

**February 2009**

**Southern District  
 LCMS  
 Recovery  
 Assistance, Inc.  
 (RAI)**

**Rev. Dave Buss  
 Director**

**John Coyle  
 COO**

***Inside This Issue***

- LINCNewOrleans and Ministry Recovery Coordinate Christmas Outreach
- Pay It Forward
- You Can't Keep A Good Tent Down
- Meet The Bakers

9301 Chef Menteur Hwy.  
 New Orleans, LA 70127

To Donate Go To:  
[www.RAIministries.org](http://www.RAIministries.org)

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

**Director's Update**

RAI Ministries enters 2009 with high hopes. It's midway through January and we have already had volunteers groups from Illinois, Nebraska, Wyoming, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New York, and Virginia! The RV sites are filled with long term volunteers and there is a lot of work getting done. We are delighted, that after 3 years and four months (yes, I'm counting!) since Katrina, God continues to provide! Here are a few of the things that are going on:



*Rev. Dave Buss*

**Strategic Planning and Vision Statement.**

As part of our ongoing effort to be good stewards and to continue the mission given to us, we are in the midst of a strategic planning process that we pray will provide the framework to continue “Restoring Faith, Home, and Community to the Survivors of Katrina” for years to come. Our vision for the future is that RAI Ministries will be the leading Lutheran disaster recovery organization making life changing events possible in the lives of Katrina survivors, in the lives of our servant volunteers, and in the life of the church at large.

**Volunteer Recruitment and Development.**

We are traveling the United States thanking those who have joined in our mission through prayer, service, and giving. We remind people of the great needs that exist here in the Gulf Coast and we enlist groups to “Bring their love for Jesus and their carpentry tools!” We solicit prayers everywhere we go, and we continue to seek financial support for the ongoing needs of the people we serve.

**LINCNewOrleans Forms New Corporation.**

From its inception, we envisioned that LINCNewOrleans would be the legacy of RAI Ministries. We are taking steps now to move LINCNewOrleans into a “long term” phase of ministry. This includes creating a separate corporation and a strategic plan to share the hope of Jesus Christ through community development in New Orleans. LINCNewOrleans will continue to work from Camp Restore and in partnership with RAI Ministries. Please continue to look for LINC NewOrleans updates here!

**God Bless our Long Term Volunteers.**

We thank God for our wonderful “long-term” volunteers. We currently have over twenty fabulous Christian servants who move to Biloxi and New Orleans for the winter, live in RVs and bunk houses, and volunteer their time and talents to helping those in need. What a gift!

**Local Volunteers Wanted.**

Local volunteers are welcome to come to either Camp Biloxi or Camp Restore to help out. Please call 888-248-2636 and ask for the local volunteer coordinator if you would like to volunteer in any of the following areas: Construction — Facilities Maintenance — Vehicle Repair & Maintenance — Food Service — Clerical — Janitorial — Quilting — Misc. **You Tell Us!**

*(continued on page 2)*

(continued from page 1)

### Pastor Victor Frank Comes Back!

“Pastor Vic” has logged over 26 trips to New Orleans from Spring, Texas since September of 2005. He now serves as our “Hospitality Manager” and Chaplain at Camp Restore. Thank you Pastor Vic! Thank you God!

### “Can-Do Helpers” Wanted for Summer Months.

Our camps are booked for June and July with High School youth coming to serve. We are in great need of experienced adults who can lead a small group of young people for one week doing construction work. This will be a great opportunity to share your time, faith, talents, make new friends, serve God, and to truly be blessed and enriched. Please call Rava Coyle at 228-594-0008 for more information or to volunteer for a week or two.

Blessings!

Rev. Dave Buss, RAI Director

## LINCNewOrleans and Ministry Recovery Coordinate Christmas Outreach

Ten New Orleans area Lutheran congregations (including Holy Cross, Epiphany, Bethel, Mount Zion, First English, Redeemer, Atonement, Prince of Peace, LINKnola/Gloria Dei, and Christ) and RAI staff provided Christmas gifts for seventy-two children!! The generosity was amazing!

Twenty-five children were from Schaumburg Elementary School. Mr. Keith Schmidt, school social worker, said that the parents were overwhelmed by the gifts and were very emotional expressing their thanks. Forty-seven foster children received their gifts from a very special Santa Claus at the Greater New Orleans Foster Parent’s Association Christmas Party at Camp Restore.

Mrs. Willie Mae Booth, a foster parent and board member, said that the children have continued to say how much they love their presents. She also shared that she didn’t expect to hear much feedback from the teenagers but was impressed when they repeatedly told her what the gifts meant to them. Even the volunteers from Camp Restore joined in to help with the party...we’re not sure who had the most fun that night!

LINCNewOrleans is blessed to have ongoing relationships with both of these organizations. Our in-school assistance at Schaumburg continues to strengthen. The Foster Parent’s Association will continue to gather at Camp Restore. We have a wonderful opportunity to host them by providing food and volunteers to play with the kids while the adults get together to support each other and discuss relevant issues. If you are interested in helping with this relational ministry, please contact Kathy Wendling (504-442-5876) or Christie Kieschnick (504-287-7916).

Thank you to all the people who shared Jesus’ love with His precious children!

- Christie Kieschnick, Co-Director of LINCNewOrleans



L-R: Mrs. Josette Ripoll, Schaumburg Principal; Christie & Kevin Kieschnick.

## Many Thanks to Our Supporters and Volunteers



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

## Attention Wal-Mart Shoppers...

During the Christmas season, churches all over the world are intent on taking the focus off of ourselves, and our hectic Christmas shopping, and onto the true meaning of Christmas. In this spirit, LINCNewOrleans hosted a Christmas celebration for Foster Children, where volunteers could “adopt” a child and provide Christmas presents for them. Epiphany Lutheran Church’s youth group, wanting to participate, went to Wal-Mart one Saturday afternoon to purchase some presents. Little did we know...

Halfway through our Wal-Mart shopping expedition, I noticed a woman and her son standing nearby eyeing our group. The woman waved me over and asked what the story was with these youth. I told her about our shopping intentions, but I misread her question—she was more curious about the youth that I was accompanying rather than our mission at Wal-Mart that particular day.

The woman introduced me to her 9-year-old son, Jack, and he explained his mother’s motive for waving me over in the first place. Jack walked with me as I gathered the youth, introduced him to the group and asked him to share his idea.

“I’m doing ‘Pay it Forward,’” he said, “and these are for you.” He then passed out \$25 Wal-Mart gift cards to each of them.

This simple act caused many different reactions. Everyone was ecstatic and grateful for this boy’s gift—some were loud with excitement and some, including a chaperone, were in tears. One of the youth noticed the boy’s mother off to the side and soon they were all running to hug her and say their thanks. One of the youth even asked if we could pray with them, which we did—we gathered in a circle, holding hands, right there in the middle of the electronics department.



*GNO Foster Parents’ Christmas Party.*

Epiphany’s youth group now continuously searches for ways to ‘Pay it Forward’ and to share Christ’s love throughout the year. It all starts with one simple act.



*“Special Santa” – Rev. Jerome Terry.*

A full five minutes later they were still in awe at their own little Wal-Mart Christmas miracle. To them, this was much more than a simple gift card. This example of Christ’s love, in the form of a gracious 9-year-old boy and his mother, meant that these youth could now buy Christmas presents for their families.

We finished shopping for our adopted foster child, then the youth had the opportunity to spend their gift cards and wrap all the presents once we got back to church.

This story is still at the forefront of these youth’s minds to this day. And our youth group has almost tripled in size—whether or not this is due to the now famous day at Wal-Mart, I’m not sure. However, I do know these kids will always remember this Wal-Mart experience and the mother and son that gave much more than a simple gift.

*- Kristen Wyzard, DCE Intern*

## You Can’t Keep A Good Tent Down!

Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, a volunteer camp was set up at Atonement Lutheran Church in Metairie, LA. Volunteers were housed in a huge tent purchased by the Southern District using funds from LCMS World Relief and Human Care and Thrivent. Once Camp Atonement was phased out, the tent became available for other use and came in quite handy to cover the gaping hole in the roof of Woody and Kim Keim of Prairieville, LA, following Hurricane Gustav. The tent has now been taken down and will be repaired for future use.

Several other tents from Katrina are at Orphan Grain Train in Norfolk, NE, awaiting shipment to the Sudan to be used as temporary hospitals. We thank God that blessings provided to us in time of need can now be shared with others in need.



*- Rev. Dave Buss*

## Meet the Bakers...

Bob and Bev Baker now serve on staff with RAI Ministries after coming several times to the Gulf Coast as volunteers. Bob states, "After watching the devastation of Katrina on television and the live video on the internet that John Coyle, an elder from the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd—Biloxi, had taken during the storm, my wife and I knew the Lord wanted us to help in some way."

Bob was accompanied on his first trip to Biloxi by his son, a licensed electrician. They hauled a trailer of supplies donated by his congregation, Trinity, Davenport, IA.

Bob, accompanied on his second trip by Bev, next helped in Slidell, LA, before returning to Biloxi so that Bev could see the situation there. On their way back to Iowa they both felt the Lord wanted them to be involved in this clean-up effort and to show His love to their neighbors in the South.

While Bev worked at her full-time job in Iowa, Bob spent much of the next year and a half living and working at Camp Biloxi. Time together in the south was spent working on recovery efforts, and time together in Iowa allowed them to face family health crises together with God's presence deeply felt.

Bob sums up their return to Camp Biloxi this way, "Bev retired at the end of August 2008, our daughter and son-in-law have a healthy baby girl, and we have returned to Biloxi to help continue with the rebuilding of the community. I still see some of the familiar names of the families from 2005 and 2006 who are still waiting for help. The work is far from being done and the people along the Gulf can still use skilled volunteers and financial assistance. We both feel this is where the Lord wants us to be and that in some small way we can be the servants He wants us to be."



*Bob and Bev Baker.*



Hope –

*"Restoring faith, home and community"*



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: Send to RAI Ministries Inc., 9301 Chef Mentour Hwy., New Orleans, LA 70127 or go to [www.RAIministries.org](http://www.RAIministries.org).  
RAI Ministries is a Recognized Service Organization of the Southern District LCMS.