

Project Katrina

Update January 2006

David Greenhalgh, reporting from the Gulfport Police Department:

David is part of the relief effort and has volunteered the next 12 months to help coordinate things with the Gulf Coast FCPO and the Gulfport Police Department. This liaison position is crucial to the recovery of the PD's lives, homes and family.

The following is part of our regular updates on FCPO Project Katrina. Upon prayerful consideration, we have decided to extend the involvement of FCPO Canada in the region until December of 2006. Your prayer and financial support for the police and firefighter families in this area is greatly appreciated.

What an amazing month January 2006 has been. There have been two 10 member Canadian firefighter teams from the Greater Victoria area (Langford, Colwood, View Royal and Dept of National Defence firefighters) as well as a joint RCMP/City Police team (Victoria, Montreal and Ottawa). Not to be outdone, Kevin McInness from Calgary Police and the Diakanos Retreat Society, paid a second visit (his first was in September) with a team of 12. We are also ending the month on a great note with a four member team arriving from Victoria Police, thanks to the tremendous support given to the project by the Victoria Police Athletic Association.

To say that things are moving forward is an understatement. One case in point is the Weatherford House where on January 7th, they would have been lucky to move back into their house before December of 2006. After a week of hard work by our RCMP/City Police team, followed up by a couple of days given by the Calgary PD team, the Weatherford's are now looking at April or May: a far cry from December 2006. The following is an excerpt from a report given by one of the RCMP officers who was part of that team: *"When we arrived, the house was basically stripped bare and the yard was a jumbled mess of tools, toys, personal possessions and tree parts. By the time we left, the yard was cleaned, the house was insulated, dry walled and some of the priming was done. The house went from the owners feeling financially ruined and feeling hopeless, to them being able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. All of us knew that we would make a difference in some small way. None of us knew however, that we would be welcomed as we were, nor would we take away personally what we did from this trip. We arrived as strangers just wanting to help but left as family and friends of those we met in our travels."*

Alec and Laurie continue to work with the Fire Department and are nearing their tenure on this leg of the project. They both head back to BC on February 7th for a well deserved rest. With God's help they have both leveraged all kinds of beneficial work on firefighter homes and leave with many friends and new family within the firefighter community.

Speaking of leaving, Patrol Officer Caleb Williams is, effective January 31, 2006, no longer a member of our family in Gulfport. Caleb has been offered a position as a Texas State Trooper and will be leaving to be with his family in Texas, where they have been living since the storm. If you aren't aware, Caleb and his family lost their home and have been apart for most of the time since August 29, 2005. Caleb was also the young officer whom God led to begin the Gulf Coast FCPO Chapter only 2 months before the hurricane hit. Caleb, good luck and in the words of a Mountie friend (yes, even city cops like the odd Mountie!) "Maintiens le Droit".

This past month has been full of planning and preparing for February 2006. We have an OPP officer and 3 retired RCMP members coming down for 2 weeks the day after our 4 Victoria PD members head home.

February can't come fast enough for me personally, as my wife is coming down to join the team and the project. It will also be a time where I will get some much needed rest and respite as we both head to Florida for a bit of R&R together, leaving the project for a few weeks in the capable hands of our new arrivals, Russ and Sharon Ideson. Both Russ and Sharon arrived on a week ago and will be on the ground until March taking over many of the jobs that are becoming too much to count some days.

I am also encouraged by the new Gulf Coast FCPO chapter executive that were commissioned on January 12th. They have stepped up and are leading the rebuilding effort in a way that will meet the needs of many area police and firefighter families. February will no doubt be another incredible month full of ups and downs, marveling at the hand of God at work and being faithful to watering the seeds that He allows us to sow. Your continued and ongoing prayers supporting this project, the personnel on the ground and your financial support are appreciated in more ways than you can imagine.

Tune in next month for the "Hermann House" as we see another family closer to getting back home.

God Bless

David Greenhalgh