



Letter From the Director

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In April I had the privilege of visiting Hyde County, North Carolina, as World Renew DRS was finishing up work in the coastline communities that were impacted by Hurricane Irene in 2011. We were hosted by our friends at the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC) and had the opportunity to reminisce and celebrate the good work that has been accomplished over the last two years. There were multiple high points during my visit, including time spent with our volunteers and renewed relationships with our UMC friends. But the most memorable highlight, by far, was visiting a hurricane survivor named Joyce whose home we had the privilege of restoring.

Joyce is a single woman who works as a bank teller and lives in an older, run-down mobile home. She is raising two of her grandkids on her own and

helping out her daughter wherever she can. At first, Joyce's circumstances reminded me of other survivors I have met in the last 11 years. Her home was badly damaged by the storm surge that Irene whipped up. Before World Renew DRS's teams arrived, Joyce and her grandkids were limited to living in one room of the house—and even then they had to watch where they walked because of the holes in the flooring.

Given the challenges she was facing, it would be easy to assume that Joyce was bitter or angry with God...or that she was mad at the culture that helped to create her difficult circumstances. But nothing could be less true of Joyce's reaction to the disasters in her life! Dear Sister Joyce is one of the most gracious, humble, and thankful people that I've ever met. Even when she and her grandkids were down to living in one room, Joyce recalled thinking that if that's what God had for her, then she would be thankful.

Closing the reconstruction site in Hyde County, North Carolina.

And she meant it! So you can imagine what a joy it was when our team showed up and basically did a floor-to-ceiling makeover. Her home is now solid and safe, with insulation, a beautiful oak-laminate floor, and fresh paint inside and out. It looks great! And all Joyce could do was cry and thank Jesus for what He'd done for her. It was my privilege to hug her and pray with her, and realize once again how much I can learn from precious saints like Joyce.

The other highlight of my trip to Hyde County was that, in many ways, this community marks the beginning and the end of my career with DRS. Shortly after I joined CRWRC in 2003, Hurricane Isabel hit that same eastern county of North Carolina. Our teams set up in Swan Quarter, and in September of that year I had the privilege of working alongside our Rapid Response team, meeting

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Ron Willett, the new director of World Renew Disaster Response Services.

World Renew Disaster Response Services' Mission is:

To show God's love and bring hope to disaster-impacted communities in North America by restoring the homes and lives of those who are most vulnerable,

To help communities build their capacity to prepare for and recover from disasters, and,

To provide opportunities for Christians to honor the Lord by using their time, talents, and financial resources in service to others.

Letter From the New Director

Dear Friends,

It has been a wonderful first few weeks being a part of World Renew DRS already. Thank you to everyone for the warm welcome! I look forward to continuing to work with the staff and especially the wonderful volunteers of DRS. What could be better than showing God's love to people who are experiencing a disaster and working with them to restore their lives, provide emotional and spiritual support, and assist their community.

I'd like to take a few moments to introduce myself and my family. My wife, Diane, and I have been living in Grandville, Michigan, for the last 10 years. We attend South Grandville Christian Reformed Church and will be celebrating our 35th wedding anniversary in August. After graduating from Calvin College, I began my work with the Boy Scouts of America, where I served in many positions across the country for 35 years. Diane is a registered nurse working as a MDS coordinator at Porter Hills Retirement Village. I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and grew up in Rochester, New York. I am an avid Boston Red Sox fan! Diane grew up in Denver, Colorado, and attended Denver Christian Schools.

We have three grown children, and two are married. Our daughter, Heather Mayle, and her husband Joshua live in Wyoming, Michigan. Heather is a Calvin College graduate and employed at Cherry Street Health Services as a research coordinator. Joshua is a Ferris State University graduate and is self-employed as a 3D computer modeling contractor.

Our son Eric is a Calvin College graduate and a paramedic with ProMed out of Muskegon, Michigan. His wife Erin just graduated from Grand Valley State University with a Doctorate in Physical Therapy. Our daughter Melissa is a Hope College graduate and is finishing her certificate as a sign language interpreter.

In our spare time, Diane and I like to camp and hike; lately we have been exploring the many Michigan State Parks. I am also an avid reader and model railroader.

I'm anticipating this next phase in my life, and I am encouraged by your wonderful work, compassionately helping families recover from disasters. You are truly showing God's love in a time of need.

May God continue to bless you!

Ron Willett
World Renew Disaster Response Services

A Shelter in the Storm



On April 27, 2014, a powerful storm system in the Midwest spawned more than 100 tornadoes as it cut a destructive path across the southern and eastern regions of the United States. By the end of the week, it left flooding, damage, and calamity in six or more states, killing 36 people and injuring many others.

More than 5,000 homes were damaged or destroyed in all and in some locations, where the most violent tornadoes were concentrated, not much was left standing. One of those places was Vilonia, Arkansas.

World Renew DRS Regional Managers Len and Carrie Blauwkamp traveled to Arkansas in early May to meet with partners to help shape the emerging response

plan and to begin on-the-ground damage assessments.

“We talked with those who survived the tornadoes, providing spiritual and emotional support wherever we could,” Len said. “We also explained the next steps that people can take to start to put their lives and homes back together.”

The Blauwkamps met Hal Sellers, an EF4 tornado survivor in Vilonia where ten people were killed. The couple says that the damage to the small town is devastating and the loss, heartbreaking. A less severe tornado struck the town just three years ago, and many homes that were rebuilt then were hit again in April. Sellers and five of his extended family members lost everything, but Len



had the opportunity to talk and pray with him (photo, above).

“There used to be a dozen homes in the neighborhood where we met Hal,” Carrie said. “Now all that is left is debris and the cement slabs where the houses stood.”

“I asked the Lord to place his hedge of protection around us, and He did,” Hal told Len. “Thank God—none of us has a scratch on us.”

“Because this is a wide-spread, high-impact disaster, recovering from it will be a long process,” says Bill Adams, the program’s director. “It will require communities like Vilonia to work together to rebuild their businesses, homes, and families. World Renew DRS will walk alongside them to serve those in need, especially those who don’t have the resources to recover on their own, and point to Jesus as our shelter in the storm.”

Well Done, Good and Faithful Servants



At a meeting in May, DRS staff and RPMs celebrated two couples who have given many years of faithful service as regional managers—Ed and Helen Mulder and Fred and Mary Visser. The Mulders have been volunteers for 12 years and the Vissers for 18. Though they are retiring their green shirts, their passion for and contributions to disaster recovery through World Renew DRS has made a true difference in many lives. Thank you, Mulders and Vissers, for everything you’ve done, and God bless you.

Across North America, DRS Volunteers Respond

DRS is always busy, with many activities going on across the United States and Canada.

Reconstruction Sites

Ocean County, New Jersey has kept Project Managers Rich and Phyl Grevnstuk very active in Ocean County, Atlantic City, and the surrounding area, restoring homes that were destroyed by Super-storm Sandy. Teams are now working two-week summer schedules, with our volunteers continuing to accomplish many projects.

Volunteers at our other year-round site in **High River, Alberta**, with Henry and Linda Visscher as project managers, continue working and finishing homes that were damaged by last year's floods. Case Managers Sarah and Steve and Construction Coordinator Mike are constantly lining up work for our volunteers in High River. This site also moved to a two-week summer schedule in June.

Project Managers Don and Gert Vos, along with a last work team, closed the **La Place, Louisiana**, site at the end of April. Many homeowners returned to their homes thanks to all of the many, many volunteer hours donated to the survivors. There have been so many blessings for homeowners as well as volunteers in the wake of Hurricane Isaac in 2012.

The same is true for **Hyde County, North Carolina**, where DRS has been working for the last two years on homes damaged by Hurricane Irene in 2011. Project Managers Rick and Bonnie Wiersma, along with the last work team, closed this site the end of April. The local long-term recovery group had a special dinner for the Green Shirts, celebrating all

the work that was accomplished in Hyde County.

We want to thank all of the volunteers who helped in closing the North Carolina and Louisiana sites. Each of the last teams did an excellent job of closing, packing, and cleaning. We also want to thank the volunteers who drove vehicles back to the home office and unloaded the trailers.



The Last Nail Ceremony with Earline Wilson in LaPlace, Louisiana.

Unmet Needs Assessments

Since January, unmet needs assessments have been completed in the following communities:

- **Weld County, Colorado:** response to the September 2013 floods, led by Denny and Judy Stoel.
- **Boulder County, Colorado:** response to the September 2013 floods, led by Tom and Marge Hoogeboom.

- **Essex County, New Jersey:** response to Super-storm Sandy, October 2012, led by Harry and Phyllis Kuipers.
- **Milford/Norwalk/Bridgeport, Connecticut:** response to Super-storm Sandy, October 2012, led by Herm and Joan Fransen.
- **Kokomo, Indiana:** response to November 2013 tornadoes, led by Denny and Judy Stoel.
- **Oklahoma City/Moore, Oklahoma:** response to May 2013 tornadoes, led by Bruce and Christine de Boer.
- **Austin, Texas:** response to the October 2013 flooding, led by Harry and Phyllis Kuipers.

Building Estimating

Lee and Sue Mys provided building-estimating services in **Galena, Alaska**, in response to spring flooding in 2013.

Ongoing

We want to thank our RPMs for their ongoing work as they continue to partner with long-term recovery groups, attend meetings, facilitate trainings, assist each other, and all of the additional responsibilities that they carry.

What is an Unmet Needs Assessment?

World Renew DRS conducts communitywide surveys to identify disaster survivors, who may otherwise fall through the cracks, and their unmet needs related to the disaster—construction and household needs as well as emotional and financial needs.

Meaningful, Memorable, Motivating!

How do group mission trip volunteers usually describe their experience with DRS and its partners?

- **Meaningful!** Often volunteers report that they had a growth-producing learning experience: as they saw God at work; as they were exposed to poverty and injustice; and as they experienced the surprising faith and strength of many disaster survivors.
- **Memorable!** Many group volunteers describe their DRS mission trip as “a highlight in their lives” and “a transforming experience.” Using their skills and learning new skills was valuable, but even more cherished were the relationships they formed with team members and homeowners—and good memories of being blessed while blessing others.
- **Motivating!** Our feedback indicates that after a mission trip with DRS, volunteers of all ages think more about how they can make an impact for Christ in their own community, showing a greater sensitivity to those who are poor and hurting. Most groups that serve with DRS come back to volunteer time and time again!

Winter and spring continue to be the busiest time of year for the group mission trip program. Many skilled adult teams labored through the winter months, while spring break presented an opportunity for dozens of college and high school groups to make a difference and gain valuable experience.

Particularly noteworthy:

- Six weeks of teams from various Reformed Church in America congregations worked along with special project managers Bruce and Laurie Hawley in Bastrop, Texas.
- Friends and associates from Orland Park Christian Reformed Church once again built an entire house, this time for a family that lost their home in a devastating wildfire.
- Churches in Classis Toronto pooled their resources and did some fantastic work in the Florida panhandle, an area impacted by a flood and wind event last July.
- In late April, students from Eastern Christian High School in New Jersey got a different kind of education for a day, helping to build a park and playground for a community devastated by Super-storm Sandy.
- Work teams have begun to head to Colorado where last fall’s tremendous flooding redirected rivers and lives in many communities. Special thanks to local volunteers who are providing leadership in that area.

Needs and opportunities continue to abound, such that any size and type of group can be used every week of the year. Don’t miss out on your own meaningful, memorable, and motivating experience!



Notes from All Over



Disaster Preparedness

The spring tornadoes that touched down in the U.S. in April are a good reminder about preparing to weather a disaster. As a family, there are steps that you can take to prepare. Build an emergency kit to take with you if you need to leave in a hurry. Make a plan so that your family members know what to do and where to go during a disaster. Most important, once you have a plan, practice it and adjust it as needed.

Churches are not immune to disasters, and church leaders have a responsibility to maintain a safe environment for their congregation in changing circumstances.

In November 2013, tornadoes tore through Illinois on a Sunday morning. After being notified that a tornado was on the ground—and that Bethany Community Church was in its path—the pastor and staff moved the congregation to predetermined shelter areas. The church executed their plan, the congregation was in a safe place to wait out the tornado, and no one was injured. (Story paraphrased from blog by Rev. David Myers, *History is a Great Teacher*, 12/17/2013. (www.fema.gov/blog/2013-12-17/history-great-teacher.)

This story is a good reminder that churches and families should have a disaster plan. Visit our website at worldrenew.net/drs to find more about creating a disaster preparedness plan.

The World Renew/RCA Summit and Partnership

On April 23 - 24, 2014, pastors, staff, and volunteers from World Renew and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) gathered in a spirit of cooperation for the sake of the Kingdom. Two days of worship, discussion, and planning set the stage to put the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between World Renew DRS and the RCA into motion. In the MOU, the RCA identified World Renew as its primary partner for compassionate ministry focused on domestic disaster response. The aim of this agreement is to expand the ministry capacity of both organizations.

Include World Renew DRS in your Estate Plan

You have demonstrated your support for World Renew's ministry through your faithful prayers, volunteer service, and monetary gifts during your lifetime. A legacy gift to World Renew DRS in your will or estate plan demonstrates your passion for World Renew's ministry even after your death. It also enables you to continue the good work that you started into the future. In addition, those who indicate a gift to World Renew in their estate plans can join World Renew's Joseph Stewards group and receive exclusive information about this ministry throughout the year.

To assist you with planning, World Renew is a member of Christian Stewardship Services (Canada) and the Barnabas Foundation (US).

These organizations can provide you with free, confidential advice about estate gifts, charitable gift annuities, gifts of stock, RRSPs, and more. For more information, visit worldrenew.net/josephstewards. Or contact Bob Laarman (US) at 616-224-0779 or Judy Eising (Canada) at 800-730-3490.

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for the first time some of our managers and partners. Those early relationships have endured to this most recent trip. Making it particularly special was the fact that Rick Wiersma was the Rapid Response team leader back in 2003, and this year, along with his wife Bonnie, served as the project manager for the Hyde County reconstruction site until it closed in April.

Relationships with volunteers, partners, and disaster survivors have made the last 11 years of my life very special. I spent 30 years in business and in the late '90s came to the conclusion that somewhere God had a more important job for me to do. DRS has been that job...and I thank Him for it! I also thank each of you for your faithfulness and your friendship. Ron Willett will be taking over the leadership role at DRS, and I know that he'll do a great job. But I'll always remember the good work that we were able to do together in the last 11 years. And perhaps we'll have the opportunity to remember together as we sit around His great banquet table one day, and glorify God for allowing us to be participants in His kingdom work...because, after all, it's always been His work that "He prepared in advance for us to do."

In His Service,

Bill Adams, Director
World Renew Disaster
Response Services

If you would like to stay in touch with Bill and/or send him a greeting, his home email address is BillAdams312@gmail.com.

In the Words of a Green Shirt



If you wrote a creative piece or poem about your time volunteering with World Renew DRS, please send it in to the office to possibly be used in the next *Spotlight*.

DRS Rap

by Sonja Wolters

We're 24 rugged DRSers
Well trained for any disasters.
We're all good-looking, and very
well fed
"Enough of that cake," Bernie has said.
We rise at five, come back at four
Work hard all day and tomorrow
some more.
It's tearing up rooms and fixing old
roofs
With Bernie taking pictures to have
some proof.
Dry walling, taping, mudding, and
painting
Smells of mold and decay may cause
fainting,
Clean-up and moving from here and
to there
Helping those who are in need of
some care.
We're ready to leave this place of
disaster
And fully know that we served our
Great Master.
May God have the glory for the
things that were done
So that many may come to know
Jesus, His Son.



A High River Acronym

by Bonnie, Dorothy and Marina

H is for hundreds of Homes in High
River hoping for hammers and
helping hands and Herculean hearts.
I is for Icicles, incredible icicles,
ice cream, and interesting and
imaginative interactions.
G is for Grill where galloping
gourmets grace our gregarious
gatherings, giving us gigantic
portions of great food resulting in
growing waistlines.
H is for Henry who herds us
hither and yon, reads us humorous
homilies, heals our hunger and hurts,
is humble, honorable and helpful,
washing the clothes that hurtle
through his holey tub.

Donate to Spring Storms 2014

World Renew not only responds to the storms you see on the news but also intervenes in lesser-known disasters. Please give generously to support these ongoing efforts to ensure that we can provide recovery services long-term.

Donate today at worldrenew.net/giveDRS or by calling 800-552-7972.

R is for Rising early before the roosters, and before the rising sun, to refresh our ravenous appetites, to read God's Word, and to regroup for reconstruction that is rewarding.

I is for IQ that brings us interesting ideas at break time; insights into illustrations as we interact with other intellectuals.

V is for Volunteers who value very vast and varied opportunities to visit and validate vulnerable victims whose valuables have violently vanished.

E is for Evenings at the café, a convenient place to convene for casual conversations, competitive cards, and caffeinated coffee with crumbly koek and crunchy cookies.

R is for Ridders who ride in their Dodge Ram, restocking resources for renovations, rousing us all with reassurances, and reel us in with rules.



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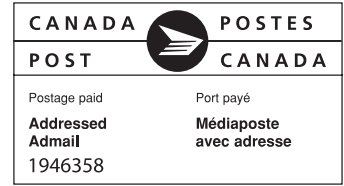
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