

**Bethel Lutheran Church, ELCA
Biloxi, Mississippi**



**Bethel Volunteer Ministry
Ministering in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina
*October/November 2008***



From The Director – Heather Westcott

We are really settling into our new new home at Camp Gospel. Seeing familiar faces of so many boomerangers makes it feel like home.

The month of October started with the dedication of the House That Bruce Built, in honor of longtime boomeranger Bruce Marson. We had an awesome turn out. 45 volunteers kicked off the 5-day blitz build. What an amazing testimony to the power of God's people when they come together with a shared mission. The first picture shows all the volunteers at the kick off on Monday morning and the second pictures was taken at the dedication just 5 days later. Amazing! What a beautiful home! Councilman Bill Stallworth read a proclamation from the Governor declaring October 3rd, 2008 as Bruce Marson Day. Bruce's wife, Charlotte, worked on the house all week and there was hardly a dry eye at the dedication when she thanked everyone on behalf of her late husband. My heart feels full when I imagine Bruce looking down on the homeowner as she celebrates the holidays in her new home.

The new clinic has presented us with some twists and challenges, but due to the dedication of so many volunteers and the amazing support and leadership from Project REHAB, the work has moved forward steadily. Our goal is to complete the building before the new year. Keep praying for smooth and steady progress.

November started off with a bang, 60 volunteers in the first week and 100 volunteers the second week. Then the week of Thanksgiving was the Project REHAB roofing blitz in Chauvin, LA (the area where hurricane Gustav came ashore, and was also flooded by hurricane Ike). We spent the week in Louisiana with our partners, Hope Force, and a total of 70 volunteers. It was great to see God's blessings extend to another community and group of people in need. Their appreciation and gratitude was so evident, especially in the evenings when local community organizations provided dinner for all of the volunteers.

As we end the month of November with Thanksgiving and prepare for the holiday season, we send our thanks to all of you who have come to rebuild Mississippi and have provided 80 people with a 'Home for the Holidays'. God bless you all.

Cajun Roofing Blitz – by Bart Tucker

The Terrebonne Parish Roofing Blitz in Chauvin, Louisiana is now a very memorable history! In partnership with our long-time friends in Biloxi, HopeForce, and newer friends Bayou Grace (in Chauvin) and Hands On New Orleans, we re-roofed or repaired 14½ homes this week. Originally we had a grander goal of 50 houses, but the local partner with the most money withdrew so we scaled back to 15 roofs. That turned out to be a blessing as 14½ kept us very busy. I'd say it was a success.

Bayou Grace, who did the case management, had actually only selected 13 homes but a couple of real world events occurred.

You might wonder why we're counting a one-half roof...A neighbor helped us a great deal on one of our homes so we agreed to strip and tarpaper his roof and he would shingle it later, hence, half a roof.

The second event was much more comical—one of the HopeForce crews starting tearing off the roof of the *wrong* address! Craig Snow amicably and easily resolved the issue by agreeing, on the spot, to re-roof the person's house.

Project REHAB had a team of 30 student volunteers from the University of Illinois, our trusty AmeriCorps team of 8, boomeranger Lee Struck from Hudson, WI and a team of 7 from Thunderbird, a Formula speedboat manufacturer in Decatur, Indiana. We were joined by many volunteers from Hands-On and Hope Force which brought us to a total of 70 volunteers.

The week after the Blitz we had a great team of 25 kids and 5 chaperones from Marist High School in Illinois. The team was lead by boomeranger Adam Wouk. We are always blessed by these eager, hard working, young Christians.

We're also very grateful to financial sponsors, Messiah United Methodist Church, Springfield, VA, and The United Church of Christ, Medfield, MA, who contributed funds for the materials for two homes.

We have some quotes from some of the homeowners which we'd like to share with you:

"I never had such kindness shown to me. There are wonderful people in the world."

"Do people really help to fix someone's roof? I can't believe it."

"Thank you, thank you! I love you and I love them so much for helping me."

"Please help me. I need all their help, please. I feel so thankful and grateful for ya'll coming to help me."

"The world is filled with wonderful people of all races coming together."

Let me assure you their need is as serious as any we've addressed. The quotes above are a great summary of why we do what we do! And, oh, I forgot to mention that different community groups prepared awesome banquets for us each evening!

During this holiday season, I am overwhelmed with thankfulness that all of you have the love and passion to make the sacrifice for others and do what you do! Thank you.

Clinic News



Our New Logo ... In a previous update we let you know that we were looking for someone to volunteer their artistic talents to design a logo for the clinic. Ministry volunteers Janet Fischer and Sharon Fischer notified their friend Natasha Medwedeff from Swampscott, Massachusetts of our plea. Natasha contacted the clinic this past summer and after consulting with us designed this wonderful logo, capturing our mission. We love it!!! Thank you, Natasha!

New Clinic ... Project REHAB volunteers continue to work daily on building our new home. We have been blessed with many volunteers through Project REHAB, bringing lots of energy and skill to ready the clinic. The walls are up ...two rooms have been made for intake triage providing privacy (no more curtains!!) ... one bathroom has become handicapped accessible ... dispensary storage is coming along ... well, you've heard the song, *It's Beginning To Look a Lot Like Christmas?*

It's Beginning To Look Like A Clinic!!!



Judy and Donna's Interior Designer friends from the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Biloxi, Jackie Branch and Sarah Irby are lending their time and talent to assist Judy in selecting clinic colors and textures. They have also assisted in coordinating with Lisa of O'Malley from King Interiors who will be ordering some of our furniture, made possible through a generous donation from Our Savior Lutheran Church in Naperville, Illinois (under the guidance of our dear friend Doug Ver Lee).

As soon as we have a date for the clinic dedication, we will post it on the web page (Our goal is still January 2009). We hope you'll all be able to come and celebrate this momentous occasion with us!

Always Need Volunteers ... We are busy at the interim clinic! We have been blessed with several volunteers who have done extensive data entry into our electronic medical records system. We have also been blessed with two local nurses and several local volunteers who routinely volunteer. (We'll introduce you to local volunteers in our next update.)



New Doctor: Joel Kavanagh, MD ... We are blessed by another local physician who is volunteering his skill on Monday and Wednesday mornings in the clinic, Dr Joel Kavanagh. Dr. Joel grew up in Ocean Springs, and is a graduate of Mercy Cross High School in Biloxi (which joined with St. John's High School in Gulfport to form St. Patrick's School just last year). He graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in Bio-Engineering in 1994, earning his MD in 1998 from University Medical Center. Dr. Joel completed a residency in internal medicine in 2001 from MUSC in Charleston, South Carolina and has been in private practice in Ocean Springs, MS until 2007 when he moved to New Zealand.

He was on contract for 1 year as a hospitalist in Gisborne and is now a locum tenens in the USA. Dr. Joel has recently become engaged to Jill Alexander of Long Beach, Mississippi. We so enjoy Joel's sweet nature and willing attitude to serve in our clinic. God bless you, Dr. Joel!

Dedication of The House That Bruce Built

You may recall the story from the last Update newsletter about the House That Bruce Built. Many of Bruce Marson's friends and his wife, Charlotte, came together in September and October to honor him by building a beautiful home in East Biloxi for a Vietnamese family whose home was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

On October 3rd we dedicated this home. On the day of the dedication, Bill Stallworth, Councilman for East Biloxi, read a proclamation from Mayor A. J. Holloway which declared October 3rd, 2008 to be Bruce Marson Day. The proclamation was a beautiful memorial to Bruce, pointing out the fact that when Bruce passed away he had just returned from a trip to Biloxi and was planning another 2-month trip in the near future. Bruce will be sadly missed by us all, but his deep commitment and many contributions will be remembered by all of us as we go about helping other Coast residents return home.



This home, this blitz, this dedication was a beautiful testimony to Bruce's efforts, achievements and commitment to the people of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Thank you to all the volunteers and churches that participated in this very special house.

If you'd like to read more and see the pictures go to the link for The House That Bruce Built on our web page, www.bethelvolunteers.org.

AmeriCorps – by Heather Westcott

Our AmeriCorps team that arrived in September was only here for 3 days. They got pulled to Texas to do disaster relief after hurricane Ike. We hoped they would return but they were greatly needed in Texas where they were working in evacuation shelters and supporting the case management of hundreds of victims.

We eagerly anticipated our next AmeriCorps team that arrived on November 4th. This team is unique because they come from the newly formed AmeriCorps campus in Iowa. The Iowa campus opened in July to support the upper Midwest area. It couldn't have come at a better time; they opened around the same time as the flooding in that area.

This is the first team from the Iowa campus to come to the Gulf Coast to do Katrina relief. We are flattered that they selected Project REHAB as their sponsor and Camp Gospel as their home.

This is an 8 member team, 5 women and 3 men led by Zar Matta. They will be working with us until December 15th. We are so blessed to have this hard working group of young adults, especially during the holiday season when the volunteer numbers decline. They are able to keep our projects moving and the homeowners happy. Thank You, AmeriCorps!

Goodbye, Dave

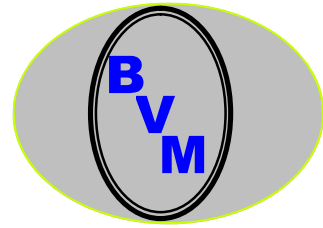


It's always very sad for us to have to say farewell to a long term volunteer and it was no exception when we said our goodbyes to Dave Bolter on November 15th. "Cute" Dave, as known to all the female volunteers, was more than just a "pretty face". He was always quick to flash a photo of his girlfriend back home! Dave is a faithful Christian and a hard worker. He proudly lives his faith and is an example for all of us to follow. His impeccable work ethic, his laughter, his energy, his sweetness, his willingness to always go the extra mile to help will be greatly missed and not be easily replaced.

Dave came here as a long-term volunteer and then took a year long AmeriCorps (state) position working with Project REHAB. Dave led the teams in our early days working in Hancock County. He was instrumental in networking with county volunteer groups and local agencies.

Wherever God leads Dave, we know that it will be for the good of others. We wish him well and will never forget the many lessons we learned from this young disciple. God bless you, Dave. We miss you already!

To Keep You Posted



THE NUMBERS FOR OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

We hosted 121 volunteers in October and 189 in November. At the end of November, there have been over 8,873 volunteers serving the people of south Mississippi through the Bethel Volunteer Ministry.

Through our work with Project REHAB, Joining Hands, and others we have 78 homes as of November. With Project REHAB and churches and volunteers from across the country we are in the process of rebuilding 5 homes in Hancock County **PLUS** our clinic!

Thank you, volunteers & sponsors!

Our clinic has had 23,994 patient care visits through the volunteer services of 240 doctors, 549 nurses, 375 other volunteers, and 179 student nurses.

Thank you, volunteers & sponsors!

Our Needs as We Continue to Minister

Volunteers are always needed! Long-term, short-term, skilled, and semi-skilled for help in the kitchen and on work crews. Any and all with the willingness to serve – we invite you!

Donations for the clinic can be sent directly to Bethel Free Health Clinic, Inc. Until the new clinic is built, the clinic will continue to use the Bethel Lutheran Church address of 2521 Pass Road, Biloxi, MS 39531.

Donations for the Ministry can be sent to the Ministry with checks payable to: Bethel Lutheran Church, but be sure to indicate in the memo, “volunteer support” or “Project REHAB”. The ministry uses the Pass Christian address posted below.

Of course, we always continue to ask for your prayers for south Mississippians, this ministry, and all sponsors and volunteers.

A full list of current medical and ministry needs are available on our web page.

Bethel Volunteer Ministry
P. O. Box 627
Pass Christian, Mississippi 39571
(228) 365-2734

www.bethelvolunteers.org
bethelkat@gmail.com
bethelkatclinic@gmail.com