



Destruction caused by Hurricane Irene is still evident in the Florida Keys.

The Ripple Effect . . . and Waiting **Ten months after U.S. Hurricanes**

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Between August and September 2017, three major hurricanes hit the U.S. Through World Renew DRS unmet needs assessments in Florida and Texas, it is evident that the hurricanes had a ripple effect that caused difficult situations for many people.

Hurricane Irma stormed through the Florida Keys in September 2018. In April, a DRS needs assessment team interviewed more than 500 individuals and families. Here is how the hurricane created a ripple effect for Iris, Daryl (not their real names), and a young family.

Iris worked cleaning homes in the Florida Keys before Hurricane Irma struck. The storm damaged or destroyed the homes where she worked, so she was out of a job. At the time of our needs assessment, Iris could no longer pay her rent, and she

was living in a truck with her disabled brother.

One young family from the Keys was doing fine until Irma destroyed their home and one of their vehicles. The family became homeless and was living in their remaining car. Finally, five months later, they were able to move their family of four into a studio apartment. “We still feel like we are drowning financially, but at least we have a roof over our heads,” they said.

Daryl lives on a sailboat, like many other people in the Keys. He rode out Irma on the water by tying his boat to some mangrove trees. “It was terrifying,” he said. His boat was badly damaged and some of the safety features were destroyed. He has nowhere to go, and he does not have the cash to fix his boat. To cope with

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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,

The completed feedback forms that volunteers return to the office after their assignments are passed from staff mailbox to mailbox so that all of us in Byron Center have a chance to read them. This is one good way for us to have an appreciation for what goes on at each site and with different groups, even when we cannot be there. Thank you for faithfully filling these forms out and sending them in.

Sometimes we read about a problem or issue that arises. Often, the same report tells how the volunteers on the site resolved it. It is gratifying to hear about your good leadership in action and handling situations on the spot.

It is rewarding to read about the connections that volunteers make with the homeowners they work with. Sometimes, language differences are a challenge, but our volunteers respond with "my 10-word Spanish vocabulary" or a smart phone translation app. Our reports often indicate that smiles and hand gestures provide the majority of the communication. I wish I were there more often to watch this—and add my own smile as I watch and learn.

One question on the feedback form asks how we are able to demonstrate a Christian witness in our work. The most common responses are through diligent and joyful work, through prayer, and by being ready with a thoughtful response when asked why we do what we do. Sometimes these all result in shared meals with disaster survivors and local recovery organization staff. These are wonderful expressions of Christian witness. They inspire sparks of joy in the office when we read them!

The ministry of DRS starts with well-organized and diligently implemented work. When this work is wrapped up in smiles, gestures, joyful work, listening, shared meals, fumbling language, and prayer, a vibrant witness flourishes.

Thank you again for sending in your feedback forms. Keep going strong in problem solving, diligent work, and joyful witness. God is glorified through this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Laarman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Bob Laarman
 Director, World Renew DRS

Miss Mae Returns Home after Harvey

The Presbyterian Church of Fredericksburg, Ohio, sent a group of volunteers to work on the DRS-facilitated site in Port Arthur, Texas, repairing homes damaged by Hurricane Harvey. Pastor Jack McClelland shared his reflections about working for Miss Mae (not her real name).

On the night Hurricane Harvey hit, Miss Mae went to bed while it was raining. When she sat up to answer a phone call from her son in the middle of the night, her feet landed in water next to the bed.

She grabbed a few things and opened the front door to leave, and a wall of water hit in her chest, along with snakes that were trying to get out of the flood. The only place to get away from the water and the snakes was on top of the clothes dryer, but it was shorting and sparking.

Miss Mae's family and friends soon arrived in two modified pick-up trucks to rescue her and some of her neighbors. With one truck flooding out during the 2-mile drive to safety, her daughter, son-in-law, and 7-year-old grandson had to wade to safety in the dark. A friend carried the boy on his shoulders, and at one point Miss Mae's son-in-law told the others to leave him because he could not go on – the port for his kidney dialysis procedures was submerged in the filthy floodwater. The rest of the group refused to go, and they all eventually made it to safety.

She and 13 other family members moved out of their flooded homes and stayed with Miss Mae's daughter. The



Two volunteers painting cupboards.

home was a 40-minute drive from Miss Mae's house, and the family had one car to get appointments, work, school, and her son-in-law's dialysis appointments.

When DRS volunteers met her, Miss Mae had not lived at home since Hurricane Harvey hit. Other groups worked on her home before we arrived, but we had the privilege of completing the repairs and participating in a "blessing ceremony" led by Henrietta, the World Renew site facilitator in Port Arthur. Miss Mae received a blanket to bless her new home during the ceremony, and she started to move back into her completed house the next day.

Her praises to the Lord and thanks to us, all through tears, were expressions of joy that I will never forget.

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his losses, Daryl is fixing a small diesel motor to use to take the boat elsewhere to find work. He is 80 years old.

Hurricane Harvey also left many Texans struggling. DRS volunteers Yogi Haasdyk led a needs assessment team in Galveston, Texas, in May 2018.

"Ten months after Harvey hit Galveston, we found many people living in moldy homes," the couple said. "Some of the houses had been gutted, but the homeowners had nowhere else to go, so they were still living in the bare shell of their houses. Others, were living in hotels "temporarily," are still trying to get back home. The housing needs are critical, and World Renew helped identify residents who were in need. With the information DRS gathered, the local recovery group can address what needs to be done.

"Most people appreciate being offered emotional and spiritual support and prayer. We shed many tears together. (Our team and the people we talked with in Galveston.) We cannot promise people anything concrete in terms of rebuilding, but the local recovery group is looking forward to supporting their neighbors now that they can identify and prioritize homeowners who have needs."

Please pray for the local recovery efforts in the communities affected by Harvey and Irma. After a World Renew Unmet Needs Assessment, recovery workers learn of dozens, often hundreds, of households that are in need of support or resources. Pray that the resources needed will be available to support those who need them.

Across North America, DRS Volunteers Respond

Long-Term Reconstruction Sites

Volunteers completed work in **San Marcos, Texas**, in April. Thanks to many people who gave many hours, the homes of individuals and families were put back together. We are thankful to the church that housed us and to the long-term recovery group that welcomed us to their community. (See the story of the Last Nail Ceremony at *Margarita's house* on page 6.)



A Last Nail Celebration in Hammond, Louisiana, signifies the completion of a home for a couple who experienced severe flooding in 2016.

The site in **Rio Grande Valley, Texas**, is closed for the summer but will reopen for a few teams in the fall. Roof repairs have been a major part of the work in Rio Grande Valley. Many families no longer have to live with leaky roofs, damaged ceilings, or the deterioration caused by unaddressed structural issues.



Behind the scenes, on-site managers and construction supervisors fill important roles in organizing and planning site operations. Cooks always make sure everyone is well fed. Cal (pictured top) and Ellie Scholma filled the role of on-site manager in San Marcos, Texas, in February, and Alice Proper sliced up a healthy side of fruit for one of the team meals.

In response to Hurricane Matthew in October 2016, DRS is working in **Tarboro, North Carolina**. Our teams are staying in a community building and sharing the space with volunteers

from other organizations. Several teams are enjoying living side-by-side with volunteers from a Muslim organization whose volunteers also joined the DRS team for a Last Nail Ceremony in February.

Volunteers working in **Hammond, Louisiana**, had very positive experiences there. They are staying at a camp, living in cabins, mobile homes, and a house. Darryl Ready is the construction coordinator for the long-term recovery group in Hammond. He was previously the construction coordinator for World Renew DRS in San Marcos, Texas, until the organization he works for transferred him to Louisiana. We are happy to be working with Darryl again.

Short-Term Reconstruction Sites

A second team spent two weeks repairing homes in **Puerto Rico** with our partner ADRA. Regional Managers Len and Carrie Blauwkamp visited the island several times to work on plans for long-term reconstruction, recovery, and other possible ways that DRS can assist communities there. Plans are underway to send the next team in the summer.

Unmet Needs Assessments

Regional managers are working with many communities that were affected by hurricanes to determine if an unmet needs assessment would be helpful to them. The following assessments have recently taken place.

Location	Disaster	Project Managers	Dates
San Marcos, Texas	Flooding 2015	Doug & Mary Van Der Muelen	Sept. 2016 –Apr. 2018
Rio Grande Valley, Texas	Flooding 2015	Joel & Angie Ploegstra	Sept. 2016 – Dec. 2018
Tarboro, N. Carolina	Hurricane Matthew 2016	Rick & Bonnie Wiersma	Sept. 2017, ongoing
Hammond, Louisiana	Flooding 2016	Harv & Verla Klaver	Jan. 2018, ongoing
New for Fall: Texas	Hurricanes Harvey	Doug & Pat Guikema	TBD



DRS volunteers work with local volunteers in Puerto Rico to build a house from the ground up.

Florida

- Upper Keys, led by Harry and Phyllis Kuipers in April
- Lower Keys, led by Rich and Pat Grasman in April
- Jacksonville, led by Bruce and Christine DeBoer in May

Texas

- Victoria County, led by Walt and Carol Ackerman in April
- Wharton County, led Herm and Joan Fransen in April
- Galveston County, led by Yogi Haasyk in May

We are receiving more requests for our assessment services, and we are setting up plans to complete these in the late summer and fall of 2018.

Building Estimating

Peter and Ann Gootjes completed the estimating requested in **Coastal Bend, Texas**. Dale and Joyce Rhodea completed estimating in **Dunham County, Florida**, and Lee and Sue Mys compiled estimates in **Sumter County, Florida**.

Facilitated Sites

The work in **Manning, South Carolina**, wrapped up in April after three sessions of repairing homes damaged by 2015 flooding.



Westwood CRC organized 70 volunteers to serve in West Virginia, repairing homes damaged by flooding in 2015.



Gary and Pat Timmermans, Christine DeBoer, and Elly and John De Vries canvas a neighborhood in Jacksonville, Florida, to find residents who still need help to recover from Hurricane Irma.

Thanks to local efforts and the hard work of many of our volunteers and staff, a site in **Port Arthur, Texas**, opened just four and a half months after Hurricane Harvey.

We would like to thank our facilitators, who have been incredibly flexible and generous with their time, for making these sites operational. Whether you gave two or six weeks, please know that these sites are not possible without your help.

Group Mission Trips

Many churches, families, schools, and businesses wanted to volunteer in 2018 after three hurricanes hit the U.S. in the fall. Both new groups and groups who volunteer with DRS every year have eagerly put their boots on the ground to help with hurricane response as well as disaster recovery projects in other parts of the US. One hundred and forty groups served, or are scheduled to serve, in the eight months between January and August this year. This is an increase of 50 groups over the entire year of 2017!

Wildfires in California and British Columbia

Responding to wildfires is a unique activity in disaster volunteering. World Renew continues to connect with **California** communities affected by fires in 2017 to determine where and how we can respond.

In **British Columbia**, DRS is exploring response opportunities with our Canadian partners, Samaritan's Purse and Mennonite Disaster Services.



In Memory Of

The following friends passed into Glory in 2017 but were not mentioned in the February 2018 *Spotlight*.

Helene Roskamp (Michigan)

August 2017

Etty DeVries (Ontario)

December 2017

Jerene Schrottenboer

(Michigan) June 2017

Robert Damsma (Ontario)

October 2017

If you know of a World Renew DRS volunteer who passed away in 2017 that is not on these lists, please let us know so we can recognize them in an upcoming issue of the *Spotlight*.

World Renew Around the World



Since 2017, more than 665,000 Rohingya refugees fled over the border from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Most shelters in the Jamtoli refugee camp are built from bamboo and plastic wrap, raising health and safety concerns as the monsoon season approaches this fall. In collaboration with our partner agencies, World Renew is providing food, cooking stoves, equipped kitchens, and training in nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation within the camp. Ask God to protect and care for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

God Helped Margarita

Ann Evans



Margarita lives in San Marcos, Texas. Her home was damaged by flooding in 2015. Her sister, a pastor, encouraged Margarita to be patient and help would come—angels would help her!

Margarita loves the Lord and knows that He is an important force for good in her life. The words, “My God helped,” and “My God is with me,” were frequently on her lips.

Margarita and her family lived in their home after the flood. There was no other place to go. They just closed the doors to the bathroom and a bedroom that were the most damaged and moved to another area of the home . . . and waited. The roof leaked when it rained, and eventually the ceiling in the bathroom fell into the tub. Margarita and her family waited for help because they were not able to fix their home by themselves.

Our team, and other World Renew teams before us, did considerable work on Margarita’s house in early 2018. We replaced the floor joists and floorboards: they were rotten and had termite damage. We also painted her home bright colors—yellow, blue, and pink—her favorites.

Margarita greeted us warmly each day, with a big hug and a wonderful smile. It meant a great deal to Margarita that

Margarita, holding a flag, with World Renew DRS Volunteer Ann Evans shortly after Margarita became a U.S. citizen.

we were there for her and her family. She was not able to do the work on her home, but she could make food, and that she did! When she heard us say, “Break time,” she quickly called out, “Break!” She enjoyed spending our break times with us as much as we enjoyed taking them with her.

It was a wonderful experience to work on Margarita’s house when she returned from receiving her U.S. citizenship papers. After two failed attempts, she dressed in her Sunday best and went for a third try. Her sister took her to the courthouse, and a few hours later, she came back and told us she did it!

As our time at her house ended, Margarita said, “I don’t like last days,” but she looked forward to the arrival of the next World Renew DRS work team. With a twinkle in her eye and a big smile, she said she would like to come to Canada to visit us.

Note: World Renew DRS operated a long-term reconstruction site in San Marcos, Texas, from September 2016 through April 2018 and finished Margarita’s home in spring 2018.



Art Opperwall is Retiring!

Church groups, facilitated sites, whole-house blitz builds, vehicles, tools, and safety. Art Opperwall has been a big part of all of these areas and more for twelve-plus years. His contributions can be seen throughout DRS. Recently, Art let us know that he is transitioning into retirement. Like so many DRS volunteers, he is not planning a “reclining-chair retirement.” Art is looking forward to using his skills and experience to continue serving in new endeavors. Art’s heart for DRS and his passion for this ministry will be missed. Please find an opportunity to join the DRS staff in thanking Art for his years of service and wishing him the best as God leads him into the next stage of serving Him.

African American and Hispanic Group Serves in Historic North Carolina Town.

A DRS volunteer team comprised of people of color worked in the small town of Princeville, North Carolina, the week of May 5, 2018.

Princeville had special meaning to this team because of its rich African American history: it is the oldest town incorporated by African Americans in the United States.

Princeville was settled by freed slaves after the Civil War and incorporated in 1885. Now, the people of Princeville are recovering from Hurricane Matthew in 2016, and the residents still have a tremendous need for volunteer reconstruction help. The town is located on the opposite side of the Tar River from Tarboro, and it floods when there are severe storms or hurricanes along the coast.

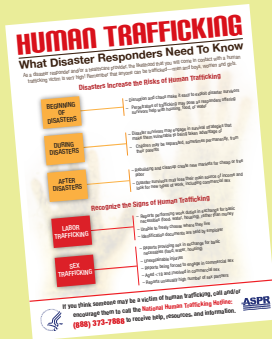
One resident said that her home was flooded, gutted, and reconstructed in 1999 and 2016. Several of her neighbors have just walked away from their homes, and some are having reconstruction work completed with the hope that their home can be raised five feet above the ground to avoid future flooding. Other homeowners are waiting for a buy-out from the government so they can rebuild on higher ground. The remaining residents are “riding it out,” and praying that future storms will miss them.

The Princeville volunteer team members were all from Grand Rapids, Michigan, and organized by DRS staffperson, Pauline Mitchell, who served with the group along with her husband and sons.



Standing (l-r): Larry Ervin, Chris Mitchell, Frank Villarreal, Danny Smith, Bryant Mitchell, Mike Essex
Seated (l-r): Janet Villarreal, Nick Mitchell, Teresa Jones, Allean Roberts, Pauline Mitchell

Human Trafficking in Disasters



At the DRS Spring Leadership Meeting, staff and volunteers learned about the increase in human trafficking after a disaster. Jenny Hwang, from Wheaton College’s Humanitarian Disaster Institute, led the session.

If you are out on an assignment with World Renew DRS and witness a suspected trafficking incident, call the National Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888 to report the situation. Also, refer the situation to the local recovery group with whom you are working.

To learn to recognize the warning signs of trafficking and learn who to call if you suspect that you have encountered a trafficking situation, visit www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign and www.acf.hhs.gov/otip to learn more.

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