

American Baptist Men of the Great Rivers Region  
204 Barbara Dr.  
Mahomet, IL 61853-9135

	<h1><i>UpStream</i></h1>	<p>Summer 2013</p> <p>Editor: Brian Romanowski (309) 826-8116</p>
---	--------------------------	---

American Baptist Men  
of the Great Rivers Region  
*Men on a Mission - from God*

---

### **A Word from Our Sponsor**

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." – Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

### **AB Men Website**

For the latest information on the AB Men of our region, be sure to check out our website at: [www.abm-gr.org](http://www.abm-gr.org). Thanks to Terry Maurizio for putting it together and keeping us informed!

# UPDATE

Informing *Disaster Relief Volunteers* and *Supporters* of our ongoing mission and ministry.

**“Because Jesus Came,  
We Come”**

Mac & LaVerne Shotwell, Editors  
Brian & Julie Romanowski, Publishers  
Vol. 10, No. 2 July, 2013

+++++

## FIVE CALLS FOR HELP

Marseilles & Peoria, IL; Moore, Oklahoma; St. Louis, MO; Edwardsville, IL--five communities where our disaster relief teams have recently ministered.

On May 3 and 4 John McConnel, Jr., and James Davis teamed with a Southern Baptist group and spent 14 hours with flood clean up in Marseilles.

Peoria and surrounding communities were also hit hard with flood waters. The week of May 6 Jon Dainty, Jr. managed the work for us, again working with a Southern Baptist team, with Everett Meister and Mike Huling joining one day. May 14-17 Brian Romanowski led the second Peoria team with his son, Vince. Teaming once more with a Southern Baptist team, other ABMen included John McConnel, James David and Charles Mason.

The Peoria mission was 8 days, with 8 ABMen giving 118 volunteers hours at 13 sites.

Responding to the needs in Moore, OK, John McConnel led a team of 9 from May 31-June 3, giving 105 hours of work at 9 sites. Two more teams were ready to go, but were canceled because of the lack of organization and more volunteers than could be managed.

June 10-14 saw two teams working in St. Louis, Mo and Edwardsville, IL under the leadership of Van Peters, Ron Kinner and John Hoenig. 20 volunteers gave 412 hours of labor at 11 1/2 sites.

**Read more on the following pages.**



## CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

This ministry was reorganized in 2004 and for ten years 34 disaster relief calls have been answered throughout Illinois and Missouri, as well as Iowa, Mississippi Kentucky, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and as far away as Haiti! To date 636 volunteers have worked at 502 sites in 39 communities for 209 days, giving over 12,246 hours of volunteer service and saving victims over \$275,000 in labor costs.

IT IS TIME TO CELEBRATE WHAT GOD HAS BEEN DOING THRU THIS MINISTRY. **On Friday, Sept. 20 at 1 p.m. all members of our disaster relief teams are invited to a complimentary meal at Lake Springfield Baptist Camp.**

At that time and through out the afternoon there will be visual and verbal testimonies, stories and personal experiences from team members who have participated in one or more of these calls. There will also be time on Friday afternoon for each team to meet with their captain and assistant for group identity and team building.

**Make your meal reservations on the enclosed Fall Gathering Registration and invite other disaster relief team members (new and old) to come with you.**

*A great time to make and/or renew and strengthen Christian friendships.*

---

Go to [www.abm-grr.org](http://www.abm-grr.org)  
for updated information on disaster relief  
as well as all of our ministries.

## Scenes, Teams and Testimonies



PEORIA team workers included Charles Mason in white shirt; John Davis, kneeling with ABMen's cap; Brian and Vince Romanowski, in orange shirts; with John McConnel between them. The others are Southern Baptists. Brian Romanowski, team leader for the second week, said *"Working with the Southern Baptists was enjoyable and enlightening."* Jon Dainty, Sr., leader of the first week in Peoria, reflected on a couple they helped, who had lived for 21 years in their house without water. *"The wife is battling lymphoma and going through chemotherapy. She had to be taken to the hospital for an*

*infection the second day we were there. The entire group gathered around her and prayed of her before she left."* At right: Everett Meister and Mike Huling from Fairbury in South Peoria. During May and June six teams, consisting of 39 workers, gave 649 volunteer hours of labor at 34 1/2 sites for 18 days, saving victims almost \$15,000.00 in labor costs.

**A MESSAGE TO ALL OUR AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE GREAT RIVERS REGION FROM OUR REGIONAL MINISTER:** Dr Dwight Stinnett sent the following to GRR pastors: "Let

us know about what is going on when disaster strikes your church, your community, or you personally. Do so as soon as possible – e-mail is preferred. In that contact, let us know if you are safe, what actions are being taken, and up to date contact information (cell phone and e-mail).... Be prepared to offer ministry to your community in a rare and unique way. One Great Hour of Sharing funds are available to help with this kind of ministry (emergency care, food, etc) under the supervision of the church. But you have to ask!!!!!! We can usually respond with a check in 24 business hours. Don't miss the opportunity for ministry....and, for community clean up and recovery, **be aware of the GRR ABMen Disaster Team in your area. It is important to contact them as soon as possible so they can make assessment, recruit volunteers, and schedule the work. Your contact with them must include accurate information so they can keep in touch."**



UPDATE Vol. 10, No. 2 p. 2



## Mac's Musings...

### DO YOU EVER RUN OUT OF G.A.S. ?

My car gas gauge has looked like the one at the right more times than I would care to admit -and- to be honest, my spiritual gas gauge has looked that way, also! Recently, at a low point in my Christian journey, I recalled an acrostic that helps me reexamine my priorities and helps refuel my spiritual, mental and.

**G.--GRATITUDE** Instead of dwelling on what is wrong in life and focusing on the negatives, I need to center on the good, the positive and let my gratitude guide my thoughts and actions.

Lately, with all the flooding in our area and the call for help in Moore, Oklahoma, my spiritual gas gauge was almost on "empty" as I focused on the lack of response from some churches and many who are on our disaster response call list, as well as the confusion faced by our team when they got to Moore. Then, I started looking at those who did respond and my gratitude moved the "gauge" far from "empty". My heartfelt gratitude goes out to one of our leaders who worked solo with Southern Baptist teams; a father and son who gave a week's vacation to lead a team; one leader who led two teams and worked with another team; the nine volunteers who went to Moore, Oklahoma; two more teams (with over 20 plus volunteers) who were ready to follow up in Oklahoma; the 18 men and women who went to Edwardsville and St. Louis and the excellent hosting by First Baptist in Edwardsville; plus those who sent money to help with expenses. As I reflected on all this and read the beautiful testimonies (some contained in this newsletter), *guess where the needle on my g.a.s gauge moved?*

**A.--ATTITUDE** Gratitude leads to a change in attitude! Instead of bemoaning the lack of response from some churches and individuals, I, and others, began to think of better ways to communicate and, thanks to the GRR staff, an email went to all pastors and a letter to all on our disaster relief data base asking for commitment, communication and cooperation---all positive attitudes that move the needle toward "full"! In worship recently a "whisper" from God reminded me that ***"we are not called to be successful, but to be faithful!"*** I thank God for that reminder and I am hopeful that

more churches and volunteers will respond when a disaster strikes. **S.--SOLITUDE**

None of the above would have happened if I had not taken time to slow down and spend time ***"alone with God"***! How often I need to remember that I cannot go it alone and, in quiet reflection and recommitment, God speaks and listens and directs. Proverbs 3:5-6 has taken on deeper meaning for me in recent days as my spiritual g.a.s. gauge has moved from "empty" to "full". ***"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in every thing you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track."***

*With positive **Gratitude**, **Attitude** and much needed **Solitude**, **Mac***





**OKLAHOMA TEAM** included: (l to r back row) Sean McConnell, Chuck Johnson, John McConnell, Ron Kinner\*, Rob Folk, Clayton Houghan, Nick Connel, Everett Meister; (front row) James Davis, Craig Luginbill, Bob Gebhardt\*\* (\* Ron was preparing to take a second team to OK, but reassigned to St. Louis. \*\* Bob is trailer coordinator at home in Springfield.) Many moving human interest and God-inspired stories emerge from our team missions. Here is one of four that team leader John McConnell shares:

"Billy was our first "client". Met him on Friday as we searched for cleanup jobs. His house is pretty much totaled and we found him looking for personal items to save or something. He was still in shock over the disaster. It took about fifteen minutes before he could focus enough to fill out the release of liability form giving us permission to clean up the debris there. He just had to relate to us how bad it was first. He really was hurting.

The next day, the crew went over to do the work at the specified time. They said that Billy was quite depressed still. They went to work but also paid attention to Billy and talked with him and listened to him. As the day wore on they witnessed his healing right before their eyes. His spirits lifted, his focus sharpened and he became normal again. This is how God works through us and other Christians doing disaster relief work. Oftentimes we are gifted with an eloquence we do not normally have or other small miracles. Chuck and I both felt we were led to Billy's house on Friday and I know that the crew was supposed to be there to help him.

This is one reason why some of us say that there is no more beautiful place on earth than that right after a disaster. God's grace flows right in front of your eyes because so many open their hearts to him. So, after the horrific violence and fear, there is love and togetherness. We actually live as God would have us live, without earthly regards but with heavenly love."

ATTEND OUR FALL GATHERING SEPT. 20-21 FOR MORE SHARING

UPDATE, Vol. 10, No. 2 p. 4



EDWARDSVILLE AND ST. LOUIS TEAMS included: (Left to right) Charles Williams, Karen Sweet, Ben Manley, Wanda Payne, John Hoenig, Sharon Payne, Jack Risley, Eugene Stover, Charlie Heyl, Ty Rees, Jerry Elliott, Larry Stanton, Ron Kinner, Van Peters, Ron Haynes, Ed Haun. Not pictured: George Labadie, Terry Maurizio, Ron Reiman, Paul Stivers

### EXCERPTS FROM "THE EDWARDSVILLE INTELLIGENCER"

"Our primary goal is to help the elderly, the handicapped, under-insured people," Van Peters, American Baptist Men's Disaster Relief Team Co-Coordinator for the Great Rivers region said. For the group providing assistance is easy. Whenever they are asked why they are doing it, they share the group's motto, "Because Jesus Came, We Come," Peters said. For the relief effort in Edwardsville, local team captain John Hoenig, a member of the First Baptist Church of Edwardsville, contacted Edwardsville Mayor Dr. Hal Patton and Fire Chief Rich Welle. Hoenig, with assistance from his wife, began locating sites.

The group that is working in the area includes volunteers locally and from across Illinois and Missouri, with the home base for this operation being First Baptist Church of Edwardsville. After working on a number of relief jobs, Peters is still amazed by what a storm can do. "It's unbelievable what kind of damage a tornado can do – how powerful they are and how helpless you are when you're in one. The amazing thing is the people we work for are pretty upbeat," Peters said. "For us, it's pretty heart wrenching at times when you see the destruction, but at the end we get more out of it than they do. It's the satisfaction of serving Christ and helping in need and seeing their thankfulness for what we do. That makes you feel pretty good." While working in the area, the group is staying at First Baptist Church of Edwardsville. Some of the women from the congregation are providing breakfast and dinner for the workers." --Matt Winte, Reporter (Go to [www.abm-grr.org](http://www.abm-grr.org) to read the entire article and see more pictures of the Edwardsville-St. Louis work.)

UPDATE Vol. 10, No. 2 p. 5

# THANK YOU!

We continue to praise God and thank many individuals, organizations and churches for their ongoing support of our disaster relief ministries. The following have given monetary gifts since our last publication in February: David Sweet, Acres of Sky Communications, Inc., Jeanne & Paul Seveska, Spigot Networks, Inc., M45 Marketing Services, Diane Grose, John B. Lovell, Bill Humenczuk, Al and Juanita Eastin, Betty Phillips French, Nancy E. Houghman, Paul Christiansen, and Richard Garling,

Thanks, also, to the following American Baptist Churches of DeKalb, Edwardsville, El Paso, Macomb, Marissa, Mattoon, Wood River, and Area I Men's Prayer Breakfast,

Special thanks to the following churches who hosted our teams: In Peoria: First Baptist Church, for sleeping; Woodland Baptist Church for feeding. In Oklahoma City: Southpark Baptist Church, for sleeping and St. Andrews United Methodist Church for feeding and showers. In Edwardsville: First Baptist Church for feeding, sleeping and showers for two teams!

**Gifts to this ministry may be mailed to George Vest, ABMen's treasurer, at 1293 S. 34th St. Decatur, IL 62521 or included in your mission receipts to the GRR office. Be sure and mark for ABMen's Disaster Relief-GRR.**

OUR HEARTFELT LOVE to Paul Stivers, Bob Gebhardt and Dave Comstock who had to accept the Home Going to Heaven of their beloved wives: Candy, Ruth and Alice. They all (wives and husbands) have been faithful supporters of our disaster relief ministries.

UPDATE, Vol. 10, No. 2 p 6

## WORKBOOK ON WEB SITE

Thanks to Terry Maurizio, major content of our disaster relief workbook is now on [www.abm-grr.org](http://www.abm-grr.org). Go to that web site and on the title page scroll down to "Disaster Relief". Highlight those words and you will be taken to the table of contents. Click on any of the following: Forward; Mission Motto, Statement and Field Guidelines; Our History and Challenge; Leadership Team; Plan For Action; An Overview of Team Planning; Map of Teams; Leadership Descriptions; Responsibilities; Liability Release and On-Site Information; Resources for Promotion; Data on Trailers; Keys and ID Signs; Learnings and Guidelines; Biblical Basis for Our Ministry; Team Member Sign-up Sheet.

**WHEN DISASTER STRIKES and one or more of our teams has been called into action, details will appear on the first page of the web-site at the "Disaster Response" spot. Volunteers are urged to call their team captain or assistant to see if they are needed.**

**DATA BASE UPDATED.** On May 29 our disaster relief coordinators, Mac Shotwell and VanPeters, sent a letter to all disaster relief volunteers asking for updates on addresses, telephone numbers etc. If you did not get this letter and want to be included on one of our teams, go to the web-site mentioned above and go to "Team Member Sign-up Sheet", complete and mail to one of the coordinators or team captains (addresses on "Leadership Team" page on web-site.)

**See you on Sept. 20 for our 10 year Celebration!  
Be sure and register on the enclosed form.**

## Larry & Becky Stanton: Missionaries to Liberia

Larry Stanton, a familiar face around the American Baptist Men of the GRR and his wife Becky, heard God's call to the mission field. Larry & Becky are currently raising the necessary funds to go to Liberia, Africa. Here is an innovative way one person helped Larry & Becky in their fundraising:

Art Wolfe at Highland challenged the men of his church to help us, using an old, beat-up tool box. Art told the guys they needed to fill the toolbox with the "tools" needed for us to get to Liberia, and he raised \$1,000 plus enough to sustain their \$50 monthly pledge for the first year! He presented the "tools" in the form of a big check. He told us that on the way home from hearing us speak at the conference in Mt. Vernon earlier this year, he felt the Holy Spirit tell him he needed to get behind us.

You can help the Stantons with their fundraising by giving online at [www.internationalministries.org/teams/513-stanton](http://www.internationalministries.org/teams/513-stanton) or you can mail your check made out to "International Ministries" and marked for "Stanton support" to:

International Ministries  
American Baptist Churches  
PO Box 851  
Valley Forge, PA 19482-9896

## Judson University Work Project



The AB Men & women of our region went to Judson University June 3-7. Pictured, from left to right are Beverly Searcy, Don Cox, Earl Troyer, Jack Sparrow, Charles Searcy, George Meyer, Don Rogers and Les Sorenson. The AB Men, or Baptist Builders as they are sometimes called, repaired a fence and built a new gate. They built a new closet in the Education Building. They installed a new door and performed other repairs in the Security Building and painted second floor of the Administration Building. Plan to join us for the next Judson project next June.

## AB Men Work Project at University Baptist Church

The American Baptist Men are currently planning a work project at the University Baptist Foundation on the campus of the University of Illinois in Champaign the week of July 15-19. If you would like to participate in this project or for more information, please contact George Meyer, our Work Projects Coordinator, at 217/488-7190.

## AB Men Work Project at Green Lake

The next AB Men's work project will be at the University Baptist Church on the campus of the University of Illinois at Champaign, IL the week of July 15-19.

After a great time at Green Lake, WI last fall, the AB Men will return the week of September 23-28 and September 30-October 5.

For more information, contact George Meyer, our Work Projects Coordinator, at 217/488-7190.