



Brethren Disaster Ministries **BRIDGES**

Rebuilding Homes • Nurturing Children • Responding Globally

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Church of the Brethren

Rebuilding more than homes

by Jenn Dorsch-Messler

The Rebuilding Program of Brethren Disaster Ministries has always involved more than making physical repairs to homes damaged or destroyed by natural disasters. In many ways it is also about building relationships on multiple levels. Friendships develop among those working on the projects each week, even though they may come from very different places. Partnerships are built between BDM and local community leaders and organizations so that work can be organized and ready for volunteers to complete. Often the most powerful connection is between homeowners and the volunteers they welcome into their homes each week.

The current Rebuilding site on the U.S. mainland is in the Carolinas. This site is unique for BDM in many ways and has greatly expanded and deepened all these relationships. While BDM typically has two locations for projects on the continental U.S., the need in the Carolinas after Hurricane Matthew called for an increased number of volunteers working on a double site based in Lumberton, N.C. Since May 2018, project leaders and up to 30 weekly volunteers have gathered there and work in both North and South Carolina. BDM volunteers may typically only work with people from their own church or district, but this larger capacity provides an exceptional opportunity for groups from as many as four different districts to work, eat, and play games together in ways they never have before, thus deepening their connections and understanding of each other. (For a reflection on this, see “Serving together for a purpose”, page 3)

The need for volunteer support in the Carolinas increased after Hurricane

Florence made landfall in October 2018, re-affecting the same areas where this project had already been working. BDM’s partnerships in the Carolinas have strengthened as we work together to navigate how to help communities facing this additional challenge. BDM has expanded the type of work that volunteers do by supporting clean-up work, particularly through new FEMA programs for cases identified as the neediest by our partners. BDM has also applied for, and received, a \$25,000 One SC Grant from the Central Carolina Foundation to leverage the funds donated

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(From left) Janey Lambert and Sue Esworthy (Mid-Atlantic district) met Tom Weber, pastor of Florin Church of the Brethren (Atlantic Northeast district), when they all arrived in Lumberton, N.C. as BDM volunteers. They enjoyed working together to clean out a home that was flooded in both Hurricanes Matthew and Florence.

Photo by Jenn Dorsch-Messler

Case Management in Puerto Rico

by Judy Braune and Jenn Dorsch-Messler

Brethren Disaster Ministries continues to partner closely with the Puerto Rico District of the denomination to support 2017 Hurricane recovery. One aspect of that partnership, case management for families still needing assistance, is the responsibility of district volunteer disaster case managers (DCMs). BDM worked with the district to provide or arrange for disaster case management training.

When a homeowner needing help is identified, a DCM visits them to listen to their stories and to complete an application for assistance. Often these conversations become emotional as homeowners recount the hurricane and its aftermath, including descriptions of hungry children without food, water, clothes or a safe place to live. The DCM then investigates to determine the legitimacy of the claim by talking to neighbors and others and confirming the documents provided by the homeowner.

Once completed, the paperwork is presented to the district's Disaster Recovery Committee for approval. If approved, the family's home is put on the list for materials and for repairs by either BDM volunteers or contractors. Cases are prioritized based on need, including the severity of the damage and the individual needs of the clients. For example, those with medical problems or



Puerto Rico volunteer disaster case managers Emily Quintana (l) and Pastor Carmen Mercado Arce work tirelessly to identify hurricane survivors who still need assistance.
Photo by Judy Braune

disabilities, the elderly and families with children would be placed higher on the list for assistance. When the needs exceed what BDM can do, clients may be referred to other agencies who have come to trust the work of the DCMs and who know that the need has been verified.

Some DCMs are also bi-vocational workers for the church, as pastors or in other roles, and some also work other jobs to support themselves and their families. For example, DCM Carmen Mercado Arce is also the pastor of the Iglesia de los Hermanos (Church of the Brethren) in Río Prieto. Carmen works tirelessly at finding and helping hurricane survivors still needing assistance. As she drives around her area, she looks to see where there might be a need, for example if there is still a blue tarp on a roof, or she asks people if they know of anyone needing help. Carmen's daughter-in-law, Emily Quintana, is also a DCM. She strives to help those who have been living in difficult condition for so long even while she is raising and supporting two young children.

When homeowners and others are surprised by the love and service offered through BDM and its

volunteers, Carmen tells them that the volunteers are there to bring peace during their pain and to bring Jesus to console them in moments of crisis. The community has experienced more than home repair. It has seen the word of God through BDM volunteers and their work. Carmen and Emily have seen their church grow and younger people are now attending regularly. They share that BDM and the volunteers channel a blessing so Puerto Rico can recover.

Rebuilding more

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to our partner in Nichols, S.C., where BDM is the only voluntary organization remaining to help with rebuilding. This grant will be used for construction materials to supplement any FEMA awards to the homeowners.

The additional damage caused and recovery needed as a result of Hurricane Florence, has had an affect on our relationships with homeowners in Nichols in unfortunate but powerful ways. Volunteers had already made strong connections with 16 of the homeowners as they worked on Hurricane Matthew rebuilding. When Florence stalled and caused the entire town to flood again, these volunteers watched the news with added concern, knowing that some of those families had to evacuate again and the work they had done was under water. While BDM is working to repair those homes again, the town is working on a plan to mitigate the effects of future storms with a survey to see what changes can be made and plans to raise homes after they are repaired. There is a different level of despair that comes when your home is flooded twice in two years, but BDM volunteers have stood with these families and brought prayers, service and reasons for hope. The homeowners and community have greatly appreciated this commitment.



Puerto Rico District disaster case manager Emily Quintana collects information from a homeowner whose home was severely damaged in Hurricane Maria.
Photo by Sharon Franzén

Rebuilding updates

Carolinas

BDM's rebuilding site in the Carolinas is continuing with work in response to Hurricanes Matthew and Florence. The site, based out of the First Presbyterian Church in Lumberton, N.C., remains at double the capacity of typical projects in order to provide extra support in Robeson County, N.C., and Marion County, S.C. This work includes the Town of Nichols, where BDM remains as the only organization providing rebuilding volunteers. FEMA funds, money donated from the town and a grant from the Central Carolina Community Foundation will help to repair homes for a second time after both hurricanes flooded them out. Nichols has completed applications for two programs through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program which, if awarded, will provide funds to raise homes above flood levels and look more holistically at the town itself to do a study to discover risks and ways to mitigate future flooding.

Irma recovery in Florida

Opportunities for future BDM sites are still being explored in Florida to

support Hurricane Irma recovery from the 2017 storm. Volunteer housing is being investigated in two areas to find the best fit for a BDM site. As decisions and information are available, they will be shared.

A group of Brethren completed some Irma recovery work in February in central Florida. DPL Larry Esworthy worked with Butch Reinhold and Ben Wenger on a damaged home in the Sebring area. They removed a bay window, framed in two new windows and repaired the siding around the home.

New leadership development volunteer position

A new leadership development volunteer position has been created and filled within the rebuilding program. Sammy Deacon, a long-time construction DPL from the Southern Ohio district, has joined the BDM team to serve in this capacity, in



New leadership development long-term volunteer Sammy Deacon (second from left) presents a quilt to a family at a house blessing in Eureka, Mo.
Photo courtesy of Sammy Deacon

addition to the many other ways she supports the program. In her new role, Sammy will work with BDM staff and leaders on various aspects of training and supporting the rebuilding leadership. She will help with scheduling certified leaders on projects and will support the development of new leader trainings in order to build up the volunteer leadership base. This includes the annual 10-day in-person leadership training as well as looking into a hybrid training that can be provided more frequently.

Serving together for a purpose

by Kim Gingerich, BDM long-term disaster project leader

As a volunteer long-term project leader with the BDM Rebuilding Program, I have had the privilege of experiencing this ministry from the “inside” for over five years. I’ve been gifted the opportunity to see our denomination through different eyes: the eyes of service, compassion and love. The one thing that keeps standing out to me is how we are united, as opposed to how we might be divided. The “we” is BDM volunteers who come from different districts across the denomination to serve together each week. I often comment to them during our end of week debrief that this ministry is the best kept secret of our denomination.

Why do I say that? Because those

that come to serve come for a common goal which we strive to fulfill together. What is that common goal? To glorify God as we serve with our hands, feet and hearts to help restore hope in our clients and the communities in which we serve. Because we have that common goal, we are united. Despite our differences, we are united. We are united because we are motivated by love—God’s love for us and our love for Him—which in turn compels us to love our neighbor as ourselves. As Galatians 5:13-14 tells us: “...serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

This is how we build the body and unite the church, week after week,



BDM long-term project leaders Steve Keim and Kim Gingerich (first row from left) enjoy watching friendships develop among BDM volunteers coming from different districts and backgrounds as they share God’s love which unites us all.
Photo courtesy of BDM

through acts of service which provide opportunities to break down barriers and build relationships. Serving. United. Being the Church.

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Amplifying work together at National VOAD Conference

The Annual Conference for National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) took place in Nashville, Tenn., from May 6-9. As an active member of this organization, Brethren Disaster Ministries had multiple Rebuilding and CDS representatives participating and supporting in various roles. The theme for the conference in the music city, “Together We Amplify”, provided a wonderful opportunity to connect with over 720 attendees, including current and potential partners, who work together to respond to disasters across the U.S. states and territories.

On the first day, several BDM staff participated in the service project with other attendees, including a local country music artist, putting together 450 clean-up buckets in 90 minutes. Those buckets were then gifted to a local Nashville organization for use.

BDM director, Jenn Dorsch-Messler, co-presented a workshop with United Church of Christ (UCC) Disaster Ministries executive Zach Wolgemuth and UCC conference disaster coordinator Alan Choe.



NVOAD conference provides an excellent opportunity to network with partners. Shown here at the awards banquet are CDS associate director Lisa Crouch (l) and Mary DeWitt Dia, partnerships manager for the American Red Cross.



CDS associate director Lisa Crouch and program assistant Sherry Chastain at the NVOAD conference in Nashville, Tenn.

Around 50 people attended the workshop focusing on supporting rental populations in long-term disaster recovery. The workshop highlighted the work of the BDM Rebuilding projects in Toms River, N.J., and Eureka, Mo., as well as two other case studies supported by the UCC. Jenn was also re-elected to the NVOAD Board for a second term and as Secretary on the Executive Committee.

Lisa Crouch, Children’s Disaster Services associate director, found the networking opportunities at the conference invaluable. For example, she met with the National Red Cross Partnerships leadership to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. Kathy Fry-Miller, former CDS associate director, completed writing work on behalf of CDS for a new Emotional Spiritual Care Guidelines resource document that went to the Emotional Spiritual Care Committee and VOAD board for approval.

Next year will mark important anniversaries of serving survivors for both National VOAD and the Church of the Brethren when NVOAD celebrates 50 years, the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) turns 60, and CDS hits 40 years of service. The next National VOAD Conference will be in Phoenix, Ariz., on May 18-21, 2020.

Serving together

continued from page 3

Since BDM has combined its two project sites into one in Lumberton, N.C., we have received a lot of feedback from volunteers which illustrates this unity through service. Here are just a few:

- We are working with people for a common goal—an extraordinary goal.
- It’s the Holy Spirit taking human form, out of our hearts and into our hands.
- We’re so different but we have so much in common.
- BDM volunteers are like-minded people.
- We come as strangers but leave as friends or family.
- We are stronger together.

Together, across districts and denominations, we come. Different but the same, bound together by love, serving for a purpose, restoring hope, and being the church as we build homes and relationships. I have discovered that these are the real ministries of Brethren Disaster Ministries Rebuilding Program.

Nigeria Response

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church feel they have a voice and are speaking up. Students at one skills acquisition center requested the addition of a literacy program. In Kaduna, the attire of the young girls has become more appropriate because they can now sew their own dresses. The benefits of the Livelihood Program are far reaching!”

Godiya, a graduate of a CCEPI program, related the story of how she turned to prostitution for survival after fleeing from Boko Haram attacks. With her training and a new sewing machine she found “a new meaning” for her life. Godiya said, “I am happily married and running my own sewing business. I have moved on from my past and now believe that there is hope for the future. To God be the Glory.”

South Sudan civil war relief

On their way home from camps in Uganda and Kenya, refugees from the civil war in South Sudan pass near the Church of the Brethren mission in Torit, which includes a peace center. Mission staff member Anthanasus Ungang is working with local partners to provide emergency relief programming for returning families. Most of the displaced people travel with little more than the clothing they wear and return to homes damaged by war, looting and neglect. With no crops, no household supplies and no income, the situation is critical.

In the last 60 years the area comprising South Sudan, both before and after it became an independent country in 2011, has seen more time at war than at peace. The most recent war started in 2013 when relations

broke down between the president and vice president, who are leaders of different tribes, resulting in tribal warfare. After many failed peace accords, a September 2018 agreement has held and families are beginning to return home.

Even with the war ending, security is still a major issue and South Sudan is in a serious humanitarian crisis. In March 2019 the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that about two thirds of the population, 7.1 million people, need assistance, with 6.45 million being severely food insecure. With the lack of food production due to the violence, families returning to their villages are in desperate need of aid.

A \$27,500 Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grant is providing 300



A young South Sudanese refugee carries a sibling on her back. Photo by Jay Wittmeyer

returning families with tarps for temporary shelter until they can rebuild their homes; household items such as cooking pots, buckets, soap and cleaning supplies; hoes, seeds and fertilizer; and 110 pounds of corn flour per family. These supplies will help families settle and survive the three months of the rainy season while their crops grow.

Powerful cyclones cause destruction and flooding in southern Africa

by Roy Winter

Cyclone Idai started as a tropical depression causing flooding in the eastern countries of southern Africa. After circling back into the ocean, it gained strength and made landfall in Mozambique on March 15 as Cyclone Idai, destroying more than 90 percent of the port city of Beira. One of the most destructive and deadliest cyclones to impact southern Africa, Idai caused high wind damage in Mozambique and extensive flooding throughout Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The storm and its aftermath caused catastrophic damage and affected over 2.99 million people in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, resulting in 1000 reported deaths with thousands still missing. Standing water and poor access to both safe water and medical care contributed to a rapidly expanding cholera outbreak and high rates of malaria. As of early May 6,743 cases of cholera (including 8 deaths) and 25,758 cases of malaria were reported.

Just six weeks after Idai, with relief programs underway and needs still great, tropical storm Kenneth gained strength, reached cyclone status and struck northern Mozambique on April 25. Equivalent to a category 4 hurricane, it was the most powerful cyclone ever to hit the African continent. Kenneth destroyed 35,000 homes, caused 45 deaths and dumped more than 22 inches of rain.

The size and scope of these storms, with their massive flooding and destruction, combined with the flourishing of diseases and the difficulty in accessing rural Mozambique, left many aid agencies overwhelmed and the affected people underserved.

In response, Brethren Disaster Ministries is supporting programs of several partner agencies through grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF). A \$30,000 grant to an IMA World Health-Lutheran World Relief partnership is providing temporary shelter, relief kits and

water filters in the Chipinge and Chimanimani regions of Zimbabwe and school kits to support safe spaces for children in temporary camps in Mozambique. The Church of the Brethren has a long history of working with both organizations.

The ACT Alliance, a coalition of churches and church-related organizations, launched an \$8.8 million appeal to support both relief activities and long-term recovery programming in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. BDM joined the effort with a \$40,000 EDF grant to support the basic human needs of water, food, shelter and sanitation for 62,506 people (all identified as the most vulnerable people in the impacted countries); agricultural recovery through the provision of critical seeds, tools and animals to help families feed themselves and reestablish their livelihood; psychosocial support for children; the rebuilding of schools; and community level training in disaster preparedness.

CDS training workshops: A conversation with Carolyn Neher

Carolyn Neher, a long-time Children's Disaster Services volunteer from the York Center Church of the Brethren (Illinois/Wisconsin district) in Lombard, Ill., was a trainer in the Spring 2019 training workshop in North Manchester, In. When asked a few questions about CDS training workshops, she was happy to share some of her thoughts.

Why is attending a CDS training workshop beneficial?

Attending a CDS training has many benefits:

- hearing firsthand from experienced trainers;
- getting a taste of what you may experience on-site with living space and variety of personalities when responding to a disaster;
- CDS training gives many opportunities to work as a team, which is so important.
- The presentation gives an overview of the history of CDS and why it is so important to be there for children after a disaster. You are given information on the specific kinds of activities we do for children who have experienced disaster. These specific activities come in the Kit of Comfort. We discuss the items and why each one is important for children who need respite from all the trauma they are going through.

What do you enjoy most about helping train at a CDS workshop?

- Having the opportunity to train those who have a love of children and want to help them during a traumatic time;
- I learn from the other trainers as well as the participants. Everyone may look at a situation in a different way and we learn from each other.
- I love it when someone asks questions and when there is discussion. Among the trainers, we either have knowledge to answer

the questions or a story to help with understanding why we as CDS volunteers respond in the way we do.

- I love it when we laugh together. It is the beginning of great teamwork.

Any other thoughts regarding training or being involved with CDS?

- CDS training is the beginning of a grand adventure. Every time we go out we learn something new, and with our project managers and team leaders we help guide our new volunteers as we become a team.
- Children's Disaster Services is an organization near and dear to my heart. It is an opportunity for me to give my time and knowledge of young children in a situation where children can be forgotten. When CDS comes in the door, the look of relief on the faces of those who are providing assistance to families is rewarding. I enjoy working with a variety of people and organizations and advocating for children during and after disasters.

Could you be involved with CDS? Host a CDS training for 2020. Attend a training. Volunteer. And we always appreciate your prayers!

For more information, or to schedule a workshop, contact Lisa Crouch, CDS associate director, at lcrouch@brethren.org.



Carolyn Neher (third from left), during the 2018 McAllen, Texas southern border response, with (from left) Kat Leibbrandt, John Kinsel and Kelly Boyd.

Photo courtesy of John Kinsel

2019 Training Workshops

CDS Spring trainings were successful, with all being at either full or near-full capacity. Six trainings were held across the United States, with a total of 203 participants. Registration for the fall training workshops is now open. To register you can go to either the CDS Facebook page and click on the 2019 training map or go to the CDS website (www.brethren.org/cds) for more information. Remember: spaces tend to fill fast in some locations!

CDS Fall training locations— Registration now open

Roanoke, Virginia September 20-21, 2019

Oak Grove Church of the Brethren
2138 McVitty Road, SW
Roanoke, VA 24018

Fort Lupton, Colorado September 20-21, 2019

Fourway Baptist Church
9966 County Road 41
Fort Lupton, CO 80621

Tampa, Florida October 11-12, 2019 (CDS/CLS Specific)

*Child life specialists are invited to register and attend.
Hyde Park Presbyterian Church
in Tampa
1309 W. Swann Ave
Tampa, FL 33606

Portland, Oregon October 11-12, 2019

Fruit and Flower Childcare Center
378 NW Irving
Portland, OR 97210

Omaha, Nebraska October 18-19, 2019

Omaha Rapid Response
5843 North 90th Street
Omaha, NE 68134

CDS updates

Thank you to all the CDS volunteers who advocate for and raise awareness of CDS' mission in their regions. Please let CDS staff know if you attend local or state meetings or are involved in work groups or task forces focused on disasters. That way we can include you as we continue to build local networks of CDS volunteers around the country who are also working to make regional connections. Email information to CDS at [cgs@brethren.org](mailto:cds@brethren.org).

CDS provided childcare at the Mid-Atlantic district disaster response auction on May 4. Volunteers Laurene Holsinger, Janey Lambert, and Donna Ritchie, along with CDS program assistant, Sherry Chastain and her daughter Taylor, were on-site from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

CDS associate director Lisa Crouch traveled to Southern California to visit the CDS training workshop at La Verne Church of the Brethren on March 23-24 and to meet the Southern California Rapid Response Team. She met with CDS volunteers over dinner to talk about their region, responses and the future. It was a great experience for Lisa to learn more about the Rapid Response Model and to hear stories from this seasoned group of volunteers.

CDS utilizing new software

CDS began utilizing a mapping software at the beginning of 2019

which offers a new way for CDS to organize responses to childcare needs after a disaster. With the mapping system, all

CDS volunteers within a specified radius from the location can be pulled within minutes and those volunteers will be contacted for availability to respond with just a couple of clicks. CDS hopes this will help make responding to calls more efficient and provide cost-savings in the long run. It was already put to use this spring with the Nebraska flood responses and proved to be very satisfactory. CDS staff look forward to using the system more throughout the year. The software also enables CDS to plot the 2011-2018 responses (see graphic below), Kit of Comfort locations, specially trained CDS volunteers and other data to help the day-to-day functioning of CDS run even more smoothly. You can view the interactive maps on the CDS website at www.brethren.org/cds.

Nebraska flooding— March/April 2019

Two small CDS local teams responded in Nebraska during the



CDS associate director Lisa Crouch (front row, second from left) enjoyed meeting with some of the Southern California CDS Rapid Response Team volunteers in March 2019.
Photo courtesy of Lisa Crouch

devastating floods this spring. One team served children at a shelter in Fremont, Neb., serving 50 children in two days. The second team served in a Saturday MARC while parents applied for assistance in Valley, Neb. This team served 10 children.

CDS Leadership Seminar— June 2019

In preparation for the 2019 hurricane season, CDS leaders hosted a leadership training seminar in Indiana. Volunteers meeting the criteria were identified, and of those invited, eleven CDS volunteers participated in the training to become a potential project manager and thirteen participated in the workshop to become potential CDS trainers. To be selected for the leadership training, a CDS volunteer must have deployment experience and be recommended by current CDS leadership or a project manager. CDS plans to hold a leadership training every other year, with a

session of Critical Response Care (CRC) training in the off years.



CDS' new mapping software has lots of possibilities, including mapping all CDS responses from 2011-18. An interactive version of this map can be found at www.brethren.org/cds.



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Nigeria Crisis Response: Spotlight on livelihood training

by Roxane Hill, Nigeria Crisis Response coordinator

The Nigeria Crisis Response has many different program areas. One very important initiative is livelihood training which helps people gain skills to encourage self-reliance and income generation. This is especially important in Northeast Nigeria where hunger is rampant and the situation is compounded by the large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who live in camps or with relatives and have difficulty supporting themselves.

The Women's Ministry of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN) and the Center for Caring, Empowerment and Peace Initiative (CCEPI) provide training through

Livelihood Programs and Skills Acquisition Centers. Some of the one to two day programs teach women how to make soap, shampoo and cleaning supplies from raw materials for both personal use and sale. The training programs at the skills centers are designed for both Christian and Muslim women and men and run from six to nine months. They are taught business management along with skills training in tailoring, knitting or computer use. Upon graduation, they are provided with equipment (sewing machine, knitting machine, or computer) so that they are fully empowered to get their business up and running. In 2018,



Soapmaking, for personal use and as a business, is a skill taught through BDM partner CCEPI (Center for Caring, Empowerment and Peace Initiative).

330 persons participated in the various training programs.

Suzan Mark, past director of EYN Women's Ministry, shared that there are numerous side benefits for women who participate in the trainings. She remarked, "A skill is being given but more important is the increase in self-esteem that is spilling over into other aspects of their lives. As they become more financially able to care for themselves, the women are ready to take initiative in many areas of their lives. Women on committees of the

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