



Southern District Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Recovery Update

Restoring Faith, Home, and Community to those affected by Disaster.

June 2008

Southern District
LCMS
Recovery
Assistance, Inc.
(RAI)

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9301 Chef Menteur Hwy.
New Orleans, LA
70127
To Donate Go To:
www.RAIministries.org

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

What is RAI Ministries?

There is a new look in the disaster world. Keep your eyes out for the following logo:



You'll see the logo featured in our next newsletter, as well as on our websites in the near future. What is RAI Ministries and what does the logo mean?

Recovery Assistance Inc. (RAI) ministries bring hope in Jesus Christ by restoring faith, home, and community. RAI was developed by the Southern District LCMS in order to locally coordinate the national LCMS response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The organization's two volunteer camps, Camp Biloxi and Camp Restore—New Orleans, assist not only the recovery of Lutheran churches, schools and their members, but their communities as well.

Besides running the daily operations of volunteer camps, RAI staff train and equip volunteers for disaster outreach in current relief efforts, and in case of future events—in partnership with LCMS World Mission and LCMS World Relief and Human Care. RAI staff also provide direct congregational and school restoration activities, and facilitate a network of missional leaders that are catalysts for justice and empowerment in their local communities.

God provides hope for spiritual, physical and relational healing...in other words: faith, home, and community. These important aspects of restoration are the main focus of our new logo: a cross represents faith, a house represents home, and hands clasping represent community.

As the RAI team continues to bring Jesus' hope to disaster survivors, we seek your involvement in sustaining God's mission through us. Restore faith, home, and community with RAI Ministries!

Please contact the RAI offices at 1-888-248-2636 or visit our website, www.RAIministries.org, if you are moved by God to partner with us in prayer, become a volunteer or wish to support us through financial gifts.

- Kurtis Smith

Camp Biloxi Recognized as Volunteer Non-Profit Organization of the Year

As part of National Volunteer month, the City of Biloxi, MS, hosted its 25th annual volunteer recognition ceremony on April 30, 2008. The ceremony recognized individuals and businesses who made significant contributions to the City of Biloxi and the local community. Camp Biloxi was presented with the Volunteer Non-Profit Organization of the Year award for outstanding volunteer commitment.

Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway, Jr. and Colonel Greg Touhill, commander of the 81st Training Wing at Keesler Airforce Base, presented awards to outstanding individuals, organizations, and businesses who contributed time and talents in the areas of health, community, arts and history, and sports. The award recognized the work of Camp Biloxi and their parent organization, the Southern District

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www.RAIministries.org

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LCMS Recovery Assistance Inc, as well as their partner organizations, Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd and Lutheran Disaster Response. "Our volunteers are giving us the most precious thing that you have – your time," said Mayor Holloway.

Camp Biloxi Program Director, John Coyle, accepted the award on behalf of the camp. "I was extremely surprised and pleased to receive the award on behalf of our organization and the Lutheran efforts here on the Gulf Coast," said Coyle. "We would not be where we are today without the thousands of volunteers who have come to serve the needs of the many families devastated by Hurricane Katrina. It has been a most rewarding experience for all of us to help people in need and to spread the love of Jesus Christ in all that we do and say. We are truly an organization that is committed to restoring faith, home and community, and I am proud to be a part of this."

- Corrina Hollar

Stand Firm: Gal 5 – Focus on a LINCNewOrleans Missional Community



LINCNewOrleans, as part of Southern District Recovery Assistance, Inc., is connecting a network of missional leaders, local to the area, that are catalysts for justice and empowerment in their communities. Relationships have been built in area public schools where staff and volunteers tutor, counsel, and share leadership development discussions. Connections are being

made in neighborhood societies and civic organizations, small business groups, and through simple prayer walks and conversations in local gathering places.

These relationships lead to small groups, usually gathered around a specific social concern. One such group is Stand Firm: Gal 5. Pictured, the group is made up of five women, but that's not why they're called "Gal 5". Galatians 5:1 says *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."* This is an opportunity for women to discuss scripture and relevant issues, pray, and equip each other for community empowerment. Stand Firm: Gal 5 is a missional community committed to standing firm together and empowering victims of domestic violence by God's grace.

Domestic violence has increased since Hurricane Katrina. Stand Firm: Gal 5 partners with community agencies that help battered women. Their goal is to develop a network of women who build relationships with victims of abuse. Kevin Kieschnick, co-director of LINCNewOrleans, says *"Stand Firm: Gal 5 is a great example of a LINCNewOrleans missional community. They stand firm together in the gift of God's grace, and then intentionally reflect that grace in communities where they share their time and resources."*

The group has provided meals for Hagar's House, an emergency shelter for homeless women, and they are connecting with the Family Justice Center, a one-stop resource for battered women to obtain court orders, referrals, and other services.

Stand Firm: Gal 5 meets every second and fourth Wednesday at 1:30 in Prince of Peace/Bethel Lutheran Church, 9301 Chef Menteur Hwy, New Orleans. Please keep victims of abuse in your prayers and contact Christie Kieschnick at www.LINCNewOrleans.com or 504-287-7916 if you have any questions.

- Christie Kieschnick



Gal 5: Pam Hunter, Christie Kieschnick, Brenda Johnson, Tammy Bayard Sperandeo, and Lorraine Breaud.

Check out the "Camp Biloxi" or "Camp Restore" Facebooks groups at www.facebook.com. When this was written, there were already over 500 others in the groups.



Director: Rev. Ed Brashier
P.O. Box 872668
New Orleans, LA 70187
504-242-2636
www.camprestore.org

Go Figure
Thru April, 2008

23,251

Number of volunteers at both Camp Biloxi and Camp Restore

\$20,078,232

Approximate value of the 1,114,838 hours worked by camp volunteers

878

Houses gutted and sprayed for mold by camp volunteers

1838

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

1235

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

Hurricane Survivors LOAD Orphan Grain Train Truck!

Very familiar with UNLOADING Orphan Grain Train trucks full of relief supplies for the survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Southern District LCMS Recovery Assistance Inc. [RAI] staff and local volunteers were very pleased to recently load a truck headed for Norfolk, Nebraska where Orphan Grain Train is headquartered.

When Ochsner Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge offered to donate 42 hospital exam tables and 50 apothecary cabinets, OGT, RAI, and Lutherans In Medial Missions (LIMM), collaborated to get this generous donation back to Nebraska so it could be redistributed around the world.

As the third anniversaries of Katrina and Rita approach, there is a strong desire to give back by the people of the South who have been helped. There is an appreciation of sacrifices that organizations like OGT and the people of this country have made to help New Orleans and the Gulf Coast recover from the storms of 2005.

While RAI ministries continue to actively facilitate the continued service of volunteers from outside the disaster zone, our organization is also making a concerted effort to help the local community to help itself and others. This especially happens through LINCNewOrleans (Lutheran Inter-City Network Coalition) and our Congregational Restoration ministry serving among the 40 LCMS churches and 13

schools that were directed affected by the hurricanes.

To learn more about the ministries mentioned in this article: RAI ministries - www.RAIministries.org; Orphan Grain Train - www.OGT.org.

- Kurtis Smith



RAI Staff Members Jason McCoy and Kurt Jostes.



Volunteers load medical equipment.

Sharing “Means of Hope” in Disasters



When people ask us how things are going in the field of disaster outreach, team members often respond, “Sadly, we have much to do.” Disasters continue to literally shake our world. Whether it’s the continuing struggle to recover from Hurricane Katrina, the spring tornadoes, or the recent cyclones and earthquakes in Asia, there are many people in need of restoration.

Except in the cases of terrorism and war, humans often have absolutely no control over the brokenness that occurs from disasters. What we can control is our response to broken people, homes and communities. We can either bring help and hope or not. Peter writes in the third chapter of his first letter, “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.”

As Christians, we choose to respond to disasters out of the love of Christ. We are moved to sympathy and compassion because Jesus first had sympathy and compassion on us. (RE)institute’s disaster outreach model reflects Jesus’ response...He provides a “means of hope” through his death and resurrection.

In partnership with LCMS World Relief and Human Care, funded by LCMS World Mission, (RE)institute Director Kurtis Smith trains people to share Jesus as a “means of hope” in disasters. Keep an eye out for regional disaster trainings in your area and be REady to REspond!

If you would like to receive disaster outreach training in your congregation or would like more information about the LCMS World Relief and Human Care regional disaster response trainings, go to www.REinstitute.org.

Please join over 5000 volunteers who have served through Camp Restore. There are several openings for your team during this Fall. Please pray, prepare and call Camp Restore at **1-888-248-2636** to reserve your place in this historic restoration effort.

- Kurtis Smith

Many Thanks to Our Supporters and Volunteers



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

The Songbirds are Back, But...

In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina there was an eerie silence in New Orleans. Months after the landfall of America's largest natural disaster, volunteers would comment on the unnatural feeling of being alone in a community. The initial "gutting" crews might be working in a neighborhood and be the only people in sight for blocks. You didn't even hear birds singing. This Spring marks a noticeable difference. The songbirds are back. Many of the staff of Camp Restore remarked on the sound of birds filling the air.

Many of the returning volunteers comment on how much New Orleans has improved. And it has. There are no piles of debris lining the streets. There are no deserted neighborhoods. There are more businesses open.

However, do not be fooled. The recovery effort is far from over. Recently, one of our staff members, who is a native of New Orleans, commented that it hurt to hear the volunteers say how much the city had improved. It hurt because the locals see how much devastation is left. It hurt because so many people are still struggling with insurance companies and government grant agencies. It hurt because so many family and friends have not been able to return to New Orleans.

The church of the Living Christ has come from all over America to help restore faith, home and community to survivors of Katrina. The cry of the city is "Thank you for your help...but don't forget, we're not yet done!"



Concordia University Nebraska students rebuild housing.



Volunteers at Christ Lutheran Church, Chalmette, LA.

Partner for HOPE

*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 Menteur Hwy., New Orleans, LA 70127 or go to www.lcmsrelief.org.