

# LSF Helps Hurricane Victims

It took only seven hours for Hurricane Wilma to cross the state after it slammed into the west coast of Florida on Monday, October 24, but it left a wide path of death and destruction in its wake before exiting the state on east coast and moving into the Atlantic Ocean. In the storm's aftermath, seven people were dead, millions were without power and property damages were estimated to run as high as \$10 billion.

Wilma was the eighth hurricane to target Florida in 15 months. Responding to the needs generated by these natural disasters, Lutherans raised more \$20 million to support relief efforts. Lutheran Services Florida was there, in partnership with Lutheran Disaster Response; the churches of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, helping the victims recover, rebuild and start over. The recovery effort continues today.

Following the hurricanes, Lutheran Services Florida and its partners helped thousands of victims by:

- providing hardship grants
- providing Pastoral Care and Counseling Services

- hosting FEMA/SBA workshops to train volunteers
- providing Disaster Preparedness Training throughout the state
- sponsoring Camp Noah — one week of therapeutic summer camp at no charge for children

suffering trauma from the hurricanes — at 25 sites across Florida.

"Today, we are continuing to provide assistance, in partnership with Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA Domestic Disaster Response and LCMS World Relief, to the 2004 Florida hurricane victims

as there is still much to be done and the recovery is far from over," said Joy Margolis, LSF Director of Marketing/Communications. "We also are now assisting the victims of Hurricane Wilma.

"In response to the many inquiries we receive daily from caring people asking what they can do, we want to let you

know how you can help. First, of course, please remember the victims in your prayers. The need for assistance is tremendous. If you want to donate a financial gift, volunteer your time, or donate food, clothing or hygiene items, please contact 800-651-1853," she concluded. □

## Hurricane Wilma Recovery

Amigos en Cristo, a ministry of the Southwest Florida Outreach Council, is launching phase two of its Hurricane Wilma recovery efforts.

"The initial phase of our hurricane recovery efforts have resulted in having served 189 families with a total of 695 people," reported Rev. Bob Selle, Amigos en Cristo director. "Total money spent on direct relief aid has totaled \$13,689."

Phase 2 recover efforts are intended "to minimize the pending crisis for migrant workers who are coming from fields up north to work in Southwest Florida," Selle continued. "Because Hurricane Wilma destroyed area farm crops, no work will be available until about February 1 creating a severe hardship for these

workers. We expect to help 200 families with, on average, \$100 in gift cards from Wal-Mart.

"This together with donated food and clothing will help them subsist until work in the fields resumes."

Amigos en Cristo personnel are working with local packing

plant management to design a way to assess and meet the needs of the migrant workforce. Management has decided to forgo the normal room and bed charge at their 900-bed migrant camp during this interim period. The United Way of Lee County along with other individuals

and local churches have promised increased funding to meet this need.

"We anticipate helping about 200 farm worker families, representing about 800 people," Selle concluded. □

## Date Set for 2006 Veterans Gathering

Registration information will be available this month for the 2006 Veterans of the Cross Gathering, March 6-8 at the Florida Methodist Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg, FL.

The annual event is open to all retired LCMS workers on the synodical roster; spouses are also welcome.

The 2006 theme — "Aging Joyfully in Retirement" — is a follow-up on the 2005 theme, "Implications of Mass Aging on Lutheran Congregations." Last year, Gathering participants participated in round-table discussions designed to identify core issues for ministry to, with and by seniors.

Presenters for 2006 include Rev. Dr. Gerhard Michael, President of the Florida-Georgia District, and Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer,

President of Concordia Seminary-St. Louis. Rev. Victor Belton of Peace Lutheran-Decatur, GA, will be the Bible study leader. Also speaking will be humorist Jan Struck and James Sanft, Vice President of the Synod's Worker Benefit Plans.

Rev. Kenneth W. Schamens, Col. USAF (Ret.), heads the Veterans of the Cross Leadership Team consisting of Dora Behnken, Drs. Floyd and Jan Behrens, Rev. Robert and Elaine Beslaski, Rev. Dr. Will Hassold, Rev. Dr. Gerhard C. Michael, Jr., Rev. Paul Foelber, Rev. Jerry and Marlyce Seaman; Rev. Hugh and June Temme, Rev. Edgar and Carol Trinklein, David Weidner and Lillian Wiebel. Music coordinator is Jane Schamens; Paulette Isaac of the Florida-Georgia District staff is the administrative assistant. □

## Grant Helps Outreach

Wheat Ridge Ministries of Itasca, IL, has awarded Amigos en Cristo — a ministry of the Southwest Florida Outreach Council — a grant of \$30,000 to be distributed over 36 months.

Eight grants totaling \$235,000 were awarded nationwide. Wheat Ridge Ministries is recognized throughout the world as an independent Lutheran charitable organization that provides support for new church-related health and hope ministries in pursuit of its mission "Lutherans seeding new ministries of health and hope in the name of the healing Christ." □

## 800+ Experience "Extreme Makeover" Retreat

For three days last November, 833 youth and adults gathered at Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center-Leesburg, FL, for an "Extreme Makeover — Faith Edition," the 2005 Florida-Georgia District Middle School Retreat.

"This number was reduced due to those affected by the Hurricane Wilma and unable to attend," reported Sally Serrine, who co-chaired the event with Megan Meissler.

Rev. Bill Yonker, senior pastor at Immanuel Lutheran-East Dundee, IL, was the guest speaker and author of the Retreat's family group devotions and themes. Four "Building Themes" were incorporated into the three-day event: demolishing the old (repentance), based on Psalm 51:17; laying the foundation (Jesus and His Word), based on 1 Corinthians 3:10-11; interior design (new moods, attitudes, behaviors and words) based on Ephesians 4:22-24; and moving in (Living with Jesus and telling others), based on John 14:23.

Daniels Window, the Retreat band, "kept the energy level high praising God with Song," Serrine said.

Breakout Sessions provided an opportunity for smaller groups to meet and learn about topics including

- "Storm Warning" — rebuilding when the damage is beyond your control;
- "A Home in Good Repair" — tips for taking care of

your God's temple, your body, through exercise and diet;

- "Building Blocks of Leadership" — guidelines for Christian leadership in church and school;
- "Meet the Band" — what's it like to serve God as a traveling Christ-centered band?
- "Interior Walls" — guy/girl interaction.

"Adult Breakouts centered around encouraging chaperones and challenging them to continue to help build young people into God's

Romac Lumber Company donated and delivered materials — and the youth and adults decorated 100 eight-foot 2x4s with favorite scriptures, Christian symbols and words of love and encouragement.

"Richena Winder, the recipient of this Habitat home was present, thanking all the kids for their help and prayers," Serrine reported. "She spoke her heart-felt thanks at the closing worship. Mary Lou Mills, the Lake County Habitat Project Manager, was so excited for our District's partnership and will keep us informed at the progress.



"THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION; THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW HAS COME!"  
2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

spiritual houses," Serrine said. "Wayne Wilke represented the Florida-Georgia District Concordia House of Studies, encouraging youth and adults of the Christian educational opportunities available right here in Central Florida."

Habitat for Humanity, Lake County, was the designated Retreat Servant Event. During the Retreat, an offering of nearly \$6,600 was collected, including matching funds of \$1,500 from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. "This is largest amount every collected at a District Middle School Retreat," Serrine noted.

"We will be invited to continue helping in the later stages of painting and laying sod. The 'build' date is set for February 4 at Carlton Village in Eustis."

Assisting Serrine and Meissler with the Retreat planning were Esther Barg, Heidi Bierlein, Jessica Byler, Sarah Freeman, Leah Helmrichs, Deon and Deb Hull, Megan Loomis, Nick Moss, Ben Piering, Rev. Jon Thomas, Sparky Wetherell, Jeff Weilert and Judy Frahm. David Weidner, Florida-Georgia District Executive for Congregational Services, provided "wisdom, guidance, support and participation," Serrine concluded. □