



Jack Buist and Ken Strydhorst worked on Anna's (name changed) kitchen, shown here before and during renovation, in Rio Grande Valley, Texas.

## Lord, I Like Your Plan Better

*What do we need, Lord, to finish out this last week?*

*You've been providing reconstruction materials in wonderful ways for the last two weeks, and I know You will again this week. Funding is so limited to purchase materials, but You have shown up in so many creative ways to provide what we needed.*

*It's exciting to pick up materials from Lowe's to finish a kitchen we are working on. And look! Right here at the entrance are two 5-gallon buckets of exterior paint for only \$30. We need exterior paint. Thank you, Lord! We can afford \$30. I have a plan for this, Lord. Lowe's will save it, and we will come back to pick it up.*

*Okay, I'm back to pick up the paint. . . . It's gone? Lord, I thought we had a plan for that paint! The store manager said they can't save mistinted paint. I wish he had told*

*me — I would have bought it right away. I had a plan for it.*

*Now what do I do, Lord? It was such a good deal. I am devastated that my plan is not working.*

*What's that, Lord? YOU have a plan?*

*Lord, I like Your plan better. I can hardly wrap my mind around it. Is this right, Lord? Can I really be walking out with 17 gallons of various paint we needed, valued at \$344, for only \$15? Did I really just pay only \$15 for all this paint for these families? This will paint more than one house!*

*Yes, Lord, I like your plan better. Much better.*

*Thank you.*

*My husband Rich and I are DRS volunteers who, with many others, have been working hard in Rio*

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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

### Greetings!

One of the favorite parts of my job is visiting DRS sites where our volunteers are working. So far, that means visits to two sites in Texas and one each in Florida and South Carolina. I have also been to a future site and previous work areas in North Carolina. Most recently, I made a trip to see a whole-house build in West Virginia and construction work on a bridge to a home that was built in part with funds from DRS.

In each of those places, I hear consistent messages:

- The volunteers from DRS are quality people and are well respected.
- Homeowners are treated with kindness.
- The work is done right.
- The whole operation is well organized.

This quality reputation is a tribute to the many volunteers and staff who have dedicated themselves to serving disaster survivors over the years. Thank you for your dedication and good work!

The volunteer leadership onsite is also noted by many. These good people have disaster experience and people experience that contribute greatly to a smooth operation. Last year was a very busy year, and many leaders served multiple times. Thank You for your service to help make our sites successful!

The large number of storms and the good reputation of DRS means that there are more requests for help than we can respond to this year. Please continue to recruit your friends and others to join the ranks of our volunteers. Be specifically on the lookout for people who may be able to serve as On Site Managers or Construction Supervisors. Good folks to fill these roles can be in short supply.

Thanks again for serving our Lord by serving with disaster survivors.

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

Bob Laarman  
 Director, World Renew DRS

📍 continued from page 1

Grande Valley, Texas. It is pretty much the southernmost point in Texas.

The area was hard hit by flooding in 2015. The community is lower income, and the amount of money the local recovery group has available to purchase materials for each home that we are fixing is very limited.

This means that we are getting more creative than ever to finish homes for families — and we are seeing the Lord's provision in wonderful ways.

We experience small miracles often while volunteering with World Renew DRS. Everywhere we go, we see the Lord at work. It is totally His plan. Nothing we do is of ourselves: we act out of His leading. I'm always amazed, but we should expect it, shouldn't we?

## The Year in Review: Fort McMurray Fires

**May 2016:** The entire population of Fort McMurray was forced to evacuate as wildfires consumed homes, businesses, and wildlife. Residents drove through walls of fire along the roads as they fled the area. World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) asked for prayer and financial support as the fires blazed. DRS regional managers for Alberta, Henry and Linda Visscher, began monitoring the situation and making plans to connect with the Fort McMurray community and churches.

**June to September 2016:** Due to the toxic nature of the fire's remains, professionals trained in handling hazardous materials provided clean-up services in Fort McMurray. Residents began returning to their homes in June to wrestle with what was left of their home and possessions. DRS staff and volunteers visited Alberta to meet with evacuees and strengthen relationships with local churches and responders. The provincial government asked World Renew DRS to begin to explore the possibility of completing an unmet needs assessment in the area. DRS connected with representatives of Reformed (RCA) and Christian Reformed (CRC) churches in northern Alberta. They then met with evacuees from Fort McMurray, including Evergreen Community CRC, to discuss their fire-related needs.

**November 2016:** World Renew DRS volunteers conducted an unmet needs assessment for NSUUR, the local recovery group supporting Fort McMurray's underinsured and uninsured fire survivors. DRS volunteers met with and called individuals and families to connect them with resources in Fort McMurray that would meet their needs.

**January to May 2017:** Throughout the winter, DRS staff and regional managers worked out the details of necessary home reconstruction projects in partnership with NSUUR and Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). Weekly conference calls with local and provincial partners kept the various partners in close coordination as we planned the response efforts.

**June to August 2017:** DRS volunteers are completing requested home reconstruction services in partnership with MDS.

## Six Months After Hurricane Matthew



**Lucretha, a Hurricane Matthew survivor, works with DRS volunteer Mary Hollebeek to fix her flooded home.**

Hurricane Matthew made landfall in the U.S. in early October 2016. The flooding was so severe that some communities in the Carolinas were still under water two weeks later.

In October and November, DRS volunteers helped clean out flooded homes in Windsor and Tarboro, North Carolina, ensuring that the homes were sanitized and ready for reconstruction.

Over the next several months, DRS Regional Managers Rick and Bonnie Wiersma, as well as Eric and Nancy Johnson, contacted and met with communities affected by the hurricane. Regional managers like these two couples work diligently with communities in their regions to offer DRS services after a disaster has occurred.

From January to April 2017, volunteers from the U.S. and Canada worked in South Carolina at a DRS short-term reconstruction site. They helped individuals and families whose homes were damaged by flooding in 2015, but were also affected by Hurricane Matthew's wind and rain. DRS staff and volunteers were grateful to partner with the Tri-County Long Term Recovery Group in Manning, South Carolina, as they hosted and helped coordinate reconstruction efforts there.

As of May 2017, World Renew DRS plans are to open a long-term reconstruction site in Tarboro, North Carolina, in September 2017.

In both Fort McMurray and Hurricane Matthew response, a DRS reconstruction site is opening very near the one-year anniversary of these disasters. This timeframe is typically needed for a community to organize a response after a disaster. If you are interested in learning more about the recovery process leading up to home reconstruction, we at World Renew DRS are happy to talk with you. Call 800-848-5818 to find out more.

## Across North America, DRS Volunteers Respond



### Long-Term Reconstruction Sites

In April, the DRS site in **San Marcos, Texas**, closed for the summer and will reopen in the fall. Thank you to Project Managers Doug and Mary Van Der Meulen for your hard work in San Marcos. The 2015 flood severely affected a mobile home community in the area, but local funds were not available to purchase materials to make the repairs. DRS committed to providing volunteer labor to help the families who were in the most need and then sought out special funding for materials for their mobile homes. We praise the Lord that our request was fully funded! DRS volunteers will be able to repair the homes of 23 individuals and families in San Marcos.

It has also been exciting to see how the Lord is providing at our site in **Rio Grande Valley, Texas**. (See article on page 1.) Project Managers

Joel and Angie Ploegstra did a great job of making sure that this site ran well. It has closed for the summer, but will reopen this fall. There is much work yet to be done in Rio Grande Valley.

Thank you to Project Managers Doug and Pat Guikema for ensuring the **Century, Florida**, site ran smoothly. Greg Strader, CEO for the long-term recovery group, BRACE, said, "BRACE and the partners of the Escambia Long Term Recovery Group will forever be grateful for the ongoing partnership of World Renew. The work of your volunteers is restoring hope and homes to those who have little of either. We are very grateful for your trust and partnership. On behalf of all of our local partners, I want to express our thanks to World Renew for your partnership in restoring hope and homes. We know that your work is making an eternal difference."

### Volunteers and staff at the Rio Grande Valley, Texas, site on March 1, 2017.

It rained a lot in **Calaveras, California**, this spring, and that caused some delays on our worksite there. Despite the showers, On Site Managers Dave and Markay Lyon said that the sun "really does shine in California most of the time!" DRS volunteers worked through the weather as much as possible. Project Managers Don and Gert Vos worked closely with the Calaveras recovery group, and they agreed to close this site permanently in April 2017.

Working in **Saipan** has been rewarding and challenging. DRS's partnership with CARE, the recovery group in Saipan, and Mennonite Disaster Services (MDS) went well. Together, we helped repair 40 homes. The incredible heat and humidity added a level of difficulty but, in true

Aerial shot by volunteer Titus Davis.



Green Shirt fashion, our volunteers worked through the sweat with joy. Thank you to everyone who made the trip across the globe to serve on the island and to Project Managers Don and Gert Vos.

Thank you, everyone, for your patience and prayers during the many hours of work and meetings that have taken place since the wildfire last year. We are happy to announce the first team of reconstruction volunteers in **Fort McMurray, Alberta**, will start in June 2017.

### Unmet Needs Assessments

Mark and Carol Martin led a team of 17 volunteers to **Albany, Georgia**, in April 2017. Volunteers from Iowa, Michigan, Ontario, and Colorado met with residents who were affected by an EF-3 tornado in January 2017.

### Building Estimating

Lee and Sue Mys provided construction cost estimates for 30 flood-damaged homes to the recovery organization in **Lafayette, Louisiana**.

### Group Mission Trips

During the winter and spring seasons, the groups program placed one-week teams from around the United States and Canada with partners in ten states from **California to New Jersey**.

Each group volunteer completes a *Report & Reflect* form at the end of their work week, reviewing what they did, what they learned, and how their experiences changed them. It's clear from the responses on this form that God works in amazing ways when people step out in faith to serve those in need.

In **Caldwell, West Virginia**, a community hit last June by a "thousand-year flood," two new homes were built from "foundation to finish" through well-coordinated efforts from several church congregations. Orland Park CRC and other Chicago-area churches spent five weeks building a home for an elderly woman. Volunteers from churches in Holland and Zeeland, Michigan, built a new home for a disabled veteran in five weeks' time. Members of the Caldwell community



**Top left: Mr. Costa's house in Calaveras, California.**



**Top right: DRS volunteers (l-r), Stan Keen, Heine Vander Veen, and Bev and Gary Van Noort with a couple from Saipan who lost their home to a typhoon in 2015.**

**Bottom right: Volunteers from Hope Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and congregations in northwest Iowa worked together in South Carolina. Pictured are Allen Smeins (l) from Iowa and Tommy Kim (r) from Michigan.**

said that these new homes have brought new hope to their area.

### Short-Term Reconstruction Sites

From mid-January to early April, a short-term reconstruction site in **Manning, South Carolina**, brought one-week groups and longer-term leadership together to serve a very low-income community affected by flooding in 2015 and Hurricane Matthew in October 2016.

## Gratitude Expressed



“We wanted to share what the volunteers found in Mr. Costa’s home. It meant a lot to all of us,” said Wally and Metha Alberda while on the reconstruction site in Calaveras County, California.



“There are no words to express our gratitude for the hard work you did to give us a new home. If you ever wonder if the hard work your teams do changes people’s lives, I can tell you that it does. We have never felt so blessed! Thank you!” said Mary. Volunteers from Orland Park, Ill., (pictured) built her mother a new home.



“The people who worked on my house not only repaired it, they took the time to talk with me and encourage me,” said R.C. from Florida. R.C. now goes to church with her brother. Her pastor attended the last nail ceremony at R.C.’s home in April.



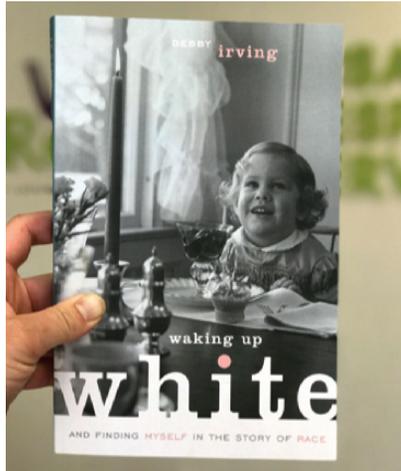
Mary Rodriguez is grateful for the work World Renew DRS has done on her home in Texas.

## Onsite Managers and Construction Supervisors — Thank You

This past volunteer “season,” September through May, has been a busy one. Thank you to all of our volunteers who served so faithfully this year. Thanks especially to our leaders who served as Construction Supervisors (CSs) and On-Site Managers (OSMs).

Consider this: Every three weeks for nine months of the year, DRS needed ten leaders to make sure our worksites flowed smoothly. Just 86 managers filled all these site leadership positions. OSMs and CSs commit to volunteering twice each year. We certainly needed that commitment with so many sites running!

Thanks to each of you for answering the call to go above and beyond to serve those who have been devastated by a disaster in California, Saipan, Florida, and two communities in Texas.



## Waking Up White, by Debbie Irving

If you are looking for a good book to read, World Renew recommends *Waking Up White* by Debbie Irving. DRS workers volunteer with and serve people from many different backgrounds, and this book is enlightening for everyone.

“Debbi Irving’s powerful *Waking Up White* opens a rare window on how white Americans are socialized. Irving’s focus on the mechanics of racism operating in just one life — her own — may lead white readers to reconsider the roots of their own perspectives — and their role in dismantling old myths. Readers of color will no doubt find the view through Irving’s window fascinating, and telling.” – Van Jones, peer review. (debbieirving.com)



## In Memory

We would like to remember the following volunteers who passed on to Glory in 2016. These volunteers were not included in the February 2017 edition of The Spotlight.

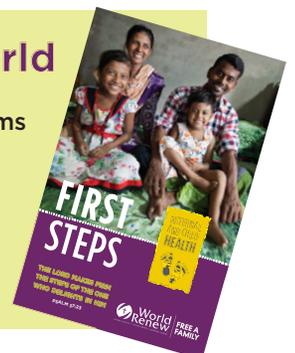
Sy Disselkoen  
 Bob Strabbing  
 Quentin Remein  
 Betty Mosher  
 Ed Mosher  
 Shirley Sjoerdsma  
 Lucille Schrierbeek  
 Geri Langeland  
 Richard Leep  
 Jarvis VanKlompbergen

If you know of a World Renew DRS volunteer who passed away in 2016 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

Did you know World Renew has excellent programs in child and maternal health and farming? Visit [worldrenew.net/mother-child](http://worldrenew.net/mother-child) or [worldrenew.net/sustainableagriculture](http://worldrenew.net/sustainableagriculture) to learn more.





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## Why Read This Newsletter?

The stories and articles inside

- celebrate the Lord's provision.
- offer you a good book recommendation.
- give you an update on the Fort McMurray fires and Hurricane Matthew.
- express the gratitude of disaster survivors.
- And much more!

The Gutbrod family from Michigan, Frank, Lindsey, Luke, and Sophia, took a week of vacation to volunteer in South Carolina.

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