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News for NOMADS feature page

NOMADS AT HEART

Katrina survivor 'forever blessed' by NOMADS

by Celeste Barlow, Pascagoula, Miss.

I was very excited when I bought my first home July 28, 2005. I thought it was just adorable and the perfect size for me (I am 33 and single with no children). I moved in the house 25 days before Hurricane Katrina. The area had NEVER flooded; however, on August 29, 2005, four feet of water came rushing into my home.

My first thought after the hurricane was that I had not even made the first house payment yet!! Now what? Then the Lord brought the NOMADS to my church, Caswell Springs United Methodist.

When the NOMADS arrived at my house in November 2005, it had no walls. We had stripped everything down to the studs. The first day, the NOMADS put insulation in the walls. When I came home the second day,

they had put up the sheet rock. I HAD WALLS. That was one of the most exciting days of my entire life!!!! I know it sounds silly, but I was so grateful to have walls! They put just as much care and love and hard work into my home as my family and I had.

It's been more than a year now since the storm, and I am back in my home. I am very blessed, because I know some people are not back in their homes yet. I have been truly overwhelmed by the thoughtfulness and generosity of people who didn't even know me prior to Hurricane Katrina. I appreciate, more than words could ever express, not only the hard work the NOMADS put into my home, but also their words of encouragement, prayers and friendships. The Lord brought them into my life, and I will be forever blessed for knowing them.

NOMADS sign invites a knock at the door, new friendships

by Sue and Arlin Kiel

We met Katie Labron one evening last summer, after an unexpected knock at our RV door. She was camped not far from us at a Portage River campground in Houghton, on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Introducing herself, she said she had seen the NOMADS sign on our car door and stopped to get acquainted. Katie is over 80, and has worked at more than 60 volunteer projects, including NOMADS and VIM. We learned that her home is Newberry, Michigan, where we had reservations at an RV park, the next week.

The next Sunday evening she arrived at our campground with firewood, graham crackers, marshmallows and Hershey Bars. Picture a roaring campfire with five NOMADS--Jim and Liz Traviss, Arlin and I, and Katie--roasting marshmallows for S'Mores. Katie had so many experiences to share that we listened for two hours to her adventures in mission work. She has fed homeless children on the streets of Calcutta, India, helped shingle the roof of an old convent in Russia and volunteered in such exotic places as Siberia, Czechoslovakia and South America. *(over)*

As always when NOMADS meet, we asked, “Have you worked with so and so?” and found we had several mutual acquaintances. We also discovered that all five of us had worked last spring on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, doing home repairs after Hurricane Katrina. What an inspiration to learn about all the joy Katie has brought to those she has served in the United States with NOMADS, and around the world with VIM. What energy and spirit she shared with us! If Katie could speak at an RV rally, we would probably sign up 20 new members!

Meeting Katie was just one benefit of having the NOMADS signs on our car as we travel. We often have Methodists or other RVers ask about NOMADS. Last summer, a couple saw our sign and invited us for coffee. NOMADS had been at their church three years ago, and now they wanted to know how they could join. Try leaving NOMADS signs on your car. Then wait and see who will knock on your door!

Favorite project? Tough question to answer

by Rod and Janie Reeder

We are frequently asked what our favorite project has been as NOMADS. We’ve had so many truly great experiences that it is very difficult to narrow it down to just one. How could we possibly leave out our first project in Odessa/Pecos, TX (1999)? There we enjoyed the wonderful leadership of Neal and Helen George and had a great time with our team, working on two Rio Grande Conference Churches. We thought it would surely go downhill from there, but it didn’t. We enjoyed Joe and Lucille Bell’s leadership on our second project, in Tucson, AZ, and again had the good fortune of working with a great group of NOMADS. Our final project that first year was in Rio Grande City, TX, with Jack and Flossy Higgins as leaders. It was again a great group of NOMADS and a phenomenal experience.

It would be difficult to list our favorite projects without naming places like Cedar Key and Mims, FL, the Midwest Mission Distribution Center, UMOM (Phoenix AZ), Port Isabel, Uskichitta, Upper Sand Mtn. Parish, Thomasville, Greenville, Perryville, Henderson Settlement, Los Fresnos, LaFeria, Titusville, Eagle Pass, Dixon, Lewistown, New Orleans, Eustis, Baldwin, Mercedes, Jefferson, Dulac, Mt. Pleasant and Macon.

We have fond memories of each project. We hold some nearer and dearer in memory than others, but each has a special place in our hearts.

We fully anticipate we will add significantly to this list as we continue NOMADing. Some of our previous projects have been wiped away by natural disasters such as Waveland, MS--Gulfside Assembly--and Biloxi, MS--Seaside Assembly, both destroyed by Katrina, as was the Small Homes Repair Studio in New Orleans.

Each project and place is different. We have found the geography in Greenville, TN to be very pleasant, and the manner in which Macon Children’s Home works with its residents to be awe-inspiring. The road to Henderson Settlement is difficult but the need is immense and the project rewarding. The folks at UMOM do a really great job of caring and rehabilitating homeless people. The Dulac Community Center provides so many much-needed services that it is difficult to imagine the community functioning without its presence.

We have met people on almost every project that we will consider friends for the rest of our lives.

Do we have a favorite project? You know, that is a really hard question.