

Family and Friends of Evacuees and Rebuilders

We continue to learn about the family and friends of the evacuees and rebuilders (those rebuilding).

After a hurricane the majority of the people in the region experienced a small disturbance in their normal routine. They were back at work, school and play after a short season. But there are usually some that suffered major losses. It might take months, years or a lifetime to deal with all the dramatic changes.

Long before the first hurricane of the season hit we began to pray and prepare for ways to serve this very complex and scattered group of people.

Logically we began with two important insights. When a couple is married, dozens of people attend the wedding. Then at a funeral dozens of people attend. This is an indicator of how many others are connected to that couple or individual. Plus there are many others that could not attend for any number of reasons.

It is possible to count the numbers of evacuees that are in the temporary shelters and move into the FEMA apartments. It is possible to count the number people that are rebuilding their house. But for each of them there are many dozen family members and friends that are out of state.

Imagine that you were in a retirement community in Arizona and your daughter, son in-law and grandchildren had to flee for their life last week. Imagine that you were attending college in California and your mother almost drowned yesterday when the storm surge hit the place she was staying. Imagine that you were on a business trip while tree fell hitting your younger sister last week and she is in ICU.

After each major hurricane a few people die. That means that the grief process begins for the dozens that were connected to that individual. We are collaborating with experts all over the Internet to improve ways to comfort and serve them.

We have found that when the family members and friends are grateful to learn about the local churches and new coalitions that are serving their loved one. They use their contact base to enroll more prayers. They take up a collection of their coworkers and neighbors to send the funds both to the people they know as well as the groups that are helping. Many enroll associates to give up vacation time to help rebuild.

There will never be enough professional counselors and pastors to completely serve all those that are hurting after the hurricane. Yet we have found that with some wise guidelines and encouragement these family members and friends have proven to be a wonderful support network. They really did rise to the challenge. Dealing with a loved one that has gone through a trauma is usually a once in a life time experience. And because we have already served thousands of others like them there are distilled guidelines of various experts that Four Bridges offers online for free.

God has answered thousands of prayers as we have continually improved the communications systems online and by way of the quarterly CDs. Most of the family members and friends are in a condition to give aid. Others are shaken by the grief that they need to receive emotional and spiritual support. Then there are many that both give and receive what Four Bridges has to offer. They appreciate that we are committed to the long term solutions. They respect that we are Bible based and Christ centered.

Each hurricane has been different. Each one had unique qualities about the ways it impacted the areas. But after Four Bridges served in the wake of a few of them the patterns began to appear. The other agencies told us about the immediate mental and emotional ways that people cope with such a tragic incident. Their inputs assisted us enormously to prepare the initial materials that keep getting better.