

BEING THERE

Faith on the Frontlines

Successful Models of Faith-Based Cross-Sector Collaboration from
the 2006 *Partners in Transformation* Awards Program

by

AMY L. SHERMAN

Director, Sagamore Institute Center on Faith in Communities

Editorial Director, FASTEN

with

RACHAEL ANN GREEN & MARY-KATE BRISSETT

Research Assistants, Sagamore Institute Center on Faith in Communities

FASTEN



Center on
FAITH IN COMMUNITIES



BEING THERE: FAITH ON THE FRONTLINES

by Amy L. Sherman with Rachael Ann Green and Mary-Kate Brissett

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For additional copies, contact:
Sagamore Institute Center on Faith in Communities
757 King Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Tel: 434-293-5656
Fax: 434-295-8728
www.CenteronFIC.org

For media and speaking engagement purposes, please contact the Center on Faith in Communities office at 434-293-5656.

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[INTRODUCTION]

Our nation will not soon forget the images of shock and devastation broadcasted in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Riveted, Americans watched as FEMA, the American Red Cross, and other secular organizations moved in to help the victims. Soon, the public also began hearing about the response of the faith community. In some instances, the veteran aid agencies arrived on the scene only to find congregations and faith-based organizations—many of them storm victims themselves—already on the frontlines offering relief. In others, these big organizations encountered faith-based groups that had not only immediately helpful supplies to offer, but also experience in longer-range community rebuilding efforts based on their work in previous emergencies. And as some Americans were transported “virtually” by CNN to deep pockets of poverty such as New Orleans’ Ninth Ward, they discovered that faith-based charities had long been there, too, attending to those typically neglected by the rest of society.

In short, the calamities of fall 2005 revealed powerfully that the faith community is *there*: there at the site of emergencies, there after others leave, and there in the places long forgotten. This report celebrates these faithful organizations and paints a picture of what their “being there” has meant to the lives of thousands of Americans.

The 2006 *Partners in Transformation* Competition

In 2002, the Pew Charitable Trusts launched the FASTEN (Faith and Service Technical Education Network) initiative to explore faith-based social services. The project sought especially to gain insight into “multi-sector collaboration” —that is, models of faith-based organizations (FBOs) working with government, secular nonprofits, public agencies, and private philanthropies to transform distressed communities. In 2005, FASTEN began the *Partners in Transformation* awards program in order to identify and reward effective models of faith-based, multi-sector collaboration. This Awards Program offered FBOs the chance to win cash grants for demonstrating achievement in addressing social problems through meaningful partnerships with organizations *outside* the faith community. In 2006, our competition’s theme was “Faith on the Frontlines.”

The 2006 contest was open to FBOs located and serving in ten states that have recently been faced with a natural or man-made disaster: Alabama, California, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia. First, second, and third place awards were granted in three separate categories:

- Category 1: Short-Term Emergency Disaster Response,
- Category 2: Long-Term Community Recovery and Rebuilding Efforts, and
- Category 3: Services Addressing Deep Pockets of Poverty.

Table 1
Applicants by Category

Category 1 “Short Term Emergency Disaster Response”	55
Category 2 “Long-Term Community Recovery and Rebuilding Efforts”	37
Category 3 “Services Addressing Deep Pockets of Poverty”	170
TOTAL	262

In addition to the geographic eligibility restrictions, entrants also had to have annual operating budgets of under \$5 million dollars. Over 300 groups applied and 262 were deemed eligible for the contest (see Table 1). Although the judging criteria varied somewhat from category to category, in all three we were interested in examining program character and effectiveness; creativity; volunteer mobilization; and the robustness of the collaboration with the non-faith-based partner(s).

We recruited a diverse panel of judges with experience in working with FBOs around the nation to help review the applications. Faith-based collaborations in each category were evaluated based on criteria determined to be appropriate, given the nature and goals of each category. The judges employed a weighted, 100-point scale.

Applicants in Category One (Short-Term Disaster Response) were evaluated based on:

- Program Resourcefulness;
- Program Outcomes;
- Rapidity of Response;
- Volunteer Mobilization;
- Creativity;
- Program Character (e.g., flexibility, individuality);
- Robustness of Collaboration; and
- Cost-Effectiveness.

Judges for applicants in Category Two (Long-Term Community Recovery and Rebuilding Efforts) examined:

- Program Outcomes;
- Effectiveness of Collaboration;
- Volunteer Mobilization;
- Mobilization of other (non-volunteer) assets;
- Stewardship of Existing Resources;
- Program Scale/ Cost Effectiveness;
- Clarity of Mission;
- Organizational Sustainability;
- Creativity; and
- Program Character (e.g., uniqueness, flexibility).

And in Category Three (Services Addressing “Deep Pockets of Poverty”), entrants were evaluated by their:

- Program Outcomes;
- Robustness of Collaboration;
- Creativity;
- Program Character (i.e., degree to which the program was relational and holistic);
- Volunteer Mobilization;
- Scale/ Cost Effectiveness; and
- Program Target (i.e., validity of the targeted neighborhood or population group as a “deep pocket of poverty”).

During the first round of assessments, judges selected thirty semi-finalists (ten applicants from each category). These FBOs were awarded \$250 each for their promising programs. Judges then engaged in a deeper examination of the semi-finalists, requesting additional information and in some cases conducting telephone interviews with staff.

Table 2
Applicants by State

Alabama	14
California	24
Florida	43
Louisiana	7
Mississippi	9
North Carolina	19
New York	36
Oklahoma	30
Texas	58
Virginia	22

Table 3
Total Individuals Served

Category 1	385,011
Category 2	92,378
Category 3	413,795
TOTAL	891,184

Following that additional round of assessment, we announced our nine finalists. We awarded \$10,000 to each category's first-place finisher, and \$5000 and \$3500 respectively to the second and third place winners. The finalists were honored at a special awards ceremony and roundtable co-sponsored by the Sagamore Institute, FASTEN, and the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy in Indianapolis in June 2006.

Characteristics of Contestants

Geography. FBOs in Texas supplied the greatest number of contest applications, submitting some 58 programs for consideration. Entrants were reasonably distributed across the ten states, with the fewest hailing from Louisiana and Mississippi (see Table 2).

Age. Because many of the Category 1 applicants were religious organizations not previously engaged in disaster response, a relatively high number of applicants were operating young programs. Over three-quarters (77%) of the programs were 5 years old or younger; 40% had been in existence for just one year or less (see Figure 1).

Size and Reach. Many of these programs operated on very modest budgets: nearly half of the FBO applicants reported an annual program budget of under \$25,000 (see Figure 2). But these groups served remarkable numbers of clients on those modest budgets. All together, the 262 programs deemed eligible for the competition served a total of 891,184 individuals in the past year (see Table 3 for the breakdown by category).

Organizational Type. Approximately 71 percent of the applicants this year were faith-based nonprofits; the remaining 29 percent were religious congregations of diverse types (see Figure 3). Applicants included mainline and Evangelical Protestant groups as well as Catholic, Mormon, and Jewish organizations.

All together, the 262 programs deemed eligible for the competition served a total of 891,184 individuals in the past year.

Volunteers. Most applicants utilized numerous volunteers to get their work done. Taken together, the applicants in Category One had mobilized 15,300 volunteers. Many of these were short-term or one-time volunteers, such as those who participated in initial feeding operations or housecleaning. In Category Two, the total was 24,380. For Category Three applicants, we asked for a report on the average number of volunteers active in any given month. Overall, the mean number of active volunteers on average per month was 18. Sixty-eight percent of the Category Three entrants reported 1-25 volunteers active each month; 19 percent reported 26-50 volunteers on average per month; and 6 percent reported 51-100 volunteers per month. The remaining 7 percent of applicants had the support of over 100 volunteers per month.

Collaboration Characteristics

We were interested in learning with what entities outside of the faith community FBOs were partnering. We uncovered a rich diversity: FBOs were active in collaborations with local government agencies, secular nonprofits, businesses, universities, prisons, hospitals, and public schools, among other groups. Although we anticipated a high degree of collaboration with FEMA, it was not the most common partner noted, even among Category One entrants. Table 4 shows the overall distribution of non faith-based partners reported by the 2006 entrants. The three most common were secular nonprofits, local/state government agencies, and businesses. Tables in later sections of the report provide specifics on secular partners by Category.

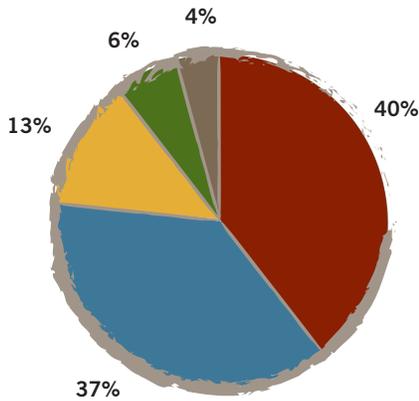


Figure 1
Age of Programs

1 year
2-5 years
6-9 years
10-15 years
>15 years

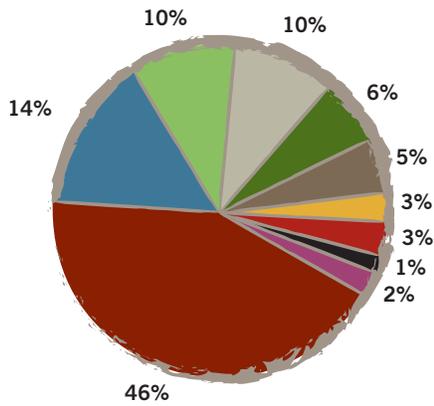


Figure 2
Annual Budget

Under \$25,000
\$25,000-49,999
\$50,000-99,999
\$100,000-149,999
\$150,000-249,999
\$250,000-349,999
\$350,000-499,999
\$500,000-749,999
\$750,000-999,999
Over \$1,000,000

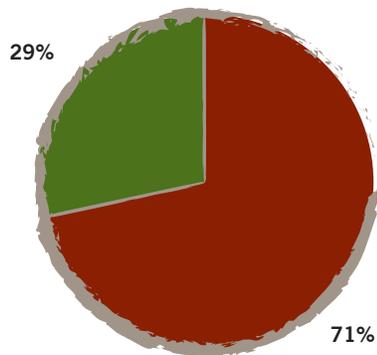


Figure 3
Category 1 Applicants
by Type

faith-based non profits
congregations

Table 4
Most Common Non Faith-based Partners

Partner type	#	%
FEMA	15	5.7
Red Cross	12	4.6
Federal Gov't Agency	8	3.1
State/local Gov't Agency	80	30.5
Public School	34	13
Police	22	8.4
Secular Nonprofit	112	42.7
Business	36	13.7
Fire Co./EMT	4	1.5
Public Hospital	13	5
Public Library	1	.4
University or College	10	3.8

[CATEGORY ONE]

EMERGENCY DISASTER RESPONSE

THERE... *When Disaster Strikes*

W “We were stunned. We didn’t know what to do. All that we had worked for was lost.” The words of this disaster victim from the southeast who lost her home sum up the experiences of millions of individuals traumatized by the numerous natural and man-made disasters assaulting the U.S. in the past decade. Katrina, of course, was the mother of all calamities. According to a senior official from the American Red Cross, it was a natural disaster 20 times larger than anything that veteran agency had ever faced before.¹ Officials estimated the affected area at some 90,000 square miles—equivalent to the size of Great Britain. Roughly one million people were displaced.²

For residents of the Gulf Coast and Florida, the names Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne are pregnant with meaning: the fury of these storms ravaged entire communities. In the Sunshine State alone, roughly one in five homes were damaged by these four back-to-back hurricanes of the infamous season of 2004. Outside of this region, the West Coast has coped with its own disasters, including fires, earthquakes, and mud slides. And who among us will ever forget the man-made disasters of the Oklahoma City bombings or the tragedy of 9/11?

We have immunity from neither the horrors of sudden natural calamities nor violent terrorist attacks. Uncertainty is a sad fact of life. But one thing is sure: when disasters do strike, faith-based organizations are there, ready to offer succor.

Descriptive Information: Category One Applicants

Through this year’s *Partners in Transformation* competition, we learned about over 50 faith-based, cross-sector collaborative programs engaged in disaster response. Seventy-one percent of these programs were directed by faith-based nonprofit organizations (Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, and Jewish) and 29 percent by religious congregations (see Figure 3).

Roughly two-thirds of Category One applicants were still operating their relief program at the time they entered the 2006 *Partners in Transformation* competition. The remaining one-third had ended their efforts (see Table 5). For those who reported they had terminated their program, the average length of the program was just over 11 weeks.

Category One applicants were involved in providing a wide variety of relief-oriented assistance. We asked applicants to indicate all services their program provided. The most common included provision of clothing, food, and referrals to social services agencies.

Table 5
Program Still Operating?

Program Ended	17
Program is Still Running	35
TOTAL	52

¹ Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means of Joseph C. Becker, Senior Vice President for Response and Preparedness, American Red Cross, December 13, 2005.

² Tony Pipa, *Weathering the Storm: The Role of Local Nonprofits in the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort* (Aspen Institute, 2006).

“As the human dimensions of Hurricane Katrina (and, later, its sister Hurricane Rita) unfolded, it became apparent that its scale and scope was overwhelming those normally tasked with responding to a disaster—FEMA, the state offices of emergency preparedness, the American Red Cross, and other nonprofit first-responders. Countless local churches and faith-based groups, nonprofit agencies, and foundations in Louisiana and Mississippi jumped into the fray. They did so spontaneously, and at considerable risk to their budgets and normal operations, because they knew that their resources and expertise could spell the difference for victims whose lives and health hung in the balance.”

— Tony Pipa, *Weathering the Storm: The Role of Local Nonprofits in the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort*

Half of the applicants were engaged in providing temporary shelter and nearly half provided trauma counseling (see Table 6).

Category One applicants were active in partnerships with a variety of public and secular entities. Their most common partners included state and local government agencies, secular nonprofits, and businesses (see Table 7).

Best Practices in Emergency Disaster Response

As described in greater detail below, the faith-based collaborations with the most impressive outcomes in short-term disaster relief were characterized by several common elements, including:

- Rapid response;
- Ability to serve hard-to-reach, vulnerable populations;
- Highly personalized, flexible aid;
- Ability to serve those ineligible for government assistance; and
- Frequent communication with partner organizations.

In Hattiesburg, MS and Lake Charles, LA, Florida Baptists had mobile kitchens up and running mere hours after Katrina and Rita struck. Countless small churches in the storm areas, many damaged themselves, spontaneously opened makeshift shelters and soup kitchens within the first few days. Before a short two months had passed, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief had prepared 10.5 million meals for Katrina victims. Large, well-established FBOs with experience in international disasters also mobilized resources and aid with remarkable speed and agility. For example, the Michigan-based agency, International Aid, poured \$40 million in relief aid to the Gulf Coast within the first fourteen weeks after Katrina’s landfall. The Salvation Army deployed its largest disaster response contingent ever in the wake of the storm and assisted nearly 1.6 million victims.

Obviously, in the face of emergency disasters, rapid response is critical. The average response time among our semi-finalists in Category One was 5.8 days; for our first and third prizewinners, it was one day. These response times were achieved with the help of thousands of volunteers. For example, this year’s ten semi-finalists for Category One mobilized a total of 6,412 volunteers. All together, the FBO applicants in Category One mobilized a total of 15,300 volunteers to serve those ravaged by disasters.

Table 6
Common Program Services of Category One Entrants

Type	%
emergency financial assistance	45%
temporary shelter	50%
food/meals	77%
medical care/Rx	36%
search & rescue	14%
matching refugees to host families for housing or friendship or material support	33%
referrals to social service agencies	61%
clothing	86%
transportation	53%
family reunification	27%
trauma counseling	48%
child care	23%
job assistance	44%
other	64%

Table 7
Category 1 Non Faith-based Partners

Partner type	%
FEMA	14.5
Red Cross	16.4
Federal Gov't Agency	3.6
State/local Gov't Agency	27.3
Public School	3.6
Police	9.1
Secular Nonprofit	23.6
Business	18.2
Fire Co./EMT	3.6
Public Hospital	1.8

All together, the FBO applicants in Category One mobilized a total of 15,300 volunteers to serve those ravaged by disasters.

FBOs and congregations are often the first groups to which people in need turn for help. Information provided by our Category One applicants further indicated that in some cases, FBOs were the *only* groups initially able to assist some hard-to-reach populations, such as impoverished sugar cane workers in rural central Florida. As Rick Pogue, the Red Cross’s senior vice president for human resources, explained in the wake of Katrina, “Even with our vast wingspan, we can’t do everything. We want to partner with [faith-based organizations] to get faster relief in future disasters. We have a challenge of getting into every single area.”³ Reverend Brian Braddock of Pastoral Ministries of Central Florida (our third place winner in Category One) agrees with Pogue’s assessment: “I can tell you as someone who’s personally been on the frontline of seven storms that the churches made it possible for the Red Cross to do its work, not the other way around.”

“Local religious congregations, nonprofits, and other private and public entities were sometimes sheltering as many evacuees as the American Red Cross. Their adaptability and responsiveness demonstrated the strength of their local expertise, relationships, and capability to reach and serve vulnerable populations and communities.”

— Tony Pipa, *Weathering the Storm: The Role of Local Nonprofits in the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort*

In addition to their quick response and ability to reach underserved populations, the high-scoring FBO applicants in Category One were also characterized by their ability to respond in highly flexible and personal ways to the needs of victims and evacuees. Muskogee Ministerial Alliance was our first place winner in Category One. It matched some 700 Katrina evacuees displaced to Camp Gruber in Oklahoma with host teams from

³ Judith Dobrzynski, “Shock of Katrina Pushes Black Charities to New Fund-Raising,” *New York Times* (November 14, 2005).

specific congregations. These teams provided the evacuees with a wide variety of practical and emotional supports. Caring people, the Alliance’s Kevin Stewart reports, are the most important resource the faith community has to offer. He elaborates: “For any program to make a change in people’s lives, people who care have to sit in front of the victims and look in their eyes and take care of them face-to-face.”

This kind of personalized aid was a hallmark of our second and third prizewinners as well. Evangel Temple of Wichita Falls, Texas customized services to address evacuees’ special health needs and it quickly established a tutoring program for the children staying at its “Compassion Center” family housing facility. Pastoral Ministries of Central Florida brought in not only huge quantities of general relief supplies to those in need, but provided specific items including particular brands of baby formula and diabetes testing strips. “The local pastors are the people who know the needs of the families and they can direct us to those needs with accuracy,” says the organization’s leader, Rev. Brian Braddock.

FBOs could also provide assistance to those ineligible for government aid, such as ex-felons or illegal immigrants. The *Miami Herald* reported on one undocumented immigrant, Miriam, whose mobile home was destroyed by Katrina. “A few weeks before the hurricane, I borrowed \$7,000 and bought a trailer in Davie, then the hurricane destroyed it,” she said. “All I have are debts.”⁴ Miriam could not receive help from FEMA, but was aided by World Relief, a Christian nonprofit. In Oklahoma, Muskogee Ministerial Alliance assisted ex-felons with housing and other practical services when they had been denied help elsewhere due to their criminal record.

Finally, Category One programs with strong outcomes were also characterized by close coordination and contact with their non-faith-based partners. Of all Category One applicants, approximately 61% were in contact with their partner a couple of times each week. The higher scoring programs had at least this level of contact and most had daily communication with their partners (see Table 8).

⁴ Roberto Santiago, “Charities Step Up Where Feds Cannot,” *Miami Herald* (Nov. 20, 2005).

Table 8
Frequency of Contact
with Non Faith-based Partner(s)

Amount	Semi Finalist	Finalists
Daily	70%	67%
Couple times a week	20%	33%
Once a week	—	—
Couple times a month	10%	—
Once a month	—	—
Less than once a month	—	—

"I can tell you as someone who's personally been on the frontline of seven storms that the churches made it possible for the Red Cross to do its work, not the other way around."

—Rev. Brian Braddock, *Director, Pastoral Ministries of Central Florida*

CATEGORY ONE SEMI-FINALISTS DESCRIPTIONS

[Short-Term Emergency Disaster Response]

Bass Memorial Academy (Lumberton, MS)

This 7th Day Adventist Boarding School, despite being hit hard by Hurricane Katrina, provided emergency shelter and hot meals to evacuees and became a major staging ground for the receipt and distribution of disaster relief supplies and some 1600 out-of-town volunteers. The local Sheriff's Department worked closely with Bass in traffic control, security, and referrals to elderly persons and shut-ins needing assistance.

North Davis Church of Christ (Arlington, TX)

This congregation transformed its facility into an emergency shelter and fed, housed, and provided medical care to 175 evacuees from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It provided an on-site social worker to develop individual case plans for each family, then mobilized over 250 volunteers to assist evacuees with transportation, job leads (80 percent of guests have obtained local work or been relocated to jobs elsewhere), and a myriad of supportive services. Key non-FBO partners included the Arlington Police Department, the Red Cross, and FEMA.

Henry S. Jacobs Camp (Utica, MS)

This Jewish FBO partnered with the City of Utica to provide emergency shelter for 250 individuals (including 70 residents from a nearby center for developmentally disabled adults) and operate a major relief supplies distribution network that moved over 3 million pounds of donated goods to over 60 frontline disaster response agencies. The Camp also hosted weekly "Utica Days" during which supplies garnered from around the nation were distributed to local families in need.

Muskogee Ministerial Alliance (Muskogee, OK)

Through its collaboration with Red Cross, OK Emergency Management, HUD, and USDA, MMA's "Disaster Relief Team" assisted over 700 Hurricane Katrina evacuees housed at Camp Gruber, a National Guard Training Base outside Muskogee. The Team provided immediate aid and matched each evacuee family that wished to resettle in OK with a sponsor church that helped them to locate and furnish permanent housing and to integrate socially and occupationally into the community.

Pastoral Ministries of Central Florida (Lake Placid, FL)

Pastoral Ministries partnered with the Red Cross to serve poor migrant and African American families in rural areas of central Florida following Hurricane Wilma. Food, tents, and other essentials were provided for 400 sugar cane workers and their families, who lost not only their homes and belongings, but also their jobs. In addition to meeting physical needs, several pastors addressed the emotional needs of these families by providing trauma counseling and support. Pastoral Ministries continues to assist a number of these families trying to get their lives back together.

**Evangel Temple Church (Wichita Falls, TX)**

This church responded to Katrina by purchasing a \$1.1 million building and furnishing it as a family-housing facility. This “Compassion Center” houses forty families and provides meals, transportation, after-school tutoring, and other social services. Non-FBO partners include Midwestern State University (provides volunteer tutors), Texas Workforce Commission (provides grants to underwrite salaries for residents who work as kitchen staff at the Compassion Center), and 90 corporations that have donated supplies, financial aid, and volunteers.

FaithAction (Greensboro, NC)

Through its “Piedmont Neighbors Care Team” initiative, this interfaith FBO has mobilized volunteer teams to befriend and assist evacuees displaced to NC from the Gulf Coast. Over 40 teams have assisted over 50 families to find permanent housing (and aided in the furnishing of the new residences). The teams have also helped evacuees in obtaining new jobs and enrolling their children in school. With the success of this initiative with evacuees, some of the volunteer teams now are assisting ten local families not affected by the hurricanes but in need due to domestic violence, house fires, or other serious crises.

Gateway Community Church (Webster, TX)

This congregation launched “CORE Base Camp” to serve as a mobilization, staging, and training center for over 1500 volunteers who have been deployed in relief efforts in Jackson County, MS. Teams assisted residents with home clean-up, repairs, and search & rescue. Key partners include Jackson County (which has helped plan and implement the Camp), Chevron Corporation (which has provided free electrical power to the Camp), and the Orphan Grain Train (which provides food weekly for the volunteer teams).

Mt. Carmel Baptist Church (Hattiesburg, MS)

This congregation converted its church building into an emergency shelter housing 72 individuals. It provided daily meals for its guests plus hundreds of relief workers/emergency personnel. It then leased a huge warehouse and formed a partnership of churches, community members (including inmates from the local Forrest County corrections center), and local government to serve as a major warehousing and distribution center of relief supplies for agencies responding to the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

Celebration Church (Metairie, LA)

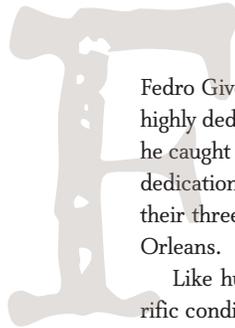
Celebration Church began operating a disaster relief and recovery center following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They teamed with other ministries and community organizations to provide over 3,500 hot meals as well as baby supplies, clothing, non-prescription medicines, and trauma counseling. With the help of the local government they were able to distribute supplies to first responders and residents. Celebration Church also used its school and gym to house volunteers from around the country and provided transportation using church vehicles to send these teams to New Orleans to help families remove debris and clean houses.



[FIRST PLACE]

Muskogee Ministerial Alliance (Muskogee, OK)

*Key Partners: U.S. Department of Agriculture, HUD,
Muskogee Housing Authority*



Fedro Givens, pastor of the Be Bee CME Church in Muskogee, OK, has some new and highly dedicated parishioners named Troy and Lashon in his congregation. One Sunday, he caught the couple walking to worship services...from several miles away! The couple's dedication to Givens' church stems from the multi-faceted help it has provided them and their three children since they lost everything under the muddy waters of flooded New Orleans.

Like hundreds of other Katrina victims, Troy and his family first endured the horrific conditions at the New Orleans Superdome, then were bussed to Dallas, and finally evacuated to Camp Gruber, a National Guard training center outside Muskogee, OK. There, with the help of the Muskogee Ministerial Alliance (MMA), their fortunes began to change.

MMA President Kevin Stewart had visited Camp Gruber as soon as he heard that some 1,500 evacuees would be arriving. He consulted with state and federal disaster response officials, asking how Muskogee's congregations could help. Quickly, in collaboration with the USDA and HUD, MMA devised a plan to find permanent housing situations for the evacuees at Camp Gruber who desired to remain in Oklahoma. MMA recruited church sponsors to be matched with individual families. Troy and Lashon's volunteer team worked with the former "Big Easy" residents to help them integrate into the Oklahoma town by enrolling their children in school and assisting Troy in finding a job.

"[F]or any program to make a change in people's lives, people that care have to sit in front of the victims and look in their eyes and take care of them face to face," emphasizes Pastor Stewart. "Here the faith-based community has something to offer: caring people. We have people who provide more than just a house and furniture. They are people who will invite others into their lives and their community." Like Lashon and Troy, each family at Camp Gruber had its own personal story, personal losses, and personal needs. Church sponsors offered what they could do best: highly individualized physical, emotional, and spiritual support. Simultaneously, USDA and the Muskogee Housing Authority provided rental assistance (vouchers) for evacuees. When an applicant did not qualify for a voucher (e.g., ex-felons were not eligible for government aid), church sponsors provided free housing for six months.

FAST FACTS

Muskogee Ministerial Alliance

Program launched within 1 day of the evacuees' arrival at Camp Gruber

790 individuals served

\$7,000 budget

Evacuees relocated to permanent housing within four weeks

Assistance provided to ex-felons not eligible for government help

To ensure the best possible assistance to the evacuees, MMA met with its partners daily. The USDA and HUD both provided clerical assistance to help MMA track and process applications from Camp Gruber families that wished to resettle permanently in Muskogee. Each evening, all partners met again to evaluate progress and make any necessary adjustments. By pooling resources and communicating closely, the MMA/government partnership achieved impressive results, placing over 700 evacuees in new homes within just four weeks.

Today, Troy's family resides in a better neighborhood, and his children attend higher-performing schools, than they did when they lived in New Orleans. Troy is making enough money to support his family and was recently able to pay off old parking tickets and reinstate his driver's license. Soon the family will be moving out of public assistance and buying their very first house.



“The church sponsors were the link to getting the evacuees off the base and helping them transition to a new living situation. Without this support, there was no plan in place to help the evacuees move out of camp.”

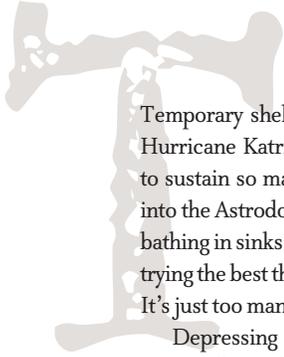
— Rev. Kevin Stewart, MMA President



[SECOND PLACE]

Evangel Temple Church (Wichita Falls, TX)

Key Partners: 90 local corporations, Texas Workforce Commission, Midwestern State University



Temporary shelters like the Houston Astrodome and Convention Center provided many Hurricane Katrina and Rita evacuees with a place to go, but obviously were not designed to sustain so many people for an extended period of time. With 15,000 evacuees brought into the Astrodome, it was no wonder that the *Houston Chronicle* soon reported, “People are bathing in sinks because the Astrodome’s toilets [are] backing up into the showers... They’re trying the best they can to help everybody, but they can’t be in every place all at the same time. It’s just too many people.”

Depressing images of the all-too-public and much-too-crowded Astrodome landed powerfully on the compassionate hearts of members at Evangel Temple Church in Wichita Falls, Texas, as did the wrenching accounts of evacuees’ losses. “The story of Hardy Jackson especially resonated with us,” recalls Chad Sykes, Associate Pastor. “His wife Tonette was swept away by the flood, and her last words to him were: ‘Take care of the kids and grand-kids.’ Those dying words became our mandate.” Sykes adds, “We knew that we must do what we could to provide a long-term solution for families with children in need of housing to help bring privacy, stability, community, and healing.”

So Evangel Temple Church stepped out in faith in a major way. The congregation purchased a \$1.1 million building not far from the church that previously was a nursing home. Church members and innumerable community volunteers refurbished the entire building in a matter of days, transforming it into the “Compassion Center,” a long-term family housing shelter. The task was Herculean, but local corporations, government agencies, and other churches joined together to make the ambitious vision come to life. On September 15th, Evangel Temple chartered two buses and brought the first group of evacuees from Houston to the Compassion Center.

With gratitude and sighs of relief, evacuee families began settling into suites with private bathrooms at the Center. In addition to the more personal accommodations, they found the church ready to help them with medical needs, childcare, three meals per day, clothing, transportation assistance, phone and internet access, job leads, and trauma counseling. After helping parents enroll their children in local schools, the church quickly established an after-school tutoring program at the Compassion Center using volunteers from Midwestern State University. Soon, 80 percent of the children living at the Center were enjoying individualized tutoring. The church also secured a grant from the Texas Workforce Commission to employ eight of the adult evacuees at the Center. Overall, its job assistance program helped 90 percent of the adult residents to secure employment. This multi-faceted aid proved Evangel Temple’s commitment to provide not merely housing, but the comprehensive services and tools that could help the families rebuild their lives.

FAST FACTS

Evangel Temple Church’s “Compassion Center”

Program launched within 10 days of Hurricane Katrina
157 individuals served
400 volunteers mobilized
80% of children received individualized tutoring
90% of residents employed

One Mother's Story

Rosalie, a single mom at the Compassion Center, has benefited from all that Evangel Temple has had to offer. But its most important aid was not material. Upon her arrival, her most pressing question was, "Can you help me find my daughter?"

Rosalie's child, Darrione, lives with Rosalie but visits her father a couple times each month in New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina made landfall during one of those visits. When Rosalie arrived in Wichita Falls, she was brimming over with anxiety, having had no word from Darrione in nearly two weeks. For the next 21 days, church staff and their partners (local government agencies and a legal aid center) spent countless hours helping with paper work, making phone calls, and scouring the Internet to try to locate the child. The hard work paid off: Darrione was found and Rosalie was able to go to New Orleans and bring her daughter back to Wichita Falls where they could begin a new life. Today, Darrione attends a local school and participates in the Center's after-school tutoring program.

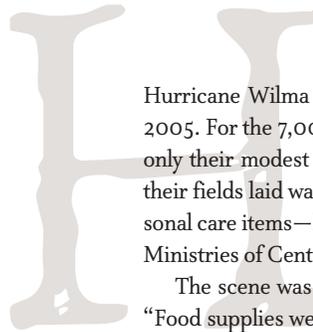




[THIRD PLACE]

Pastoral Ministries of Central Florida, Inc. (Lake Placid, FL)

Key Partner: The Red Cross



Hurricane Wilma made landfall in Florida at approximately 6:30 a.m. on October 24, 2005. For the 7,000 migrant farm workers in Highlands County, the storm destroyed not only their modest housing, but also their livelihood. With their mobile homes gone and their fields laid waste, the farm workers were in desperate need of food, shelter, and personal care items—but had no source of income to provide these for their families. Pastoral Ministries of Central Florida (PMCF) saw the need and responded.

The scene was dire in Clewiston, FL when PMCF President Brian Braddock arrived. “Food supplies were very scarce and baby care items such as diapers could not be found. Mothers were using newspapers to wrap their infants and small children were sleeping by the hundreds in the grass or under cardboard shelters,” Rev. Braddock recalls. “Diabetics were going without insulin or medication, as were heart patients and others with serious needs.”

As was in the case in previous hurricanes, the Red Cross was willing to provide aid, but needed the faith community to reach some of the most remote areas in central Florida. Since PMCF had established relationships with a Spanish-speaking Pentecostal church serving a very rural community of about 400 sugar cane workers, the Red Cross needed Braddock’s group as a key distribution channel. Working together, the two organizations were able to open emergency shelters, mobilize volunteers, and get relief supplies in quickly. PMCF also partnered with local newspapers to get the word out regarding the need for donations for the farm workers.

“Food supplies were very scarce and baby care items such as diapers could not be found. Mothers were using newspapers to wrap their infants and small children were sleeping by the hundreds in the grass or under cardboard shelters.”

— Rev. Brian Braddock, *Pastoral Ministries of Central Florida*

Although it has no formal budget and no paid staff, Pastoral Ministries succeeded in providing financial aid, meals, clothing, and social service referrals to the migrant families and sugar cane workers within one week. Indeed, their first two trucks of food, water, baby supplies, tarps, bug repellent, and personal care items arrived in Clewiston within ten hours of the storm’s end. PMCF also distributed tents to provide temporary shelter for many individuals unable to reach the Red Cross’ facilities. All together, PMCF delivered 18

FAST FACTS Pastoral Ministries of Central Florida

Program launched within 1 day of Hurricane Wilma
Approximately 500 individuals served
No paid staff or formal budget
Served remote migrant farm and sugar cane workers

tons of supplies in response to Wilma. Of course, material needs were not the only ones evident in Clewiston. As a certified trauma counselor, Rev. Braddock was able to respond to victims' emotional and spiritual needs as well.

A Widow in Need

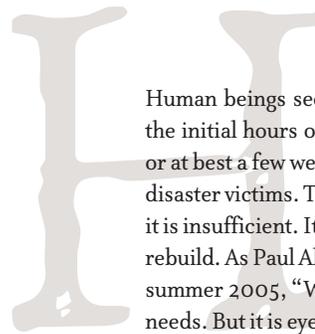
While delivering food packages prepared by Rev. Benjamin Escorcía's Pentecostal Church, PMCF volunteers were approached by a young mother of four who had just lost her 32-year-old husband to a heart attack the week before. Now, Wilma had ravaged their simple block home—ripping off the roof, smashing all the windows, and destroying nearly all the house's contents. Escorcía's church supplied a temporary residence for the family and Braddock contacted Habitat for Humanity to see what aid it could supply for this devastated widow. Habitat responded the very next day, sending out a crew of volunteers that replaced the home's roof, windows, and kitchen and bathroom cabinets. Electricity service was still cut off, and the house lacked carpeting, but now it was at least livable. PMCF supplied food and new wardrobes for the entire family, toys for the children, and all necessary household supplies. PMCF has been providing this family with counseling throughout the crisis and recently delivered a brand new stove and refrigerator purchased with its award grant from the 2006 *Partners in Transformation* competition.



[CATEGORY TWO]

LONG TERM COMMUNITY RECOVERY

THERE... After Others Have Left



Human beings seem plagued with short attention spans. Riveted to media coverage in the initial hours of a disaster, our interest wanes rapidly in the aftermath. Within days, or at best a few weeks, those distant from the site of the tragedy have nearly forgotten the disaster victims. That poses a challenge, since while short-term emergency relief is vital, it is insufficient. It takes years for individuals and families to recover and communities to rebuild. As Paul Alonso, a Baptist pastor in Florida told a denominational reporter in late summer 2005, “When we have hurricanes people generally rush to meet the immediate needs. But it is eye-opening when we are nearing the end of 2005 and there is still a need to help those who were the victims of a hurricane from the summer of 2004.”¹

One year after Hurricane Charley, the first of four storms to blast Florida in the infamous hurricane season of 2004, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reported that 8,232 of its temporary housing units were still occupied by storm victims.² Even when billions of dollars in aid are invested in devastated communities (and over five and half billion were spent following the 2004 season) recovery is a slow, difficult, and complex process. A *USA Today*/Gallup poll conducted on Katrina’s one-year anniversary asked storm survivors how they were faring. 56% said that “things aren’t back to normal, but will be;” 26% reported that things will “never be back to normal;” and just 16% said that “things were already back to normal” for them.³

In light of these realities, we felt it important that the 2006 *Partners in Transformation* competition include an entry category for FBOs engaged in collaborations focused on long-term community recovery and rebuilding. Not surprisingly, this category generated fewer applicants than the other two: a total of 37 eligible programs competed. Of these, churches operated eight programs and faith-based nonprofits operated 29.

Descriptive Information: Category Two Applicants

Category Two applicants were engaged in a variety of rebuilding/recovery services, including housing redevelopment, counseling, occupational retraining, and others (see Table 9).

In short-term relief, “mass care” programs are limited in their ability to be highly personalized. The task at hand is to feed or house quickly as many persons in need as possible. In longer-term community recovery efforts, though, more extended relationships are built

Table 9
Common Services (Category 2 Entrants)

housing redevelopment	34%
financial assistance (e.g., mortgage assistance)	30%
community development	45%
job training and/or occupational re-training	34%
youth education	25%
financial literacy training	27%
referrals to social service agencies	73%
adult education	36%
counseling	57%
other	61%

1 Barbara Denman, “United After the Storm: FL Baptists Reach Out,” *Florida Baptist Witness* (Aug. 10, 2006)

2 “Florida 2004 Hurricane Recovery Passes \$5.6 Billion Mark” (August 12, 2005)
<http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=18305>

3 Susan Page and William Risser, “Year After Katrina, Few Fully Recovered,” *USA Today* (August 21, 2006), p. 1.

and programs last longer. *Listening* to program participants, understanding the unique elements of their situation, and integrating their input are important factors. Consequently, our judges explored the character of the applicants' programs, looking for those that were highly relational and personalized and that gave participants abundant opportunities to have input into their own recovery/rebuilding strategy. Table 10 summarizes our findings.

We were also interested in the extent to which our Category Two applicants were targeting their assistance to the populations most in need and in the efforts they made to avoid duplicating other agencies' work. As shown in Table 11, roughly two-thirds of the entrants included screening of applicants according to their financial needs and targeted their aid to the poorest, the elderly, or the uninsured. In addition, over three-quarters of applicants said they strove "very hard" to avoid duplicating others' work. This was achieved most commonly through their regular communication with other long-term recovery agencies and their membership on various coordinating committees.

Best Practices in Long-Term Community Recovery/Rebuilding

Based on our judges' review of the Category Two applications, it seems clear that flexibility, attention to detail, and individually tailored approaches to service are hallmarks of effective long-term recovery efforts. No two storm victims or evacuees are exactly alike and paths to healing and re-stabilization will vary. High-scoring applicants from Category Two demonstrated their tailored responsiveness to applicants in several ways. Many matched evacuees with their own personal support team (usually composed of congregational volunteers) to assist them with either temporary residence or permanent relocation. Teams were able to focus exclusively on their adopted evacuee or evacuee family. They connected elderly storm victims with new doctors and tracked down medical records. They drove parents with young children to different schools to help them find the best matches and reenroll students as soon as possible to avoid further disruption in their education. They investigated job leads and secured donated vehicles to help heads of households eager to get to work. Most importantly, they walked alongside the evacuees for as long as needed—and that meant that those who had suffered greatly did not feel alone. To do their work well, these FBOs engaged in extensive contact with their program participants. Over half (56%) of the Category Two applicants had contact with their clients at least once per week or more often (see Table 12).

High-scoring applicants also demonstrated effective coordination and advocacy on behalf of those they served. This was critical for at least two reasons.

First, in order to avoid duplication, offer as many "wrap-around" services as possible, and guard against people in need "falling through the cracks," the various aid organizations needed good communication. The high-scoring applicants in Category Two excelled in this regard, staying in close contact with their key partners. Among the semi-finalists in Category Two, 60% were in contact with their partners at least once per week, and 100% of our finalists were in contact with their partners at least once each week.

In a report examining the relationships between FBOs, community groups, and the major first-responders (FEMA, Red Cross) during Katrina, researcher Tony Pipa concluded that a key weakness in the current national disaster response system is its inability to "integrate the many rather than depend on the few."⁴ FEMA and Red Cross disputed whose role it was to provide effective coordination with the innumerable FBOs, congregations, international aid organizations, and small nonprofits that emerged to supply valuable services and resources. Many of these groups were new to disaster response, thrust into their roles by the magnitude of the need. Based on interviews with leaders of such groups

⁴ Pipa, *Weathering the Storm*, p. 19.

Table 10
Program Characteristics: One

	All	Semi Finalists	Finalists
Very Relational	77.5%	90%	100%
Somewhat Relational	15%	10%	—
Not Very Relational	7.5%	—	—
Not Very Individualized	10%	90%	100%
Somewhat Individualized	7.5%	10%	—
Very Individualized	77.5%	—	—
Much Client Input	67.5%	100%	100%
Some Client Input	22.5%	—	—
Little Client Input	7.5%	—	—

Table 11
Program Characteristics: Two

	All	Semi Finalists	Finalists
Assistance Targeted to Neediest			
Very true of program	60%	70%	66.7%
Somewhat true	32.5%	30%	33.3%
Not very true	7.5%	—	—
"We strive hard to avoid duplication"			
Very true of program	77.5%	90%	100%
Somewhat true	15%	—	—
Not very true	7.5%	10%	—

Table 12
Frequency of Client Contact

	All	Semi Finalists	Finalists
Daily	29%	—	—
Few times a week	17%	20%	33.3%
Once a week	9.7%	10%	—
Couple times/month	14.6%	10%	—
Less than once/month	2.4%	—	—
Other	26.8%	60%	66.7%

in Louisiana and Mississippi, Pipa found that they “encountered [a] bewildering situation in which officials and systems seemed habitually to discount their abilities, complicate their ability to find critical financial resources, or hinder attempts to acquire crucial information and coordinate in a fashion that would help them perform to their highest potential.”⁵

The successes of the multi-sector collaborations we uncovered through the *Partners in Transformation* competition are, thus, particularly impressive given this general climate of weak coordination and communication. Our third place winner in Category Two, Texas Interfaith Disaster Response (TIDR), is an illuminating example. One of its primary activities has been to coordinate aid efforts for over 3,000 evacuees throughout a nine-county area of central Texas. It established a Communication Center, staffed by two paid employees (both evacuees themselves) and some 40 volunteers, that operates daily. TIDR’s executive director focuses on keeping strong relationships with some 16 partner agencies, promoting healthy communication and coordination and avoiding duplication. TIDR also employs a media specialist who works with approximately 75 media outlets on the Austin area to provide news updates, Public Service Announcements, and solicitations for volunteers.

Second, the high-scoring programs in Category Two performed strong advocacy on behalf of evacuees. This role is important given the typical stages disaster victims go through emotionally. Disaster response mental health expert Gilbert Reyes explains that most victims pass relatively quickly through the first two stages—a “heroic” phase, characterized by altruism and service to others, and the “honeymoon” phase, during which survivors express gratitude and admiration for one another and those who rescued and assisted them. Then they can get stuck in what he labels the “disillusionment phase.” This stage is marked, Reyes says, by “a worsening of pre-disaster divisions and inevitable finger-pointing.”⁶ In this third phase, patient and persistent efforts by aid groups are desperately needed, as victims reach points of hopelessness and anger.

In addition, aid agencies often need to step up their advocacy and coordination efforts on behalf of survivors at this point. Reyes explains: “People in distress may feel intimidated by or unable to gain access to assistance and resources from powerful entities such as government agencies and large organizations.” Thus, aid groups can play key roles in helping people navigate the bureaucracies, securing assistance for which they are eligible. And this is precisely what our Category Two winners did with excellence. Suzanne Yack, Vice President at our first place winner, the “Women to the Rescue” program of Fresh Ministries of Jacksonville, Florida, put it bluntly:

Our program allows people who share the philosophy of “the Buck Stops Here” to get involved as problem solvers, advocates and family coaches for Katrina evacuees... We wanted to get the job done, no excuses. People [were] not sent elsewhere. There was so much bureaucracy in the assistance groups, and families were getting routed from one voice mail to another, getting contradictory information, not understanding what was being said, and certainly feeling frustrated... [We are] a direct, person-to-person response after the collapse of the existing relief network following Hurricane Katrina. There was a lot of official talk, but inadequate action. We sent out an email asking women to roll up their sleeves and start resettling the families coming to Jacksonville.

Another promising practice employed by some of our Category Two applicants was hiring disaster victims/evacuees on their own staffs. These FBOs recognized the powerful way

⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶ “To the Rescue: An Interview with Disaster Mental Health Specialist Gilbert Reyes, Ph.D.,” *Fielding Focus* (Winter 2006).

such individuals could connect and build rapport and trust with other evacuees. Some of the applicants also took the smart step of assigning a single specific case manager to each supplicant, so that program beneficiaries would have one central point of contact and avoid having to complete multiple intakes and needs assessments.

In addition to critical mentoring, support, and advocacy efforts, our high-scoring applicants were also engaged in the very practical work of physical rehabilitation and new housing construction. They conducted such operations with attention to avoiding duplication, targeting efforts to those most in need (such as families lacking insurance), and multiplying their impact by mobilizing huge volunteer teams. For example, our second place winner, Pine Island Long Term Recovery Organization, has utilized 412 volunteers since opening in 2004. As a result of this huge work team, it has so far been able to complete work on 454 cases out of the 486 aid cases (focused on home repairs/rehabilitation) they've taken on. Moreover, the majority of Category Two applicants (80%) had previous experience in rebuilding efforts and so could bring their expertise to bear on designing and implementing their current programs.

First place finisher Fresh Ministries gained extra points from our judges for a creative measure they adopted to help evacuees begin building up new financial equity. Fresh Ministries adapted their existing IDA (Individual Development Account) program to assist evacuees resettling in Jacksonville. IDAs are matched savings accounts that empower low to moderate-income families to begin building assets. The ministry established a 2-for-1 matched savings program for evacuees in order to help them build up savings that could be used to purchase a home to replace what Katrina had taken from them. In this way, Fresh Ministries truly provided not merely a temporary handout to disaster victims, but a real hand-up.

Since community-rebuilding efforts take time, the PiT judges also evaluated the Category Two applicants' organizational sustainability. After all, to be effective in this field of service requires a "staying power" of a minimum of five years, if not longer. Organizations that last are characterized by common elements: strong governance by a healthy board of directors; a clear mission statement; a written strategic plan; and a defined fund-development strategy so that the agency will not operate hand-to-mouth. Our top-scoring programs in Category Two were directed by organizations that had these key "sustainability" factors in place (see Table 13).

Category 2 Non Faith-based Partners

Partner type	%
FEMA	10.8
Red Cross	5.4
Federal Gov't Agency	2.7
State/local Gov't Agency	32.4
Public School	5.4
Police	10.8
Secular Nonprofit	40.5
Business	13.5
Fire Co./EMT	5.4
University or College	5.4

Table 13
Organizational Sustainability Factors

	All Category 2		Semi-finalists	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
The organization has a written mission statement.	100%	0%	100%	0%
The organization has a written strategic plan that we are currently following.	80%	20%	70%	30%
The organization has a written fund-development/fund-raising plan.	62.5%	37.5%	70%	30%
The organization has previous experience & expertise in operating community recovery/rebuilding programs.	62.5%	37.5%	80%	20%
The organization has a formal Board of Directors (or Advisors) that meets at least four times per year.	90%	10%	100%	0%

CATEGORY TWO SEMI-FINALISTS DESCRIPTIONS

[Long-Term Community Recovery/Rebuilding Efforts]

Rebuild Polk After Disaster (Lake Wales, FL)

This collaborative program involving congregations, the Salvation Army, and several small city governments works together to rebuild (and fortify) homes damaged by the three hurricanes that hit Polk County in 2004. It has mobilized nearly 750 volunteers and served over 2200 individuals, providing home building, financial assistance, and furniture.

Fresh Ministries (Jacksonville, FL)

The “Women to the Rescue Hurricane Relief Project” has mobilized roughly 150 volunteers to serve as resettlement teams to assist Katrina evacuees in making a new life in Jacksonville. The program offers a matched saving “Individual Development Account” (2 for 1 match) to assist evacuees in building assets towards the purchase of a new home. It innovated a “virtual warehouse” where donors can input information about items they are willing to provide to evacuees (furniture, appliances, etc.) and team leaders can check the inventory for items needed by the families they are serving.

Dayspring Counseling Center (Irving, TX)

Victims of disaster experience significant trauma. While financial and material assistance is important, victims also often need significant immediate and on-going emotional support. Dayspring, a small FBO, has provided hundreds of hours of free counseling sessions and seminars to 300 Katrina evacuees displaced to Irving, TX. It collaborated with the Irving School District, which received almost 400 new pupils from Katrina families. The District provided transportation, funding, referrals, and parenting classes while Dayspring focused on individual and group counseling.

Christians Helping in Recovery Process (Wauchula, FL)

Their “Rebuild Hardee County After Disasters” initiative repairs and rebuilds homes damaged by the 2004 hurricanes for low-income families in this largely rural area. CHIRP caseworkers provide case management services for English and Spanish-speaking families in need, coordinating short-term financial and material assistance as needed with longer-term help in rebuilding homes. CHIRP collaborates closely with FEMA and the Hardee County Emergency Operations Center to share program and materials costs, client identification, and implementation of rebuilding efforts.

Victory Christian Fellowship (Lynchburg, VA)

For the past three years, on a remarkably modest budget, Victory House Outreach Ministry has provided transitional shelter for families that have lost their home to fire or flood. The Outreach House was built through collaborative efforts with the Lynchburg Fire and EMS Department and the Lynchburg Police Department. With the house occupied over 85 percent of the time, the ministry has begun construction on a second Outreach House in order to serve more families.

**Back Bay Mission (Biloxi, MS)**

The Mission’s “Housing Rehabilitation and Rebuilding the Mississippi Gulf Coast” initiative is collaborating with the City of Biloxi and the City of Gulfport to rebuild homes. The Mission has been involved in housing repair work since 1966, recruiting and deploying volunteer teams to serve low-income homeowners. With the devastating 2005 hurricanes—which damaged its own facilities—Back Bay Mission has assumed the fresh challenge of building brand new homes for families whose houses are unsalvageable.

Catholic Charities of Central Florida Criminal Justice Office (Orlando, FL)

This unique program provides counseling, peer support, and educational programs for law enforcement officers and their families throughout Central Florida. Established in 1992, the program aims to support police officers whose high stress jobs—particularly in times of major emergencies—can contribute to marital problems, domestic violence, and suicide. For example, the Unit has responded to the needs of officers who served on the frontlines responding to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and who have relocated to FL.

Texas Interfaith Disaster Response (Austin, TX)

TIDR seeks to coordinate relief and long-term recovery efforts with a variety of faith-based and secular agencies. The group meets weekly and involves numerous agencies from across the city, facilitating communication and information exchange, and helping to avoid duplication of services. Its Communication Center provides a vital link between evacuees and the community agencies working to assist them and it has mobilized and trained 250 volunteer chaplains to provide care to evacuee families.

Pine Island Long Term Recovery Organization (Bokeelia, FL)

This program assists residents of greater Pine Island with recovery from the four hurricanes that struck the locale in 2004. It has served over 1,000 individuals (454 in the past 12 months) by recruiting donations from businesses and mobilizing over 400 volunteers to help rebuild and repair homes. It works closely with Centro Campesino to serve migrant workers (22 mobile homes for farm workers who lost their homes have been provided) as well as with FEMA, Red Cross, local government, businesses, and the Conrad Hilton Foundation.

Neighbors Inc. (Montgomery, AL)

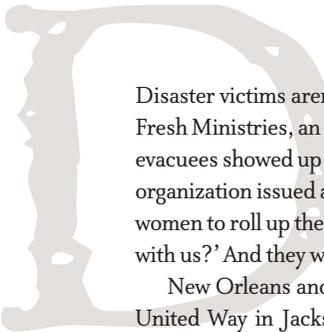
Mother Nature is not the only disaster-maker. Neighbors Inc. works to meet the needs of those struck by personal disaster: victims of crime. It partners with the Montgomery Police Department and the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Department and other agencies to provide services such as home and property repairs, transportation services, temporary housing, counseling, and spiritual support to those who have suffered violent or property crimes.



[FIRST PLACE]

First Place: Fresh Ministries’ “Women to the Rescue” (Jacksonville, FL)

Key Partners: *Volunteer Florida, Florida Hurricane Relief Fund, Volunteer Jacksonville*



Disaster victims aren’t the only ones who hate bureaucracy. So do the energetic leaders at Fresh Ministries, an ecumenical nonprofit in Jacksonville, Florida. So when 2,000 Katrina evacuees showed up in their hometown with little more than the clothes on their backs, the organization issued a challenge to the women of Jacksonville. “We sent out an email asking women to roll up their sleeves and start resettling the families ... We said, ‘Women, are you with us?’ And they were,” reports Fresh Ministries’ Vice President Susanne Yack.

New Orleans and Gulfport evacuees quickly overwhelmed the Red Cross, FEMA, and United Way in Jacksonville. Not surprisingly, many evacuees got mired in the bureaucracy—experiencing trouble in reaching staff or receiving conflicting or confusing information. They needed some place else to turn. Fresh Ministries had been working to help victims of hurricanes for years—but mainly by sending relief supplies out to affected areas. They needed a new approach to serve their new neighbors, and “Women to the Rescue” was born.

Fresh Ministries targeted their recruitment efforts on highly competent female leaders and executives with large personal networks. They asked these ladies to serve as Team Leaders. Each Team Leader was expected to mobilize a handful of other women volunteers to serve as a coaching team to help evacuees with every detail of resettlement. The team’s focus is on problem solving. As Yack puts it, “We share a philosophy of ‘The Buck Stops Here.’”

The strategy proved both relational and efficient. Women to the Rescue successfully resettled over 80 families within a few months with the aid of some 150 volunteers. Teams assisted families in securing housing and jobs, registering children for school, and locating new doctors and attorneys. Team leaders served as the primary contact with the family and then kept the rest of the team updated on needs and issues through email. With the strong support and coaching provided by team members, evacuees no longer felt isolated and alone. And the practical aid they received kept many from becoming dependent on public resources.

To avoid bureaucracy, team leaders were given great latitude and autonomy. If a team felt it was best suited to tackling particular tasks for several families rather than mentoring one single family, Fresh Ministries gave a green light. One team, for example, decided to cook and freeze meals for numerous storm victims.

Creativity was another hallmark of Fresh Ministries’ approach. To get material resources from donors to families efficiently, Fresh Ministries worked with Volunteer Florida to create a “virtual warehouse.” On this website, donors post the items they wish to donate such as cars, furniture, gift certificates, or clothing. Fresh Ministries evaluates the quality

FAST FACTS

Fresh Ministries’ “Women to the Rescue”

1,350 individuals served on a budget of \$100,000

Average of 60 volunteers each month

80+ families adopted

100% of adopted families had stable housing within 6 weeks

95% of adults in adopted families are currently employed

of the items; those approved are added into the virtual warehouse's inventory list. Team leaders can access the site to review the inventory. In consultation with families in need, team leaders can then select items most appropriate. Donors keep their items until such a match is made. When it is, donors and volunteers arrange for transporting the items to the families. To help the evacuees further, Fresh Ministries also offers them Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). These are special tax-free, matched savings accounts. For each dollar saved by the evacuee, Fresh Ministries puts two dollars into the IDA. In this way, evacuees can begin building up capital to purchase a new home.

Fresh Ministries' innovative, grassroots, and volunteer-driven method of recovery has worked so well that its program is now being replicated by Volunteer Florida as "Neighbors to the Rescue" in nine counties across the Sunshine State. Florida's Lt. Governor Toni Jennings announced the new initiative in November 2005, as a key part of the state's response to Hurricane Wilma. Neighbors to the Rescue follows Fresh Ministries' model almost identically, though without the specific focus on female volunteers. By replicating this model, more and more Florida communities are being strengthened in their ability to become knowledgeable in disaster recovery and to build a culture of preparedness for subsequent disasters.





[SECOND PLACE]

Pine Island Long Term Recovery Relief Organization (Bokeelia, FL)

Key Partners: *Cape Coral Housing, Lee County Long Term Recovery, Volunteer Florida Association, Builders Care, Centro Campesino*

FAST FACTS Pine Island Long Term Recovery Organization

Program launched in 2004
in response to Hurricane Charley

Nearly 1,500 individuals served

Over 400 volunteers mobilized

22 replacement mobile homes
provided for farm workers

Have completed 75% of all home repairs requests
from elderly, low-income, and uninsured residents

Florida officials estimate that 1 in 5 homes were damaged by the four devastating hurricanes that battered the state during the infamous 2004 season. Following the first—Hurricane Charley—Pine Island residents gathered at the local United Methodist Church to determine how they would rise up from the destruction. Thus was the “Pine Island Long Term Recovery Relief Organization” (PILTRO) born, with the ambitious mission of coordinating and managing long-term recovery efforts. PILTRO’s founders envisioned an organization that would help displaced residents secure affordable replacement housing; offer home repair assistance to those who failed to qualify for local, state, or federal aid; provide systems for emotional, spiritual, and mental health support during long-term recovery; and advocate ongoing emergency preparedness within this close-knit community of 9,000 residents.

Since its formation, PILTRO has helped nearly 1,500 individuals with housing redevelopment, housing repairs, and replacement furniture and appliances, as well with referrals to social service agencies and guidance in navigating bureaucracies and filing paper work. This impressive impact is made possible by the enormous volunteer support PILTRO has been able to mobilize: over 400 volunteers since the program began, with nearly 50 participating monthly. PILTRO’s Volunteer Coordinator uses a skills evaluation form to place volunteers at job sites where they can best utilize their skill sets.

“Since we are in the process of helping our clients rebuild their lives as well as their homes, we support their control over the decisions necessary to recover... We initiate the contacts that will help the client become more and more independent in his/her decision-making process.”

— Jill Davidson, *PILTRO Office Administrator*

With the physical help and professional knowledge of both volunteers and key partners, PILTRO has been able to complete home repairs for 75% of their clients who have so far sought aid. The ministry has aided vulnerable populations that are often overlooked and underserved, such as migrant farm workers and the elderly. For example, PILTRO provided 22 replacement mobile homes within six months for displaced farm workers and gave two other mobile homes to elderly persons that lacked insurance. Roughly three-quarters of senior citizens without insurance who sought aid from PILTRO are living now in fully restored homes.

One Family's Story

Crisis hit one Pine Island family of three when Hurricane Charley struck. Émigrés from Mexico, the mother and father work hard to provide for their severely handicapped son, who suffers from cerebral palsy. The storm left their home in shambles and destroyed all of their possessions. Once self-sufficient, this family now needed their neighbors' help. PILTRO was there, ready to work with the family in brainstorming a recovery plan. Listening to the families and getting their input into the process is important, PILTRO believes, in returning disaster victims to independence. PILTRO found the family initial emergency shelter, then moved them to a nearby motel, and eventually helped them to get set up in a temporary apartment. Because of its numerous collaborations with other community agencies, PILTRO was able to offer this family vouchers for Wal-Mart and Winn Dixie for food and clothing, and to arrange emergency medical services for their son. Today, mom, dad, and son are happily settled into a replacement mobile home with two bedrooms, and a medical supply company has donated a hospital bed for the boy. With the father now back at work, this family has returned to self-sufficiency.





[THIRD PLACE]

Texas Interfaith Disaster Response (Austin, TX)

Key Partners: *Refugee Services of Texas, Goodwill/Worksource, FEMA, City of Austin*

FAST FACTS

Texas Interfaith Disaster Response

Serves a 9-county area in Central Texas
3,000 evacuees aided
Committed to providing at least two years of services for evacuees
250 volunteer chaplains deployed for counseling and emotional support of evacuees
Distributed over \$50,000 in debit and gift cards, as well as thousands of furniture items

When disaster strikes, chaos can quickly follow. In this, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were no exceptions. Their scale overwhelmed even veteran agencies with decades of emergency response experience. Thankfully, numerous community and faith-based aid groups emerged to join government entities and the Red Cross in efforts to serve victims. But the very breadth of responders heightened the need for good coordination and communication. In the Austin area, as thousands of evacuees arrived, Texas Interfaith Disaster Response (TIDR) stepped in to help people and organizations connect effectively.

TIDR provides two essential and related services: Communications Center assistance and casework assistance. The Communication Center, operated by two staff plus volunteers, has already responded to needs from 3,000 evacuees. The Center provides a vital link between evacuees and the community agencies working to assist them. Center workers share timely news updates, answer evacuee questions, schedule pick-ups and deliveries of furniture, food, and household goods, arrange transportation to medical and other appointments, and refer evacuees as needed to professional caseworkers and government and nonprofit agencies. With its numerous connections to congregations, TIDR secures many donations of house wares and furniture to give to those resettling in the area. To ensure that those in the most pressing situations receive first priority, TIDR workers employ a needs assessment tool that identifies those individuals—such as the elderly or disabled—who are at highest risk.

To further advance good communication, TIDR also hosts regular meetings with partners such as Goodwill, Refugee Services of Texas, and FEMA to discuss and plan how best to meet the needs of those new to the community. TIDR also employs a Communications Specialist who works to keep evacuees, volunteers, service organizations, and the community at large informed and connected through press releases and announcements on community billboards and calendars.

“[Our] level of cooperation and collaboration has opened the door for information-sharing between agencies and congregations that never existed prior to these disasters. This culture of information-sharing and utilization of new interpersonal and interagency relationships has helped prevent unnecessary duplication of effort and made it possible for groups with shared goals to pool their limited human and financial resources.”

— Gingo Scott, TIDR Communications Specialist

In certain instances, TIDR connects evacuees with one of its own caseworkers. Caseworkers conduct assessments and schedule client appointments with agencies and professionals. They have also served evacuees by arranging transportation, securing new identification papers, and even helping families bury loved ones. The larger organizations have many material resources to offer evacuees, but the personal attention TIDR is able to provide—and its commitment to offer services to evacuees for up to two years—is unique.



[CATEGORY THREE]

SERVICE TO DEEP POCKETS OF POVERTY

THERE... In the places long-forgotten

“Floods wash away the surface of society, the settled way things have been done. They expose the underlying power structures, the injustices, the patterns of corruption and the unacknowledged inequalities.”¹

— David Brooks

Storms and natural disasters such as Katrina always hit marginal groups in society harder than they do other segments. Women, many of whom were primary caregivers for their children, were vastly over-represented among those in New Orleans’ shelters, reflecting... the glaring statistical fact that women in America are more likely to live below the poverty line. Similarly, the elderly and disabled faced some of the most severe horrors of Katrina, again in part because they constitute a disproportionately high percentage of those who are impoverished... By now, we have all heard the damning statistics about the demographics of New Orleans residents so devastated by Katrina: 67% are African American, 28% live below the poverty line (of whom 84% are black), 100,000 had no car, and therefore had no ability to flee the city when the storm hit.²

— Paul Frymer, Dara C. Strolovitch, and Dorian T. Warren

Americans who watched CNN as it reported on Katrina and the bursting levees in New Orleans saw not only floodwaters, mud, and destruction. They saw the poor.

Although we may wish to consider calamities “equal opportunity” violators, the reality is that some groups—the poor, the sick, the elderly, the immigrant—typically suffer more. The quotes above, from a well-known conservative columnist and a liberal academic journal, suggest widespread acknowledgement of this fact. Television coverage of Katrina made the reality visually obvious.

Since Katrina exposed deep pockets of poverty in America in such a visceral way, we thought it appropriate that the 2006 *Partners in Transformation* competition honor not only

¹ David Brooks, “The Bursting Point,” *New York Times* (September 4, 2006).

² “Katrina’s Political Roots and Divisions: Race, Class, and Federalism in American Politics,” *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, Social Science Resource Council website (posted September 28, 2005).

FBOs responding to the short and long term needs of those affected by disasters, but also those organizations that have faithfully labored in neglected communities or among deeply impoverished population groups. We uncovered many who are there in the places long forgotten.

One hundred seventy faith-based collaborative programs competed for recognition in Category Three. Seventy-seven percent of these were operated by faith-based nonprofits, the rest by religious congregations. In some instances, the programs focused on particular persistent poverty neighborhoods, such as the *colonias* of south Texas or blighted inner-city neighborhoods. In others, they focused on specific struggling population groups such as the homeless or female ex-offenders.

Our Category Three applicants were involved in a variety of service types (see Table 14). Youth services, including leadership and life skills development, mentoring, and education, were the most common.

The high-scoring Category Three applicants shared some common promising practices. First, they emphasized building strong relationships with program participants. As displayed in Table 15, 70 percent of the semi-finalists, and 99 percent of the finalists, had contact with their program participants at least a couple times each week (compared with 43 percent average across all Category Three entrants).

Second, in most instances, the highest-scoring programs were able to utilize significant numbers of volunteers and keep their cost-per-participant modest. For example, the second place finisher, Pharr Literacy Project, mobilizes 50 volunteers on average each month, enabling them to serve their participants at the remarkably low cost of about \$70 per person.

Third, the winning programs were well-structured, designed with great thoughtfulness and intentionality. Each anticipates a considerable length of involvement with participants, ranging from one year (in the case of Boaz & Ruth, our first place winner) to 30 weeks (for Pharr Literacy Project) and at least a few months (and typically longer) for the gang intervention initiative, Hope Now for Youth. All three programs are holistic and individualized. Pharr offers five different levels of ESL classes and has designed a special initiative to meet the needs of youth that have dropped out of school. Boaz & Ruth offers not merely job training classes but real-life, on-the-job training through the eight different social entrepreneurship business ventures it has launched. Hope Now for Youth employs ex-gang members as the primary mentors for the troubled youth it is trying to woo from the streets to jobs. These staff

Table 14
Category 3: Top 10 Service Types

Youth Leadership & Life Skills Development	48%
Youth Mentoring	45%
Youth Education	43%
Community Development	32%
Job Training/ Occupational Retraining	30%
Substance Abuse Prevention/ Treatment	27%
Financial Assistance	19%
Teen Pregnancy Prevention	15%
Housing Redevelopment	10%
ESL	9%

Table 15
**Frequency of Contact
with Program Participants**

	All	Semi Finalists	Finalists
Daily	18%	20%	33%
Couple times/week	25%	50%	67%
Once a week	20%	10%	—
Couple times/month	14%	20%	—
Less than once/month	3%	—	—
Less than once/month	20%	—	—

Table 16
Category 3 Non Faith-based Partners

Partner type	%
FEMA	1.8
Red Cross	.06
Federal Gov't Agency	2.9
State/local Gov't Agency	31.2
Public School	17.6
Police	7.6
Secular Nonprofit	49.4
Business	12.4
Fire Co./EMT	7.1
University or College	.6

Table 17
Frequency of Contact with Program Participants

	All	Semi	
		Finalists	Finalists
Daily	29%	30%	—%
Couple times/week	17%	30%	67%
Once a week	10%	10%	—
Couple times/month	15%	20%	—
Once a month	2%	10%	33%
Less than once/month	—	—	—
Less than once/month	27%	—	—

are well-positioned to earn the respect and trust of the youth, since they have “been there” and know all about life on the streets. Each organization places high expectations on its program participants, yet provides an enormous amount of moral and emotional support. Hope Now, for example, considers its work as nothing less than “re-parenting.”

Fourth, the high-scoring applicants had crafted diverse partnerships that were mutually beneficial and robust, characterized by a significant degree of communication (see Tables 16, 17, and 18). Two-thirds of the finalists, and 60% of the semi-finalists, had contact with their key non-faith-based partners at least a couple times per week.

Strong partnerships enhanced the most effective programs we reviewed. Through multi-sector collaboration, 70 percent of our semi-finalist FBOs were able to serve more participants; 90 percent were able to offer additional program components or services; and 80 percent enjoyed a greater number of staff of volunteers (see Table 18). Moreover, as a result of collaboration, 90 percent of the semi-finalists were able to focus on the service components that their organization was good at delivering, while their partners were able to focus on the components that were best suited to their capabilities.

Table 18
Benefits of Collaboration (Reported by Semi-finalists)

The collaboration made the program possible; without it we would not be operating this program	60%
Because of the collaboration, the program is able to serve more people than we could have without the collaboration	70%
Because of the collaboration, our program offers program participants/clients more services or program components than we could have without the collaboration	90%
Because of the collaboration, we can offer services to clients for longer time periods than we could have without the collaboration	70%
Because of the collaboration, more staff or volunteers have been involved in helping to operate the program than would have been the case without the collaboration	80%
Because of the collaboration, our FBO has been able to focus on the service components of the program that we were good at delivering, while our partners focus on the parts that are best suited to their capabilities	90%



CATEGORY THREE SEMI-FINALISTS DESCRIPTIONS

[Programs Addressing Deep Pockets of Poverty]

Petersburg Urban Ministries (Petersburg, VA)

This FBO's "Youthbuild" initiative is an exciting effort combining job training for at-risk youth with constructing affordable housing for the city's low-income citizens. In this program, unemployed youth between 16 and 24 years of age are gainfully employed building low-income housing for half of the work day while working towards their GED and attending job and life skills classes during the rest of the day. 94 percent of program graduates attain employment or are successfully enrolled in vocational education or college programs.

Perpetual Help Home (Victoria, TX)

Working with the TX Department of Criminal Justice, this ex-offender reentry program has served over 70 women (and their children) in rebuilding their lives. Women typically stay at the Home for 10-12 months, during which period they participate in 12-step programs, Bible study, and life skills classes and work full time (or work part time and attend school part time). All women integrate into a local church and over a third give back to the community by volunteering at local nonprofits. The recidivism rate for program graduates is 10 percent.

Three Streams Family Health Center, Inc. (Asheville, NC)

Three Streams Family Health Center provides primary health care, including screening and diagnostic testing, to the medically underserved of Western North Carolina. In cooperation with Project Access, Three Streams also helps clients acquire *specialty* services needed to treat conditions such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. In addition, they address emotional and spiritual needs through one-on-one pastoral care.

Hope Now for Youth (Fresno, CA)

Hope Now hires ex-gang members, who have turned their lives around, to become Vocational Placement Counselors. To date, the Counselors have placed 1300 gang-affiliated youth aged 16-24 into jobs, with an 85 percent job retention rate. The program collaborates with 300 businesses that offer employment opportunities and the Youth Authority Parole, which provides counseling and housing. 92 percent of participants have not been rearrested.

Boaz & Ruth, Inc. (Richmond, VA)

The "Rebuilding Communities Through Economic Development and Empowerment" program of Boaz & Ruth is a creative endeavor to revitalize a long-neglected section of Richmond through business development. Its anchor is a 7,500-square foot used furniture store that operates both as a successful business and job training space for some of Richmond's most vulnerable citizens. Out of this one for-profit, eight additional entrepreneurial ventures have been launched. Together, these businesses employ 23 community residents, some of whom who were previously unemployable due to criminal history or other mitigating factors. Boaz & Ruth also facilitated the incorporation of a new Highland Park Merchants Association and offers GED and computer classes for neighborhood residents at its facility.

Pharr Community Outreach Project/Shalom (Pharr, TX)

Based in the border town of Pharr, the "Pharr Literacy Project" serves a greatly impover-

ished population that is largely without the necessary skills to be a productive part of the American economy. To remedy this, the Pharr Literacy Project employs a comprehensive ministry plan that includes GED prep-work, ESL classes, introductory computer classes, and pre-literacy classes for children. Nearly 650 individuals participated in the past year, with a participant retention rate of 72 percent. 65 percent of ESL students have successfully graduated to the next level of study, and 70% of involved children have met or exceeded their personal reading goals.

Jewish Family and Children's Services of Sarasota (Sarasota, FL)

Many FBOs serve the homeless. Jewish Family and Children's Services is committed to *preventing* homelessness by identifying those who are most at risk of becoming homeless in their community and providing emergency cash assistance, mental health services, and case management. In 2003, JFCS launched an innovative collaboration with the Sarasota Public Schools called "Building Strong Families." By using the school system as a primary means of identifying children at risk of becoming homeless, JFCS is better able to target their services. The collaboration has led to a 125 percent increase in the number of families served. Over 82 percent of these families experienced no episodes of homelessness for at least six months following completion of their case plan. Additional key non-FBO partners include Jobs Etc., the United Way, and Gulf Coast Legal Services.

Good Samaritan Health Services (Tulsa, OK)

This group provides primary care medical services to the uninsured and working poor in Tulsa County. Utilizing a 35-foot mobile medical van equipped with exam rooms and a small pharmacy, they serve ten different locations on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Churches and community centers are utilized in each community to provide additional space for medical triage, prayer, and counseling. Good Samaritan Health Services partners with two to three churches of various denominations at each site who in turn provide volunteer support, counseling, prayer, and follow-up for the patients. Its non-FBO partners include local hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, and specialists; these collaborations enable them to meet a wide range of patients' medical needs.

Brooklyn Rescue Mission (Brooklyn, NY)

Responding to a lack of health education and nutritional foods in Central Brooklyn, the Brooklyn Rescue Mission has partnered with a number of organizations to launch the "Fresh Food Outreach" program for Brooklyn residents at risk of hunger, particularly single-parent-headed households and the low-income elderly. The BRM hosts nutrition workshops and cooking demonstrations for 50 clients per month, distributes 100 bags of fresh produce to at-risk families weekly, and partners with Cornell University to operate an urban organic farm in Central Brooklyn. In the past year, the ministry served an impressive 26,000 people on a modest budget of \$169,000.

Fresh Ministries (Jacksonville, FL)

Fresh Ministries' "Beaver Street Enterprise Center" (BSEC) is a small-business incubator on the north side of Jacksonville that is revitalizing the Beaver Street area through job-creation and business development. Partnering with the City of Jacksonville, a number of national banks, and the University of North Florida's Small Business Development Center, BSEC houses office space and meeting rooms for the 25 small business ventures they have helped to birth since 2001. In addition, it offers workshops on such relevant topics as government tax regulations, business planning, accounting procedures, and Individual Development Accounts, and matches young businesses with veteran "business mentors." Already the venture has resulted in the creation of 197 new jobs.



[FIRST PLACE]

Boaz & Ruth, Inc. (Richmond, VA)

Key Partners: *Richmond City Jail; City of Richmond Office of Economic Development; University of Richmond*

FAST FACTS Boaz & Ruth, Inc.

Program established in 2002
8 new small businesses launched
Plans underway for opening a small business incubator
Jobs for 23 north district residents created
Decreased crime in the neighborhood

For years, Martha Rollins, owner of a thriving antique store in Richmond, VA, was unhappy seeing abundant prosperity in her shop but so much poverty in the distressed neighborhood behind it. The urban community had struggled economically since the “white flight” of the 1960s and was each year filled with more crime, unemployment, and pain. The need for racial reconciliation, and for uncovering the assets of both the city and the suburbs to bring both together for urban renewal, was clear. The question was how to do it.

Martha’s pastor offered her two precious words of advice. The first was to capitalize on the skills and valuable resource network she possessed as a successful businesswoman. So Martha began dreaming of a furniture restoration business that could offer broken people a chance at renewing their lives. In 2001, one of Martha’s customers donated a houseful of furniture to her and a year later, another offered her \$150,000 in a challenge grant to launch a new nonprofit.

The pastor’s second tip to Martha was to identify some partners in the African-American community who shared her passion. In 2001, Rollins’ path crossed Rosa Jiggets’, a prayer warrior and long-time African-American resident of Richmond’s struggling Highland Park neighborhood who was eager to partner. God had now gathered together all the necessary ingredients for birthing what became Boaz & Ruth, Inc.

“Boaz & Ruth, Inc. affirms that needs and gifts exist equally on both sides of cultural and economic lines.”

— Martha Rollins, *B&R Founder and President*

Since then, this unique social entrepreneurial organization has been hard at work pursuing a threefold mission. First, Boaz & Ruth works with unemployed individuals, primarily ex-offenders referred by the Richmond City Jail. B&R offers these men and women job and life skills training, educational opportunities, and emotional support. Program participants enjoy hands-on employment for at least one year through the small businesses B&R has created to advance the second part of its mission: the economic revitalization of Highland Park. B&R’s anchor business is a 7500-square foot used furniture store. From this start, B&R has spun off eight related earned-income ventures, including a moving company, a furniture restoration business, and a residential junk removal business. Third, just as the historical Boaz and Ruth put aside social, economic, and racial issues to enjoy a rich and fulfilling relationship, so B&R seeks to see all the citizens of Richmond put aside their differences, share resources, work together, and create a better and stronger community.

“We chose our name—Boaz & Ruth—to remind us of the transforming power of human relationships, both in 400 BC [in Israel] and here today in Richmond, Virginia,” Rollins explains. “We have designed a program of intentional relationships that bridge the gap between those who possess wealth and privilege and those who do not. We believe everyone is a ‘Ruth’ with needs and also a ‘Boaz’ with gifts.”

B&R is contributing to its neighborhood’s economic development. It has already created 23 new jobs for north district residents—an impressive achievement in an area where the unemployment rate is triple the state average. And it has facilitated the creation of the Highland Park Merchants at Six Points, a nonprofit organization that has joined the Greater Richmond Retail Merchants Association and has held four successful Merchant Days (the most recent one brought out 500 participants).



[B&R] staff engage state and local agencies in an effort to provide collaborative answers for community programs. They use every opportunity to engage anyone who is interested in changing the violence that plagues the streets of Richmond. The program staff have put themselves on the ‘front lines’ of this struggle. The very nature of this action alone exemplifies a heartfelt and courageous commitment to helping others help themselves.”

— Mike Wright, VA Department of Corrections



Individual transformation, though, is at the deepest core of B&R’s vision. The ministry has recently purchased a 100-year-old condemned house adjacent to the B&R furniture store and has plans to restore it for use as a residential facility. “That house is a physical symbol of how people come to us, locked up, boarded up, decrepit—nobody wants them,” Rollins says. “As we restore it, it’s going to be a living parable. We just have to change our mindsets and see the beauty in people,” she adds. That’s exactly what B&R did for Ruth Cosby. She showed up at B&R in 2003, unemployed, uneducated, and depressed. Within six months, she had sailed through the ministry’s computer training courses and was serving as a “senior apprentice” at the furniture store. Today she serves as the Sales Director at Boaz & Ruth at OAR – a second branch of the original store.





[SECOND PLACE]

Pharr Literacy Project (Pharr, Texas)

Key Partners: *Su Casa de Esperanza; Pharr Police Department; Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District; University of Texas-Pan American*

FAST FACTS Pharr Literacy Project

Program launched in 2003
Serves residents of Hidalgo County, America's poorest county
50 active volunteers monthly
65% of adult participants successfully progressed to next level of ESL
70% of elementary school student participants met/exceeded personal reading goals
Parental participation in Parent Helping Parent Support Groups more than doubled

Some 500,000 people live in Third World conditions inside the United States in what are known as the *colonias*, border towns with Mexico. Pharr Literacy Project is active among the *colonias* in Hidalgo County—which has the dubious distinction of being America's poorest county. Seventy percent of *colonias* residents never graduate from high school. According to the PBS project, *The Forgotten Americans*, employed *colonias* residents earn only \$3000 to \$6000 annually. Clearly, the geographic focus of Pharr Literacy Project, the second place winner in the 2006 *Partners in Transformation* competition, is on a deep pocket of poverty.

Pharr Literacy Project partners with *colonias* residents to improve their socio-economic prospects by gaining language competency in English. But Pharr's program goes beyond a typical English as a Second Language (ESL) initiative. Its approach is holistic. The program integrates a health and wellness component, computer literacy classes, and parent support groups, among other services.

Pharr employs a "whole-family" approach, serving everyone from infants to grown-ups. Adults have the opportunity to study for their high school equivalency degree (GED) and attend five levels of ESL classes, Computer Literacy Classes, Citizenship Classes, and Spanish Classes. Teenagers and young adults can participate in Pharr's "Upward Youth" course to prepare them for the GED and their future careers, as well as help them gain general life skills and confidence. For children, Pharr sponsors the "Read Read Read" program and pre-literacy classes, and it offers free childcare for infants and toddlers whose parents are active in the educational program.

"Our classes are small, allowing teachers, tutors, and volunteer helpers to work closely with the students, and to know their [personal] needs and goals. Our conviction that every person has great worth creates an environment in which positive attitudes grow. The relationships that [then] develop result in strong personal motivation, more self-confidence, and increased academic achievement."

— Elva Michal, Ph.D., *Pharr Shalom Site Coordinator*

Pharr's holistic approach enhances the participants' prospects for success. They enjoy not only academic assistance but also opportunities for fellowship and emotional support. Parents can be involved in the Parents Helping Parents support group where they share

parenting tips and listen to outside speakers who address topics relevant to child rearing. Children learn about health, nutrition, and exercise in the Healthy Kids Club. The Literacy Project is also connected to the broader initiatives of Pharr SHALOM, and as such is able to offer its participants health fairs, health screenings, and free medical clinics hosted on-site. To support participants spiritually, Pharr hosts a weekly nondenominational meeting. Participants who so desire can attend these sessions and enjoy opportunities to worship, learn, pray, and fellowship together.

Dahlia's Story

The difference Pharr is making can be witnessed in changed lives like Dahlia's. In 2004 Dahlia began ESL classes at Pharr to improve her English skills. She became functionally bilingual within several months, as she completed the course's first four levels. Having tackled that hurdle, she enrolled in GED classes. With hard work, she passed all parts of the exam and obtained her high school equivalency diploma. But as a single mother of two young children with no job experience or specialized training, she was able to secure only a part-time, minimum-wage job cleaning office buildings at night for a professional cleaning company.

Dahlia became interested in gaining computer skills when her oldest child began using computers at school. At first, she just wanted to understand basic computer applications in order to help him with his schoolwork. Once again, she knew Pharr could help. Dahlia enrolled in the ministry's 10-week computer literacy class and participated eagerly, maintaining a good attendance record. She began hoping that some day she would be able to buy a used computer for use in her home. But something even better was in the works for Dahlia's future. Three months after her completion of the computer classes, Dahlia returned elated to the Pharr offices. She had just received a promotion at her job! Her boss had indicated that he needed a person to maintain computer records for his cleaning business, and Dahlia explained that she had recently completed the Pharr computer literacy program. He watched as she made data entries and used other basic computer functions. The next day, the company promoted her into a full-time, daytime position as a data entry clerk with full benefits and an increase in pay.

The Power of Partnerships

Through multiple collaborations and a vibrant volunteer force (the ministry averages 50 volunteers each month), the Pharr Literacy Project is able to serve many families at very modest cost. Last year, they assisted 642 individuals on only a \$45,000 budget—that's about \$70 per participant. Key partners provide funding, referrals, free program space, educational materials, and volunteers. Additional partners offer workshops for staff development for Pharr's employees or career assessment testing for the youth engaged in the Upward Youth program. And as noted, the Literacy Project is one component of the larger Pharr SHALOM initiative, which works with community residents to address health and housing needs.

Pharr Literacy Project not only serves its program participants, it *listens* to them as well. Participants provide input as to the courses that should be offered annually; they assist in the development of the annual budget; and they serve on Task Forces to implement new programs and evaluate program progress. At least two members of the Board of Directors must be students.

Pharr's healthy reputation in the community—and the successes its program graduates are accomplishing—are driving increased growth. The program currently operates in 4 locations but plans to open a 5th soon.





[THIRD PLACE]

Hope Now for Youth (Fresno, CA)

Key Partners: 300 Local Businesses; Sheriff's Department; Youth Authority Parole

FAST FACTS Hope Now for Youth

Program launched in 1993
Over 1,300 gang members placed into jobs
300 local business partners
Over 14,000 man-hours invested in program participants annually
8% recidivism rate among program graduates (compared to CA Youth Authority statistics indicating a 75% recidivism rate for juveniles generally)

Sometimes a phone number on a TV screen can save a life. That's how it was for Eddie. Growing up amid abuse, alcohol, and drugs in Fresno, Eddie had a criminal record by the time he was merely ten. By 13, he was on the streets and in a gang. At 16, he had dropped out of school, gotten his girlfriend pregnant, and put his life in jeopardy by horning in on a rival's drug turf. After an enemy put a gun to Eddie's head, he began rethinking his life. Though his fellow gang members plotted revenge, Eddie wanted to stay alive for his child. So he and his girlfriend moved to another neighborhood—but Eddie continued selling drugs. He simply didn't know where else to turn to provide for his family. He explains, "I just didn't see a way out, because this lifestyle was all I knew. I wanted to change, but didn't know how." But late one night thereafter, Eddie saw his friend Alex on the TV news. Alex was talking about his life as a former gang member—and how an organization called Hope Now for Youth had helped him to escape the dead end of the streets and find a real job. Eddie called the number on the screen. And that changed everything.

Alex responded to Eddie's call and guided his friend through the Hope Now Program. Eddie's self-confidence grew, and he found himself a job at Wendy's. When he turned 18, Hope Now helped Eddie secure better employment at a local Holiday Inn. The supervisor there was astonished by Eddie's competence and reliability—joking that he'd gladly hire 40 more ex-gang members if they were all as hardworking as Eddie. Eddie later came on staff full-time at Hope Now. From 1996 to 2002, Eddie helped 180 gang members to get off the streets and into productive employment. During this time, he was baptized and joined a church, obtained his GED, and eventually, with scholarship aid from Hope Now, a B.A. from Fresno Pacific University. He married the mother of his three children and bought a home. Today, Eddie is a successful realtor. Through Hope Now for Youth, Eddie was able to escape the life of pain, violence, and crime that had threatened to hold him forever. As Hope Now's founder, Rev. Roger Minassian, puts it, "By the grace of God, the death-grip of generational gangbanging and hopelessness has been shattered."

In its 16-year history, Hope Now has placed more than 1,300 former gang members into jobs. Through employment—plus the mentoring, education, and training Hope Now provides—it is transforming these young men's lives. That's a crucial service in California, where the Department of Justice estimates that some 300,000 youths are gang members.

Youth involved in Hope Now take several Job Preparation classes: Job Success, Job Search, Job Support, Drug and Alcohol Awareness, and Anger Recognition. Vocational Placement Counselors (VCPs), themselves ex-gang members, provide crucial mentoring to the participants as they work through the curriculum. Initially, youth work in odd jobs to earn what is perhaps their first "clean" money. In addition, Hope Now creates strong structure for

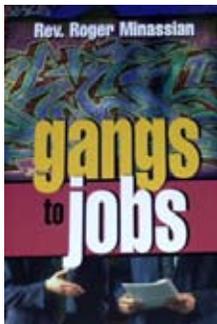
them. Youth participate in organized times for fellowship where they can learn how to develop healthy relationships that overcome differences in age, race, and previous gang association. As their “final exam,” the young men walk through a Pre-Placement Interview; this exercise also serves as practice for the real-world job interviews they will encounter shortly.

The most powerful crime prevention program is still a job... Gang youth know that a job is the way you should earn money, but they don't know how to become employed.”

— Rev. Roger Minassian, *Hope Now for Youth* founder

Hope Now is able to provide employment opportunities for these high-risk youth because of the strong reputation it has built with local employers. Some 300 businesses in the Fresno area partner with the FBO, as does the City of Fresno. After Hope Now graduates are placed into new jobs, staff continue to offer them support, guidance, and supervision. The benefit of this on-going relational support is clear: Hope Now graduates boast a recidivism rate of only 8 percent. By comparison, the California Youth Authority reported in 2004 that 3 out of 4 of their prisoners were rearrested within 3 years of their release.

“Hope Now is the family [these youth] never really had,” says Minassian. “We meet their emotional need to belong and be valued.” Hope Now staff take that family identity seriously. They go the extra mile daily for the program participants—whether that involves transporting them to the dentist, helping them study for a driver’s license, taking them camping, or standing up in court for them. “We work with their brothers and cousins. We help them buy homes. We conduct their marriages. We even have a retired member of our staff who provides pastoral care,” Minassian reports. “Any emergency—medical, dental, or legal—is handled.... The relationship we establish with these men is just as important, if not more important, than the job we offer them.”





[CONCLUSION]

“It’s all about *being there*.”



In 1999, *Newsweek* magazine interviewed Rev. Eugene Rivers, a charismatic and outspoken African-American urban minister who gained prominence for his role in the so-called “Boston miracle.” This was the label media gave to the strong success of a cops and clergy collaborative known as the Ten Point Initiative, which led to a dramatic reduction in youth homicides in Bean Town. Rivers explained to the journalist that he had learned his first and most important lesson in urban ministry from a sassy drug-dealer named Selvin Brown. Brown agreed to give Rivers a tour of the neighborhood crack houses when the minister first moved into the troubled community. From him, Rivers learned why “God was losing to gangs in the battle for the souls of inner-city kids.” Rivers told *Newsweek*, “Selvin explained to us [ministers], ‘I’m there when Johnny goes out for a loaf of bread for Mama. I’m there, you’re not. I win, you lose. *It’s all about being there.*’”¹

The 2006 *Partners in Transformation* competition uncovered hundreds of faith-based, cross-sector programs that are there, when and where it counts. In the past year, close to one million Americans turned to these programs and obtained critical aid—usually help that went far beyond material assistance. The winning models display the power of innovative, persistent, flexible, holistic outreach to transform individual lives and neighborhoods. We honor these faithful Good Samaritans and hope that our recognition of them will spur others to participate in supporting them in their vital service.

¹ Quoted in John LeLand, “Savior of the Streets,” *Newsweek* (1 June 1999) emphasis mine.





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Sagamore Institute
Center on Faith in Communities
757 King Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Tel: 434-293-5656
Fax: 434-295-8728