



Needs assessment volunteers from Colorado, Ontario, Iowa, and Michigan supported the recovery group in Albany, Georgia, by interviewing people from 241 households. The information was used to help the community recover throughout 2017.

## Inside This Issue

No Place like Home **1**

Letter from the Director **2**

A Glimpse at 2017 **3**

Where We Worked in 2017 **3**

Across North America,  
Volunteers Respond **4 - 5**

In Memory **6**

Hurricane Harvey's Impact on  
Vulnerable Texans **6 - 7**

Alphabet Soup: Neighbors  
Helping Neighbors **7**

World Renew Around the  
World **7**

Youth: Operation Ruby Slipper **8**

Churches: DRS Sunday 2018 **8**

## No Place like Home

In 2017, we have had the privilege of working alongside many individuals and families during their recovery. This photomontage introduces you to just a few of the people World Renew DRS volunteers helped last year.



Volunteers Karen and Gary Tinklenberg (left) present the Nguyens with a Last Nail Wreath in Century, Florida.



Isobel (center) in her home in San Marcos, Texas, with volunteers Willie and Sid Kloosterman.



Volunteers from classes Holland and Zeeland in Michigan stand in front of the home they built for Mr. Clay in West Virginia.



**Robert Laarman**  
**Director, World Renew**  
**DRS**

### **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 Director**

### **Dear Friends:**

Recently, a volunteer couple told me a story.

They began working on the home of a single woman whose husband abandoned her. After it was damaged by a storm, her home was in disrepair and just two of the rooms were usable. The woman slept in one room and used the other for storage. She rarely interacted with DRS volunteers during the first few days that they worked on her house. The few times they did talk, she seemed depressed and hopeless about living for so long without improvement in her situation.

After a few days of watching the volunteers make real progress on the house, the woman began to brighten a little. She even asked if there was something she could do to help. The volunteers said it would be great if she could sweep up the work area. She not only did this, but she was soon out working in the yard as well. The repairs made by the volunteers, plus her own contribution to the improvements, began a transformation in her life.

Many of you have had similar experiences. It always brings me joy to hear you tell them. The work of rebuilding homes that DRS does is important. It is not more important than the work of restoring hope and reinvigorating lives. They work together to restore wholeness and hope, materially and spiritually.

The gentle invitation extended to disaster survivors to participate in their own recovery is an important role for DRS volunteers. Continue to be aware of opportunities to invite people to join in the good work of restoring homes, communities, and individual lives. We know that God can use every interaction.

Serving Christ by serving others with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Laarman". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Bob Laarman  
 Director, World Renew DRS

**P.S. I'd like to give a special thank you to all the volunteers in leadership roles with DRS.** This ministry could not operate without you, our onsite managers, construction supervisors, group leaders, rapid response leaders, regional managers, and needs assessment managers. You bring important passions and skills to this ministry. Thank you also to those who are considering taking on leadership positions within DRS this year.

## A Glimpse at 2017



In March, volunteers from Big Rapids, Michigan, worked at the DRS-facilitated site in Manning, South Carolina.

Photo, right: Volunteers from Grandville and East Martin, Michigan, served in Denham Springs, Louisiana, in April and July.



In January 2017, (l-r) Joanne Legerwey, Judy Harrison-Lameyer, and Judy Applegate volunteered to enter data during a needs assessment in Livingston Parish, Louisiana.



Four volunteers who worked on homes in Fort McMurray, Alberta, in July 2017: (l-r) Case and Corry DeBoef, Bill Helmus, and Dennis Bertram.



Photo, left: In August, (l-r) Fred and Mary Visser, Dave and Arlene Gibbon, Gaylin and Cobie DenOuden, Ken and Nancy Schrader, and Rich and Pat Grasman formed a needs assessment team that worked in Ripley and Carter counties, Missouri.

### Where We Were in 2017

- Alberta: Fort McMurray
- British Columbia: Williams Lake
- California: Calaveras County, Lake County, Yosemite, Santa Rosa
- Florida: Century, Ferry Pass, Citrus County
- Georgia: Albany
- Louisiana: Franklinton, Lafayette, Livingston parishes, Robert, and St. Tammany parishes, Baton Rouge, Hammond, and Denham Springs
- Michigan: Detroit
- Missouri: Ripley County, Carter County, Springfield, St. Louis, and more
- Mississippi: Coahoma County, Hattiesburg, Holly Springs
- North Carolina: Tarboro, Washington, and more
- New Jersey: Union Beach
- Ontario: Constance Bay
- Puerto Rico
- Saipan
- South Carolina: Manning and other areas
- Texas: Houston, Port Arthur, Rio Grande Valley, San Marcos, Fuller Center, and more
- Washington: Okanogan County
- West Virginia: Clay County, Caldwell, Charleston, Kanawaha County, Greenbrier, and other areas



## Across North America, Volunteers Respond

### Reconstruction Sites

In Tarboro, **North Carolina**, individuals and families are finally getting their homes back in order after Hurricane Matthew hit there in October 2016. Nina (not her real name) is one of those people who stayed in her gutted out mobile home for nearly a year, and is now living back in her own home, safe and secure. Thank you Project Managers Rick and Bonnie Wiersma for your attention to all of the details that ensures that everything runs smoothly.

A new site in Hammond, **Louisiana**, opened in January 2018. Louisiana residents experienced significant flooding in both the spring and fall of 2016. Securing volunteer housing was tricky, but Project Managers Harv and Verla Klaver worked diligently and found lodging at a camp. A team of volunteers then spent two weeks getting the camp ready to receive reconstruction teams. The site opened on January 20.

Volunteers in San Marcos, **Texas**, will be working through the spring to fix flood-damaged homes. Project Managers Doug and Mary van der Meulen are making sure everything is humming along. “We continue to have a good relationship with the staff and the members of the church where we are staying,” Mary said. “The community is also happy with the work our volunteers are doing.”

Project Managers Joel and Angie Ploegstra reported that volunteers and residents in Rio Grande Valley, **Texas**, experienced some unusual snowfall in December,



**“In Tarboro, North Carolina, volunteers Phil Borgerding, Jack Buist, and Steve Hekman made a paper template of the floorplan of the house where they were working. They rolled out the linoleum sheet on the driveway, taped the template in place, trimmed the flooring, and rolled it back up (brushing off all the little stones and bits of debris as they went), and carried it into the house. They were able to fit the linoleum into the space perfectly, without any tearing, and glue it in place. They pressed out the air pockets and rolled it so it was secure to the subfloor. The piece of linoleum was 26 feet long and covered the kitchen, pantry, laundry room, and dining area – with no seams and it was trimmed right to the walls. Only baseboard will be needed, no quarter round. Now, that’s ingenuity, good planning, and excellent teamwork!”** said Wally and Metha Alberta, DRS volunteers.

but otherwise the work there is progressing well. Volunteers are enjoying their time on the site, and they continue to be dedicated to exceptional results to make sure that homeowners can return to houses that are safe and secure. The work in the Rio Grande Valley will continue through the spring.

### Facilitated Reconstruction Sites

The DRS worksite in Manning, **South Carolina**, opened for the

third time in December and will operate from January through April. Manning was hit by a flood in 2015, and church and family groups have been helping to repair homes that were water damaged. A new site in Port Arthur, **Texas**, is also open from January through April. Volunteers there will repair homes damaged by Hurricane Harvey. Thank you, group facilitators, for making it possible for many church groups and families to serve here.



**Helen walks through the front door of her newly remodeled home. “I am so thankful someone decided to help me.... I could not do it by myself,” said Helen.**

### Unmet Needs Assessments

Regional managers have been talking with many communities in Texas and Florida that were hit by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, offering needs assessment services to aid the recovery efforts. Denny and Judy Stoel led an assessment team in Brazoria County, Texas, in January. Jerry and Nancy Brouwer led a team in Immokalee County, Florida, in February. We anticipate more requests for needs assessments in the months ahead.

### Groups

From October through December 2017, churches and families organized mission trips to repair homes in Missouri, Michigan, Texas, North Carolina, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Hurricanes Harvey and Irma stirred hearts in churches and schools across the country. We are already working



**Hurricane Harvey flooded Rebecca (in red) and Ingram’s (in blue) home, but volunteers from South Harbor Church in Byron Center, Michigan, helped them clean it out and restore their household in November.**

with over 140 churches, schools, and families to help plan their 2018 mission trips.

### Rapid Response

After Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, World Renew DRS came alongside Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church in Port Arthur, **Texas**, sending volunteers to help with clean up in the community. Hurricane Harvey caused extensive damage to 80 percent of the homes in Port Arthur. The community was hit hard, but a volunteer who served there said that the residents were kind and welcoming, even in their suffering.

### Fires and Hurricanes – Regional Managers

After a hurricane or fire, DRS regional managers are on the phone, on the road, at meetings, and offering services to communities in the days, weeks, and months following the event. They build and maintain relationships with pastors, government liaisons, community

recovery groups, and more.

Regional managers give important guidance on when, where, and how World Renew responds. Thank you, regional managers, for your dedication.

Regional Managers Eric and Nancy Johnson, and Rich and Pat Grasman, have spent a number of weeks in **Florida**. Mark and Carol Martin, and Len and Carrie Blauwkamp, have been in Texas meeting with dozens of community leaders, pastors, local recovery groups, and FEMA. They are offering DRS services such as building estimating, unmet needs assessments, and reconstruction help. As communities start to set their sights on the next phase of recovery, they are also beginning to request more World Renew services.



**This photo from Gert Vos shows a home destroyed by wildfire in Santa Rosa, California.**

The fires in **California** have been devastating. Don and Gert Vos are attending meetings and offering World Renew’s help in Santa Rosa. They report that the community is organized and working diligently

continued from page 6 ➔



## In Memory

We take a moment to remember those World Renew volunteers who passed into Glory in 2017.

Charles Terpstra January 16  
 Richard Leep January 22  
 Agnes Lindeman February 24  
 Steve Van Antwerpen March 22  
 Ken De Rooy April 1  
 Connie Rodenhouse April 6  
 Dirk VanderVorst May 4  
 Leon Radder May 16  
 Jan Van Stedum June 11  
 Irene Smeenk June 15  
 Donald Bouwer June 20  
 Ken Geurink July 14  
 Clarence Doornbos July 15  
 Ken Vander Heide July 30  
 Len Bracko August 19  
 Sarah Volkers August 24  
 Gerrit Vander Ploeg September 10  
 Harriet Meiste October 18  
 Grace Talsma October 23  
 Lois Byker October 30  
 Melvin Van Farowe October 30  
 Joan Treffers November 9  
 Roland Buteyn November 17  
 Maxine Haak December 17  
 Connie Rodenhouse April 6

If you know of a DRS volunteer who passed away in 2017 who is not on this list, please let us know and he/she will be included in the June edition of Spotlight. Thank you.

◉ continued from page 5

at recovery. The Vos's continued to monitor the fires in southern California in January.

Cariboo Community Church in Williams Lake, **British Columbia**, requested training in trauma healing after wildfires raced through the community last summer. World Renew provided support for three church members to attend a Trauma Healing Training workshop in Ottawa, Ontario, in November. Mike Hoyer, the World Renew area representative, continues to monitor wildfire response efforts there.

World Renew representatives have made two trips to **Puerto Rico** to make plans for home repairs. "We

were hoping to send volunteers to help with home repairs to Puerto Rico before Christmas," said Bob Laarman. "However, we were asked to wait until after the new year because the affected communities were not ready to host volunteers from the U.S. mainland." Len and Carrie Blauwkamp's trip to Puerto Rico in January finalized the details to send volunteers in February.

"God's love becomes tangible for those who are helped as well as to those who are helping," reflected George Vink. He and his wife Shirley volunteered at the Tarboro, North Carolina, site in October 2017.

## Hurricane Harvey's Impact on Vulnerable Texans

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Episcopal Health Foundation, which collaborated on a representative survey<sup>1</sup> following Hurricane Harvey, adults living in 24 counties along the Texas coast were particularly hard-hit by the storm.

Here are a few key findings from the survey.

- Two-thirds of residents of the 24 hard-hit Texas counties surveyed report being affected by Hurricane Harvey.
- One in nine people remained displaced from their homes at the time of the survey (October 2017).
- One in six affected residents said someone in their household had a health condition that is new or worse because of Harvey, and nearly two in ten felt that their own mental health was worse because of the storm.
- About a quarter of those whose homes were damaged said that they had flood insurance. Four in ten said that they expect no financial losses to be covered by insurance or other assistance.
- Local, county, and state governments received high marks from residents for their response to Hurricane Harvey so far.

<sup>1</sup> Find the entire report at <http://files.kff.org/attachment/Report-An-Early-Assessment-of-Hurricane-Harveys-Impact-on-Vulnerable-Texans-in-the-Gulf>.



## ALPHABET SOUP: Neighbors Helping Neighbors

by Ben Dykstra, World Renew DRS volunteer

WRDRS. ADRN. CTMT. HIH. These are the initials of the groups that came together on Saturday, December 2, 2017, to help residents in Port Arthur, Texas, muck out their homes and treat them for mold. These “alphabet soup” groups are World Renew Disaster Response Services, Austin Disaster Relief Network, Christ Together Mobilization Team (from Hillcrest Country Bible Church in Austin), and Help, I’m Hurting (from Port Arthur, Texas).

The 1-day event in December was preceded by a training session at New Light Baptist Church in Port Arthur. Twenty local residents and 22 volunteers from World Renew attended the training. Stan Keen, the volunteer leader from World Renew’s Rapid Response Team, explained the dangers of mold in homes and described the process for gutting homes to prepare them for treating mold.

Then, on Saturday, December 2, thirty-five volunteers gathered at Port Arthur’s Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church. After opening remarks and prayer by Reverend Randy Vaughn, the volunteers formed teams and headed out into the community. Each team was comprised of a representative from each of the groups that were present.

“At the end of the day, the residents we helped knew that their homes were safer and healthier,” said one volunteer. “But many homes also looked worse after we treated them because we removed the drywall and flooring. We assured the homeowners that this was just the first step in restoring their homes. It ensured that the upcoming repairs would not



**Stan Keen, a volunteer leader for a World Renew Rapid Response Team, explains the dangers of mold and the process for gutting a home to treat it properly.**

just cover up mold issues that would result in long-term health problems.”

During the Saturday event, the volunteers directly helped eight homeowners with mold remediation, but the effects of their efforts reach far beyond those families. Local volunteers were trained, gained valuable experience, can share their knowledge, and will continue to contribute to the ongoing local recovery efforts in the community.

Please pray for the people of Port Arthur. Eleven thousand homes, or 84 percent of residential structures, suffered storm damage during Hurricane Harvey. The results are long term, and it will take years for the community to recover. The people of Port Arthur are determined and resilient: they are working together, and they have a strong faith in God’s provision for them as they move forward a day at a time.

### World Renew Around the World

People who are part of World Renew’s Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) aim to better manage, save, and invest their income. VSLA members said, “I’ve been able to start a business,” and, “Before, if I had money, I would spend it; now I save it.” We thank God for blessing impoverished communities in southern Africa and elsewhere with financial resources and education. Learn more at [worldrenew.net/southernafrica](http://worldrenew.net/southernafrica).

## YOUTH: Ruby Slipper Campaign



Have your young people been looking for a fun, meaningful way to help people affected by the hurricanes last fall?

Operation Ruby Slipper is an opportunity for teens and young adults to take action to help hurricane survivors get home. **The goal of the campaign, which runs through March 9, 2018, is to raise \$100,000 through activities by groups of students, youth, and young adults.** The funds raised will help up to 25 hurricane-affected families rebuild their homes.

In addition, a generous World Renew donor has provided a challenge. All donations up to the \$100,000 goal will be matched, dollar for dollar. **Your group's donation will be doubled!**

Find resources, ideas, and register a team at [myworldrenew.net/rubyslipper](http://myworldrenew.net/rubyslipper) or contact Kellie Scholma at 800-848-5818 or [kscholma@worldrenew.net](mailto:kscholma@worldrenew.net).

## Does Your Church Know About World Renew DRS?



A new video and printed materials are being created for your church for 2018. World Renew is a donation-based organization, so church offerings are vital to ensuring that DRS can continue to serve people in disaster-affected communities across the U.S. and Canada.

Talk to your church leaders about scheduling a DRS Sunday offering. It is an opportunity to share about the ministry of DRS in your own congregation and extend an invitation to partner with DRS with gifts of time, treasure, and talent.

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