



Brethren Disaster Ministries **BRIDGES**

Rebuilding Homes • Nurturing Children • Responding Globally

Vol. 19, Summer 2018

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Puerto Rico: The race to rebuild as a new hurricane season looms

by Roy Winter

Eight months after Hurricane Maria, and, for many, just weeks to a few months since getting power back, the people of Puerto Rico are trying to imagine preparing for another hurricane season. It is hard to plan when the horror and devastation of Hurricane Maria looms so clearly and so many people still desperately need help rebuilding their lives. In this environment, the seven churches of the Puerto Rico district and Brethren Disaster Ministries are faithfully preparing to help families with that recovery. It is a journey that will take more than a decade. Instead of waiting for Long-Term Recovery Groups to form, get organized, and start assisting hurricane survivors, we are leading the way by developing our own recovery process. With such a huge disaster, impacting so many on the island, a slow recovery process is understandable, and even expected, but not acceptable.

In early May 2018, the BDM staff introduced the district Recovery Committee to some basic concepts of long-term recovery and they began developing a program to help families and communities with Church of the Brethren congregations. This involves creating a disaster case management program to help each family develop their individualized recovery plan. After that funds will be secured for the necessary services, material aid (appliances and furniture) and/or home rebuilding needed to help the family become independent and find a “new normal” for life. Volunteers from Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland will be important as we repair and rebuild homes.



May 2018: Puerto Rico recovery director, José Acevedo, led a discussion with the district recovery committee to identify priorities for their work.

Photo by Sharon Franzén

While visiting mountain communities near Castañer and Rio Prieto, another layer of complexity of recovery in Puerto Rico was revealed. Many of the damaged mountain homes are occupied by seasonal farm workers who live on property owned by large landowners growing coffee, bananas, plantains or other crops. To protect the workers, Puerto Rico requires that workers have the right to live in these homes after they retire, until their death. However, most landowners feel no responsibility to repair the damaged homes, leaving the poor farm workers and retirees in damaged and leaking homes without resources for repairs. Other challenging housing situations include families who may have had a handshake agreement to buy a plot of land but who never received a proper deed, the very poor who have built shanty-type homes on public land and the homeless.

The Brethren response has already helped many families with food, water, medical care and some building supplies for temporary repairs. The response has helped families affected by the hurricane

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Puerto Rico: The race to rebuild

The elderly couple who live here retired from working on a plantation. They can stay in their house until they die, but the landowner takes no responsibility to repair it.

Photo by Sharon Franzén



A Río Prieto house damaged by Hurricane Maria. Photo by Roy Winter



The same Río Prieto house after partial repairs. Photo by Sharon Franzén

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from each church. For example, when one young single mother's rental home and most of her belongings were destroyed, the church helped her move, paid rent until she found a job and helped her purchase appliances and furnishings. Another family received help for basic repairs to their badly damaged house, but more needs to be done to

make those repairs permanent, particularly to the roof.

While progress is being made, we are challenged to help as many families as possible before the worst of the upcoming hurricane and tropical storm season arrives. We are challenged to maintain a response through the many years of recovery. We are challenged to not forget Puerto Rico, even as other disasters

strike closer to home. Join us! To sign up to volunteer in Puerto Rico, contact Terry Goodger at tgoodger@brethren.org or 410-635-8730.

Global Updates

Venezuelan migration and humanitarian crisis

A mass migration and humanitarian crisis continues to unfold for the Venezuelan people. Government policies have caused an economic disaster resulting in years of hyperinflation, food shortages and very high unemployment. More than a million Venezuelans have already fled to surrounding countries seeking humanitarian assistance and thousands more leave each day.

Venezuela was approved as a new mission point for the Church of the Brethren in 2017 and it now has 18 churches affiliating themselves as Brethren. Last year, Brethren Disaster Ministries attempted to send canned meat to help the new mission point, but the government would not allow the shipment because it denies that there is a humanitarian crisis.

In response to a Church World Service appeal for this crisis, \$20,000 has been allocated to support Venezuelans migrating into rural parts of Columbia. The funds will support up to 2,000 people with

food and hygiene kits, as well as job programming and training.

Flooding in Kenya

Church World Service is leading a response to severe flooding in Kenya that has displaced more than 300,000 people, killing 132 and causing extensive agricultural and livestock losses. BDM is providing \$40,000 to assist CWS and the ACT Alliance in serving 910 families with materials to rebuild homes and farms, while also repairing schools and other community buildings.

Hurricane Matthew recovery in Haiti

The final wave of house construction through the Hurricane Matthew Response in Haiti began in May 2018. An additional \$65,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant is helping to build up to 12 new homes and provide repairs to 17 homes. This joint effort of BDM and the Haitian Church of the Brethren (Eglise des Freres Haitiens) began in the fall of 2016 after the hurricane caused extensive damage, flooding and more than 500 deaths.



This family in Haiti was the first to receive a new home after Hurricane Matthew destroyed dozens of houses in their community.

Photo by Ilexene Alphonse

Although Brethren church buildings and members received limited damage from the storm, the Church felt called to respond to neighbors in need. Early relief programs provided nearly \$30,000 for emergency food and clothing distributions, followed by medical clinics and distributions of seeds, fertilizer and goats. Combined with the current home reconstruction and repair activity, the total hurricane response program provided a ministry worth \$155,000 to thousands of impacted families.

DRSI in the USVI

September 2017 saw two Category 5 hurricanes tearing across the United States Virgin Islands (USVI): Irma (September 6) and Maria (September 16). St Thomas, home to 51,642 individuals prior to the storms, has a current total of over 18,775 households who have registered for assistance with FEMA (the highest of the three islands). Brethren Disaster Ministries has been supporting the recovery in the USVI through the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI). DRSI staff have been walking with and mentoring the St. Thomas Recovery Team (STRT) as they plan their recovery.

Through the U.S Department of Labor Dislocated Workers Program, DRSI and STRT employ 12 hurricane survivors who lost their jobs during the storms. As Disaster Case Managers they are developing new skills as they assist over 250 families. Over the next 12 months, in partnership with STRT, DRSI aims to complete repairs for over 100 households and develop individual recovery plans for 1,000 to 1,500 households. The focus will be on vulnerable population households (elderly, disabled, single parent and low to median income) identified as having unmet needs who are unable to participate in FEMA repair programs and have exhausted the resources available to recover on their own.

Among other things, DRSI staff continue to support STRT by helping to locate additional funding and by providing construction assessments and volunteer coordination. The Steering Committee for STRT has been hard at work with many aspects of becoming more established, including preparations for hiring a program director and construction management staff.

Complete funding for the work in USVI is coming from multiple locations including \$325,000 total from the disaster ministries of the three denominations collaborating

on DRSI, the Church of the Brethren, the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Church World Service is providing \$50,000 to fund the purchase of tools and construction materials. DRSI also secured a \$212,000 grant from the Fund for the Virgin Islands (FFVI) through the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands. The FFVI grant will allow DRSI to support STRT to develop its disaster case management, resource management, construction management and volunteer coordination.

BDM short-term response on St. Thomas

STRT is ready to welcome volunteers. BDM has two-week time periods open in 2018 (September 9-22) and 2019 (January 6-19) reserved for BDM volunteers working in St. Thomas. A December 2-15 time period is already full, with a waiting list. Spots are available for volunteers from all districts on a first come basis.

Housing, job site transportation, tools and meals will be provided during these designated two-week time periods. Volunteers must be able to work in warm climates. Some of the work could include mucking and gutting homes.

BDM can offer partial reimbursement of airfare for BDM volunteers during these designated weeks when:

- Volunteers are unable to fund travel to USVI on their own
- Their local district does not provide travel coverage/ reimbursement (Check with your District Disaster Coordinator)
- Travel is taken by coach class (and purchased 21 days in advance, if possible, as the least expensive form of travel)

If the above conditions are true, then the BDM national office can reimburse airfare as follows: twenty-



Hurricanes Irma and Maria rendered most of the buildings for one St. Thomas school uninhabitable, tearing off roofs and completely destroying all equipment inside.

Photo by Jenn Dorsch-Messler

five percent for 5-7 workdays; fifty percent for 9-14 workdays. To receive a reimbursement, volunteers must submit a signed Volunteer Expense Statement to BDM, along with all flight receipts, upon their return. To sign up to work in St. Thomas, please contact your District Disaster Coordinator (DDC) or Terry Goodger at TGoodger@brethren.org or 410-635-8730.



"I can't find the words to express the appreciation and love I have for the people of this amazing organization (Brethren Disaster Ministries). I will miss you all terribly but am grateful for what time we had together. I have been blessed with life-long friends and partners in the faith over the last nine months. We could not have done it without you. You made the work fun and your people lifted me up when I was overwhelmed. My heart is full because you were here - and also a little broken to see you go. I will pray for you every day and the lives you will touch on your new site. Until we meet again ..." This was a parting message to BDM from local Eureka, Mo., partner Denise Webb Kasten (Salvation Army/St. Mark's Lutheran Church), shown here with colleague Chris Hosley (l) and BDM project leader Dennis Minnick (r).

Rebuild Program Updates

BDM leaders, volunteers and local partners helped to pack up at the Eureka (Mo.) United Methodist Church, which graciously hosted BDM rebuild volunteers for nine months.

Photo courtesy of Sammy Deacon



Doug Campbell packs up the household trailer as BDM prepared to move the Eureka, Mo., project site.

Photo by Sammy Deacon

Eureka, Mo.

The BDM Rebuild site located in Eureka, Mo., opened in August 2017 in response to 2015 flooding, closed at the end of March 2018. March also marked the one-year anniversary of flooding in 2017, when BDM volunteers from across the country had helped the local community prepare by laying sandbags and moving furniture from homes in advance of the floodwaters. BDM was blessed to serve in Eureka with the Salvation Army and the Eureka Disaster Relief Committee. Much of the work done involved fixing mobile homes located out of the flood plain that were in disrepair. Survivors whose own mobile homes had flooded in 2015 and 2017 were then relocated to these repaired homes. Thank you to all volunteers who served in Missouri.

New Double Site in Carolinas

As of May 6, BDM merged what is typically two separate project housing locations into one to respond to Hurricane Matthew recovery in both North and South Carolina. In South

Carolina, over 11,600 applications for assistance from FEMA were submitted from 24 counties and in North Carolina, 29,003 applications for FEMA assistance were submitted in 45 counties.

All volunteer groups are currently reporting to the First Presbyterian Church in Lumberton, N.C., as a home base to complete recovery work in both states. Housing includes dedicated space for BDM on an entire third floor of one of building, as well as shared space in the gym building for preparing and serving meals and for bathrooms with showers. Both BDM tool trailers and the new shower trailer are also located on the property for use.

Work will continue in Marion County, S.C., as well as in Robeson County, N.C., and in neighboring areas in both states. Plans are for this double site to continue at least through the end of 2018, depending on the status of available work in the area.

Leadership Training

BDM hosted a Disaster Project Leader (DPL) Training from April 24-May 3 at the Marion County, S.C.,

housing location of St. John AME Church. This combined training with the Church of the Brethren and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) had a total of nine participants. The 10-day training included classroom work as well as workshop sessions where participants worked in homes to prepare for Construction Leadership or at the housing site to explore Household Leadership. Four participants completed both training streams, with the potential of becoming certified as leaders for both construction and household. Following this training, eight new BDM leaders are preparing to complete a one-month internship on a BDM project with other trained leaders as the next step in the discernment and training process.

Leadership Trainings are held once a year to equip potential new leaders that already have experience or are skilled in construction or preparing meals for large groups. DPLs serve on BDM projects for a month or more at a time. The next training is anticipated for the fall of 2019.

Local Marion County, S.C., partners Michaela Hufford (Town of Nichols) and Wes Knight (Marion County Long-Term Recovery Group) speak to 2018 Leadership Training participants and trainers.

Photo by Jenn Dorsch-Messler



Members of Westminster COB (Mid-Atlantic) and Wyomissing COB (Western Pa.) made up the first combined group at the new housing site at First Presbyterian Church in Lumberton, N.C.

Photo courtesy of BDM

CDS updates

CRC pilot online training

Children's Disaster Services was very pleased to offer the Critical Response Childcare course as a pilot online training this spring. Thirty-seven participants, who were experienced CDS volunteers that were recommended for this work, were enrolled in the course to prepare to respond to a critical response or mass casualty disaster. CDS hopes to offer this course to more volunteers in the future, especially with an increase in both more intense natural disasters with multiple fatalities and in human-caused mass casualty disasters. The course involved real-time webinars, reading, watching videos of national speakers on various aspects of this work and written responses. All written work was evaluated, and a final interview was required with a CDS trainer.

Participants commented that they felt both humbled and inspired by this work. One volunteer shared that she felt, "appropriately awed at the magnitude of the events, but honored to serve." A child life specialist commented, "I am interested in seeing how I can apply my learning through this course to my work in the hospital setting, as I am concurrently on an Emergency Operations Workgroup."

Oklahoma deployment

CDS volunteers can set up a safe children's center almost anywhere, even in a cattle barn! In late April, CDS teams were called in to serve in MARCs (Multi Agency Resource Centers) set up for families to apply for assistance in response to wildfires in Oklahoma. CDS volunteers from Northern Texas, Kansas, Missouri, Virginia and Wisconsin served for two days each in Taloga and Woodward, where they cared for a total of 31 children.

Boon Murray, CDS volunteer and child life specialist who served in Woodward, shared that after the team set up the childcare area, the volunteers were encouraged to interact with the other resource

people in the room when they were not caring for children. This enabled them to learn what the others did and to tell them about CDS. She recalled that some people would stop her as she passed them and say, "I love watching what you are doing over there. Thank you for what you are offering here." This interaction, Boon said, "led into many more questions about CDS."

CDS has had teams standing by to deploy for a number of other events since the beginning of the year. We are grateful for volunteers who are willing to make the necessary arrangements to go on a response, even without knowing if they will actually serve or be asked to stand down. We appreciate that CDS volunteers take to heart the message that flexibility is one of the important keys to this work!

Hawaii

In response to the volcano eruption and earthquakes, two CDS volunteers on the Big Island of Hawaii set up a



CDS volunteers Petie Brown (l) and Randy Kawate provided a safe play space for children in a shelter in Pahoia, Hawaii. They both took the time to serve with the children even though they were also affected by the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Photo courtesy of Petie Brown



During the CDS response to Spring 2018 historic wildfires in Oklahoma, children enjoyed having a safe space to just play and 'be a kid' during stressful times for their families.

Photo by Pearl Miller

children's area in a shelter in Pahoia, with support from Red Cross and local churches. Forty-nine children were served in the first two weeks of this response. With children out of school for the summer, more volunteers were needed to provide respite care. In early June, four CDS volunteers were deployed to the Pahoia shelter to work with the Red Cross.

Volunteer news

Thank you to all CDS volunteers who spread the word about the work of Children's Disaster Services in your local communities! Associate director Kathy Fry-Miller met with volunteers and partner agencies in Southern California this spring. Several members of the CDS Southern California rapid response team have been attending VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) meetings in various counties (Orange, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Ventura) where they give presentations to Red Cross and other partners. Orange and Los Angeles counties both have Children or Kids in Disaster Work Groups. Please let CDS staff know if you attend local or state meetings, or are involved in work groups or task forces, so that we can include you as we set up a network of CDS volunteers around the country who are working to make local connections. Email your information to CDS at [cgs@brethren.org](mailto:cds@brethren.org).

Kathy Fry-Miller retirement announcement

Kathy Fry-Miller has announced her intention to retire as associate director of Children's Disaster Services (CDS) on Sept. 13, 2018. Kathy began leading CDS on Feb. 1, 2014, working from her home in Indiana and from the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. During her tenure, CDS has responded to more disasters than in any similar period, with two years of record-breaking responses and a special children's trauma response to the crisis in Nigeria. Kathy has led CDS through an expansion of volunteers, developed new partnerships and secured new grant funding. She has represented CDS and the Church of the Brethren on policy and procedure writing groups and at national level meetings and is a recognized leader in child and trauma recovery.

We are grateful to Kathy for her dedication to children—the smallest survivors of disasters—and to the Church of the Brethren. We wish her well as she prepares for her retirement.

The Church of the Brethren is accepting applications for the associate director of CDS. Information can be found at www.brethren.org/about/employment.html or by emailing COBAppl@brethren.org.



CDS Associate director Kathy Fry-Miller traveled to California to meet with CDS volunteers, Orange County Social Services Administration staff, and other partners, including Red Cross and the Orange County Health Care Agency. Photo by Diana LaRusso

Participants praise CDS trainers and workshops

During the spring of 2018, Children's Disaster Services held six workshops for new caregivers, led by dedicated trainers. Two such committed trainers with cancelled flights searched for options to get to Syracuse, N.Y., in the middle of a blizzard. In the end, all three trainers, including one who drove, arrived and got home safely. Nothing like experiencing a disaster during the disaster training weekend!

If you are curious about CDS workshops, read what some recent workshop participants said about their experience. Maybe you will want to attend one of the fall trainings listed below.

- All presenters were phenomenal and well versed in training. Information was concise but well put together.
- I'm hooked! Can't wait to be deployed!
- I didn't really know what to expect, but I was reminded of the value of play in all settings and seeing circumstances through a child's eyes.
- Fantastic. Inspirational. Motivational. Eye-opening. CDS must be the best kept secret.
- Amazing event overall. I love how interactive it is, we were not stuck in a lecture all weekend. We got practical experience.

- Thank you for being so open and honest in sharing your personal experiences.

Upcoming fall workshops

Anyone age 18 or over who would like to explore what it might mean to work with children in disasters, is welcome to register for a workshop. More information and registration can be found on the CDS webpage at www.brethren.org/cds/training/dates.html. The following workshops are currently scheduled for this fall:

San Francisco, Calif.

October 19-20, 2018

California Pacific Medical Center
Women's and Children's Campus
3700 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118

Rockville, Md.

November 2-3, 2018

1401 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

Skellytown, Texas

November 9-10, 2018

Graced Land East
Cal Farley Blvd.
Skellytown, TX



CDS Volunteers Donna Savage and Jane Lindberg met with students of Highcroft Ridge Elementary School in St. Louis (Mo.) County. The school chose CDS as a service project. Students made playdough and bubbles for local Kits of Comfort and had a "penny war" with classrooms competing to donate pennies to CDS. The surprise check to CDS was for \$512.12! Thank you to these volunteers and students for their care and concern for children in times of disaster.

BDM at National VOAD 2018

Brethren Disaster Ministries staff members Sherry Chastain, Jenn Dorsch-Messler, Kathy Fry-Miller and Terry Goodger attended the National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) conference in Providence, R.I., in May. NVOAD is an association of organizations (currently 100 members) that mitigate and alleviate the impact of disasters. It provides a forum promoting cooperation, communication, coordination and collaboration and fosters more effective delivery of services to communities affected by disaster. Attending the annual conference gives staff members the opportunity to learn from others, share ideas and nurture networks which will positively impact their work.

BDM and its volunteers are active locally and in State and National VOADs, participating in various events and committees, creating awareness of our work, building networks and collaborating in disaster

situations. At the NVOAD level, BDM currently supports Jenn Dorsch-Messler's role as secretary for the NVOAD Executive Committee and member of the Board of Directors. Dorsch-Messler and associate director of Children's Disaster Services, Kathy Fry-Miller, are both actively involved in committees. At this year's conference, Fry-Miller stayed very busy as a leader and presenter in many workshops and committee meetings. CDS also set up a "playful meditation" table as a part of other activities that provided respite for any conference participants in the Reflection Room. They were also able to network with Lindsey Murphy, a CDS volunteer and board member of CDS partner Child Life Disaster Relief.

An important aspect of NVOAD involvement is the opportunity to introduce local BDM partners and disaster survivors to resources and networks to help and encourage them in the difficult work of recovery. This

year, through their collaboration in the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI), BDM, the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) advocated for hurricane recovery in the U.S. Virgin Islands where the DRSI has been working directly with the St. Thomas Long-Term Recovery Group (STRT). DRSI supported the conference attendance of team members Rachel Larratt and Tim Sheaffer and of Imani Daniel, chair of the STRT. Larratt and Daniel were presenters at the U.S. Islands and Alaska Committee's workshop. After the conference Daniel commented on the impact that the experience had on her, saying, "This week, in Rhode Island, I realized what a huge network we, survivors, have going to work for us every day. It's easy to get lost in the trenches sometimes and I really needed that experience. I am, and will be forever, grateful for the opportunity that you gave me."

CDS—Child Life Disaster Relief partnership

by Katie Nees

There is so much beauty in the partnership between Children's Disaster Services and Child Life Disaster Relief (CLDR). On paper, it makes perfect sense. CDS has the logistical organization, the relationships of trust with key disaster relief entities, and a long history of dedicated volunteers who know how to provide excellent care for children and families in these stressful situations. CLDR is made up of child life specialists from around the country who have education and training that aligns well with the care that CDS provides. The child life specialists are able to add a level of knowledge and skill in child-centered play and a calming presence during disaster deployments along with their CDS teammates. They specialize in children and trauma and know the importance of early interaction with trusted adults.

But it is the pieces hidden behind what's "on paper" that make me most

excited. I have experienced CDS as an organization that is deeply rooted in relationship and community. The friends I have made on deployments are some of the sweetest, most meaningful relationships I have experienced, and I am not alone in feeling that way. I often hear long-time CDS volunteers telling me how much they have loved having child life specialists on their teams, but I also have many child life specialists return after deployment with similar stories as mine of the amazing relationships they built with their teammates while serving children and families together. Anna Montgomery is one example of many. Anna was deployed to the Northern California wildfires last Fall and had a family emergency occur during her

deployment. This is what she wrote after returning home: "While I left early, I am definitely grateful for my time deployed with CDS. I am grateful for the people I met, the incredible team that I worked with, and that I got to be a support. But I am also incredibly grateful for the support I received. What a gift I found in the CDS team! Women who cried with me, prayed with me, and encouraged my heart in the midst of the hard."

The real beauty of our partnership, as I see it, is beyond what makes logical sense. It is more about the relational connections between caring adults and vulnerable children, and also between teammates. Thank you, CDS for welcoming us with open arms into your community.

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God's plans include even the finest details

By Jenn Dorsch-Messler

Part of a BDM Project Leader's preparation for a house blessing is to pick out a quilt or other item to gift to the owner being welcomed back to their home. Quilts are often donated by various churches to represent the things that make a home special: warmth, love, comfort, family and a connection to others.

On one occasion in Marion County, S.C., long-term disaster project leader Kim Gingerich chose a quilt with teapots on it and prayed that the homeowner would like the colors. After the house blessing ceremony was completed and the quilt was gifted, the daughter quickly went into the house, knowing exactly where to put the covering. Those present at the ceremony then proceeded into the house to observe the beautiful, newly repaired home that was completed by BDM volunteers. As the visitors made their way back to the guest room, it was



clear the quilt had been taken directly there for a reason. It had already been placed on the guest bed and was complimenting the numerous teapots set around the room with many containing colors that matched the quilt. This is proof that God's plans include even the finest details, knowing that someone would make a quilt in another state and it would fit perfectly in a guest room in a home in South Carolina that had been under water two years earlier.

Teapots on the dresser of a guest room renovated by BDM volunteers in Marion, S.C., match the colors and teapot illustrations of the new quilt, gifted at the house blessing, that is reflected in the mirror.

Photo by Jenn Dorsch-Messler



A group of young adults from Michigan helped to paint this home in Les Cayes, Haiti, built with support from the Hurricane Matthew Recovery Response.

Photo by Ilexene Alphonse