is a “can-do, never give up, accomplish anything” kind of person. It is rare to hear her say “no” to a request, but when Troy said she needed a man it was a little more than Kathy was willing to commit to providing.

To clarify, Troy didn’t want just any man, she particularly wanted a man to help her purchase a replacement car for the one she lost in the hurricane. In the past at car buying time, one of the men in her family had gone with her to help with the shopping. It made her feel more comfortable. Now, the men in her family were scattered all over the country. Kathy promised to keep her eyes open for someone to help Troy with the “man” dilemma, but the request ended up on the back burner because of its uniqueness.

That is until a call came to the Recovery Office from Red Corder. Red lives in Wisconsin and the men in his Bible Class wanted to help someone from the hurricane zone for Christmas. Kathy suggested Troy as part of the Family to Family connection effort. At first, Red was a little hesitant, after all, he said, “We’re just a bunch of old guys, are you sure we can help a young woman like Troy?” Optimistic, Kathy shared the “Family to Family Connection” information with Red and encouraged him to give Troy a phone call.

The email that Kathy received from Red a few days before Christmas tells the rest of the story. Here is what Red wrote:

*Kathy —  
Our Men's Bible Class at Elm Grove Lutheran Church will be helping Troy. We have located a car for her. It will be donated by the local Saturn dealership in Waukesha and will be in very good working order. We will supply her with a number of other items including gas for the car, insurance, etc. We will arrange for her to fly up here from Houston with a girl friend and pick up the car and drive it back. We will be picking up all travel expenses. Pickup of the car is tentatively set for January 7. Just thought you would like to know that things are happening in your Family to Family effort.  
May God Bless your day and May He always watch over you.*

*Red Corder*

We can’t guarantee a “man” (or a car) for everyone that wants one and we’re not asking you to give something as big as a car. Instead, we can promise new friends in Christ, an opportunity to make a difference in the life of a struggling person or family and a personal way to demonstrate the love of our Savior. Sign up to be a part of the Family to Family connection by calling or emailing Kathy Wendling in our office at 225.752.5590 or [kathyw@southernlcms.org](mailto:kathyw@southernlcms.org).

## Critical Needs!

People, prayer, financial support! It’s simple. People, prayers and financial support are the most important needs in the recovery effort today. As Hurricane Katrina fades from the news, the effects don’t fade from the landscape. Hundreds of thousands of people have no permanent place to live. Trailers are slow in coming. Financial needs mean the lines at food banks grow longer. (We are providing food and supplies to more than 1000 families every week and Resources are running desperately short). Long term planning is difficult until governmental agencies make decisions. A shortage of counselors means overwhelming spiritual and emotional needs go unaddressed. Prayers to almighty God acknowledge that he alone is the source of our strength. Financial gifts are used to purchase supplies, feed volunteers and give direct financial assistance to hurting storm victims. And volunteers give relief to weary people.

People make the difference. People can help clean out houses, and listen to the stories of victims. People can distribute food and supplies. People can cut trees and can hold hands. People can serve meals, wash dishes and play with children. People bring hope in the name of Christ.

Please volunteer --- get a group together from your church, school or neighborhood and come to the area for a weekend or a week and make a difference. Registration information is available in two places. To Volunteer for PHYSICAL CLEANUP, REBUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION type jobs please go to [www.ldr.org](http://www.ldr.org) and click on the volunteer link. To assist with ministry efforts like food distribution, helping with VBS or daycare, visiting the elderly, hosting congregational events sign up at the list of opportunities at <http://lcmsworldmission.org/relief>. Volunteer camps and coordination areas are set up in New Orleans and Slidell, Louisiana and Biloxi, Mississippi. More information about specific questions can be found on the attached sheet or by checking the FAQ page at the Southern District Website at <http://relief.inspiralink.com/Index.asp?PageID=4124>.

## How are the gifts used?

Below is a brief summary of where donations to the Southern District Hurricane Relief Fund have been used through December 9th. Gifts totaling approximately three million dollars have been received from individuals, congregations, organizations, LCMS Districts and LCMS World Relief and Human Care. The following are the major distributions:

Worker Care and Salary Support	\$1,242,000.
Member Care and Support	300,000.
Congregational Grants	94,238.
Southern District Support	100,000.
Volunteer Support	8000.
Administrative Expenses	35,000.
Equipment Expenses	196,000.

**Thanks to all for their generous support!**



For More Information Contact  
The Southern District  
Disaster Recovery Office  
Pastor David Lewis, Coordinator

Southern District LCMS  
2142 O’Neal Lane #303  
Baton Rouge LA 70816  
At [katrinainformation@southernlcms.org](mailto:katrinainformation@southernlcms.org)  
225.752.5590  
[www.southernlcms.org](http://www.southernlcms.org)