

LEND-A-HAND – VOLUNTEER MANUAL FOR KATRINA DISASTER ASSISTANCE

INTRODUCTION

Since 1987, with Hurricane Andrew, Lend-A-Hand (LAH) has been sending busloads of Volunteers workers to disaster sites in the United States. With the coming of Hurricane Katrina, LAH has been recruiting a busload (30 -40 people) of Volunteers each month since October 2005. Each busload has needed at least one person to act as Group Leader. On LAH's first trips this person handled both administrative and work team supervisory duties. More recent trips have divided the job into a Group Leader who handles administrative duties for the group and a Field Supervisor who obtains work assignments from the Volunteers Foundation and gives them to LAH Work Teams.

D'IBERVILLE – CAMP NEW HOPE

The town in Mississippi where LAH has been working is D'Iberville. Its population, before Katrina, was around 8,000 people. After the storm, only about half of the population was able to return to their homes. When help failed to arrive from the outside, the mayor of the town assigned two people, Dr. Irene McIntosh (affectionately referred to as # 1), and Dr. Ed Cake (affectionately referred to as # 2), to form a **Volunteer Center (VC)**. The VC was to assess the needs of the people in regards to their homes, and form a Volunteers effort to assist them in rebuilding those homes. In February the Volunteers Center became the **D'Iberville Volunteers Foundation (VF)**

The DVF assessed 1,830 homes, and discovered that 370 had been totally destroyed and 1,250 had been damaged. Of those numbers, 600+ homes have been or are in the process of being rebuilt/rehabilitated as of August 1, 2006. More is being planned daily as help and finances allow. It was determined that the **cost of materials alone** to replace/rehabilitate these homes was **over \$28 million**.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) quickly moved into D'Iberville and established a camp – Camp New Hope – on a softball field. In March, the camp was granted permission to move into the “tent city” that had been used temporarily to house the refugees of D'Iberville. The tents actually cover a plywood building that houses six persons. These shelters have electricity, heat and air conditioning. All refugees had either moved away or had been given a FEMA trailer to live in on or near their home site.

In mid-February the DVF moved from their original location to an office above the concession stand at the Camp New Hope ball field. The kitchen that had fed local residents and volunteers also moved to the concession stand. Thus, food, shelter and work assignments are all in one location. Also in February 2006, hot showers were provided to the camp – a **REALLY** great improvement. As of September 2006 PDA had moved its operations to their camp at Orange Grove, MS but the DVF has continued to run the camp – providing housing and food for all volunteers.

WHAT IS LEND-A-HAND DOING?

Since October 2005, Lend-A-Hand has sent a busload (30-40 people) of Volunteers each month to Camp New Hope to aid in the recovery process. Additional trips are planned each month through June, 2006. More trips will be planned if funding becomes available.

LAH takes care of the bus, motels en route, lodging at Camp New Hope and meals at the camp, using the money participants pay and donations from churches and other organizations. The cost for a bus trips is around \$16,000, making the cost per person about \$450. How much each individual pays toward that amount is determined by the participant and their sponsoring organization. LAH, however, asks for a minimum contribution of \$250 per person. LAH has a contract with the D'Iberville Volunteers Foundation to provide breakfast, a brown bag lunch, & dinner for five days, and lodging for six days.

The Foundation provides LAH with any additional tools and supplies volunteers may need to complete the work assigned. However, if you see a tool is needed and your organization has given you money to help in our mission, feel free to purchase the equipment and donate it to DVF at the end of the week. They will be grateful for any help you can provide.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU?

Lend-A-Hand and DVF expects and demands that you respect the rights and privacy of all other volunteers and of the people of Mississippi. Any infringement of such rights and privacy should be reported to the Group Leader or Field Supervisor as soon as possible.

One of the greatest services you can give to the people of Mississippi is to listen (really LISTEN) to their stories. Telling their story is a great part of the healing process. Don't cut them off short, and don't start telling you story back to them. They need reassurance that help is there and will continue to be there until their crisis is over.

Hold their hand when it feels right, and expect to be hugged - and don't be shy about returning the hug. It is one of the best ways we have of saying "I care."

LAH expects you to be willing to try to do a job that you may never have done before – never even thought of doing before. LAH expects a strong work ethic and a team spirit to be a part of every hour of every day. **Flexibility & Patience** are the watchwords for the week.

THE BUS TRIP

About a week before departure you will be advised as to where to meet the bus and at what time. Generally, LAH wants to leave the Harrisburg area by 8 AM. A second pick-up, further south along I-81, is sometimes arranged. This 8AM departure puts the bus in Knoxville, Tennessee around 5 PM. The LAH bus shall either stop at our Best Western motel at that time, or go directly to "Ryan's," a buffet style restaurant, for

dinner. LAH volunteers then return to the motel. It is important that the bus driver is able to get out of the bus before he violates the miles/hours he is permitted each day. On the return trip from Mississippi the bus shall follow the same routine.

Day one will be a “get acquainted” day on the bus. You are likely to be asked to introduce yourself to the group via the PA system of the bus. The Group Leader shall collect the registration forms for DVF that are part of the packet you received at the orientation meeting. Day two is where the Group Leader handles getting ready for arrival at Camp New Hope. If traffic and weather cooperate, the bus shall arrive at the camp between 4 & 5 PM on Sunday.

Snacks and water are provided on the bus. The driver stops every 2-3 hours for a bathroom break and for a lunch stop each day. The bus is equipped with a VHS & DVD player, so you can bring movies you would like to share with the group.

A DAY AT D'IBERVILLE

Each day at camp begins around 6:30 AM. Showers are opened around 5:30 AM and stay open until around 8:30 AM.

A group meeting and short devotional is held at 7:30 in the red & white tent near the camp entrance. Attendance is optional. However, each group in the camp is usually asked to be in charge of at least two of the morning & two evening devotionals. It is the job of the Group Leader to get volunteers to handle those devotionals for our group, and arrange them with the Camp Manager. See your Group Leader if you would like to lead one of the devotionals.

Breakfast is served from 8 AM to 9AM. When there are several large groups in the camp, group eating times are staggered to avoid crowding in the dining hall. While at breakfast, each individual is expected to pack a “brown bag” lunch at the lunch table and take it to his/her job site.

A “Sign Out/Sign In” sheet will be found in the dining hall. All workers are required to sign out in the morning and sign in when they return to camp. Each hour that a volunteer works is credited to D'Iberville and lessens the amount of money the town will need to reimburse FEMA.

At 7 AM each morning Field Supervisors are to meet with Dr. Ed Cake to get work assignments for their teams. Group Leaders may also be asked to attend these meetings.

By 9 AM work teams have been formed, jobs assigned, and transport to the job sites begins. Tools needed are to be obtained by Work Team leaders (who are assigned that job by the Group Leader and the Field Supervisor) from the DVF tool tents. The Field Supervisor will help determine what tools are needed.

Lunch is taken at whatever time work teams agree to take them. Each work team should have a cooler with bottled water and a First Aid kit on the job site. Also, the team leader should have a cell phone turned on and be able to contact/be contacted by the Field Supervisor or Group Leader throughout the day.

The work day ends at or around 5 PM. However, teams can decide to work longer if they wish to finish a particular task. Transportation back to camp is arranged by the Group Leader & Field Supervisor. Showers are turned on around 4 PM and stay open until around 10 PM.

Dinner begins at 6 PM and is done in shifts when the camp is full. At 7:30 PM all camp participants are encouraged to meet in the devotional tent for a review of the day, problem solving, and a short devotional at the end. This has been one of the funniest and most uplifting portions of the day.

Lights go out around 10 PM and all volunteers are expected to respect the needs of others for sleep or a quiet time for the rest of the night.

ACCOMODATIONS IN D'IBERVILLE?

From September through November, volunteers were housed in two to four man tents on the softball field in D'Iberville. In December the tents were replaced by corrugated cardboard huts that had been laminated with a plastic coating. Heat was supplied to six of these two man huts by a torpedo heater. Several six person plastic huts were also erected. Light filtered through the white ceilings of the huts from the field lights at night. The lights were turned off at 10 PM. In March the huts were removed from the field and we are now housed in the "tent city" that was erected beside the ball field to house Katrina refugees until they could get a FEMA trailer or return to their homes. Each tent will house six persons on cots. Some foam pads are available at the camp to make the cots more comfortable. These tents have an electric light, heating and air conditioning. A few tents have power outlets to accommodate those volunteers on a C-PAP machine for sleep apnea.

Hot showers arrived at the camp in February and made the stay a much more pleasant experience. The showers are turned on for several hours in the morning and several hours in the evening. You need your own towels, soap, shampoos and clothing to wear to and from the showers. Washers & dryers are available in the shower areas.

Rest rooms are the famous port-a-potties. The concession stand has a men's and ladies room where there is hot running water where you can do your morning ablutions. Two additional sinks are available in the shower trailer for unisex use.

EVENINGS AT CAMP

Dinner is over at 7PM and the remainder of the evening is free time. Each evening, at 7:30, a review of the day by all camp members, and a short devotional is held in the red & white tent near the entrance to camp. This has proven to be one of the funniest and uplifting times of the day. We encourage you to attend.

There is a shopping center with eateries about a mile from camp, but getting there requires great caution and some risk. Any group of volunteers who decide to make the trek to this area should advise the Group Leader or Field Supervisor that they are going, and check in with them when they return. No one should make this trek on his/her own.

There may be volunteers at the camp from three or four other states. This is a good time to make new friends and share stories with them.

You may want to bring books, cards or board games to play in the evenings. If you bring a radio, plan on keeping the volume at a level that does not intrude on the privacy of others (headphones are recommended).

WORK TEAMS & JOB ASSIGNMENTS

Each of you has completed a Skills Survey for the Field Supervisor & Group Leader. You will be asked to indicate the type of work you would most like to do, and the Field Supervisor will do his/her best to give you that type of work. However, volunteers must remember that LAH is there to do the work they need us to do. Your leaders will use this information to form Work Teams and will ask one or two persons to serve as team leader(s) for a group. Many of you indicated that you had little experience in the areas listed, but were willing to learn. You will learn much this week! Our watchwords for the week are **“Patience & Flexibility.”**

Jobs that you may be asked to take part in include:

- a) kitchen & camp duty
- b) mucking out – entering a flood devastated home & cleaning it down to bare wood
- c) roofing
- d) carpentry or carpenter’s helper
- e) painting
- f) drywall hanging & finishing (called mudding & sanding)
- g) tree cutting/brush cutting & hauling
- h) electricians or their helper
- i) plumbing or their helper
- j) data entry & program creation at the Volunteers Foundation office
- k) making sure that your Work Team’s cooler has water & ice in it each morning

If, at any time, you are given an assignment that you can’t do – tell the leadership. If you aren’t sure how to do a job, ask and an instructor will be assigned to help you. Be flexible & patient with yourself and others.

CAMP WORKERS & KITCHEN HELPERS

During the week two or three people from the group may be invited by the Group Leader to help with breakfast and or dinner on two or three days. These people will begin working at 6:30 AM in the kitchen, and will work until 9:30 – 10 AM. Once they have completed that job, they will report to the Camp Manager for camp duty. Camp duty will consist of:

- a) cleaning restrooms and hand washing stations
- b) policing the grounds, dumping garbage containers
- c) providing camp security if the manager has to leave for a short time
- d) keep the tool shed in order
- e) any other job the Camp Manager might ask you to do

When camp workers have completed their camp duties, they should contact the Group Leader or Field Supervisor for transportation to a work site. They will complete their work day at that site.

Another group of two or three will be assigned to kitchen duty for dinner beginning at 4:30 PM and lasting until around 7:30 PM. LAH’s share of this duty is

likely to be two days. The Group Leader is in charge of obtaining volunteers for these duties.

ILLNESS & INJURY

Always remember that you are in an area that has been devastated by a hurricane. Getting help for illness and injury will not always happen with the rapidity that you are used to in your hometown. Knowing this, inform the Group Leader, Field Supervisor or a friend as soon as you suspect that you are becoming ill- don't wait until you are really sick. Arrangements for medical attention will be made quickly so that your safety is protected. If you have an injury, report it to your Work Team leader immediately and arrangements will be made for proper medical attention. Small cuts should be cleaned, an antiseptic applied and bandaged immediately to prevent infection. When in doubt as to what to do, ask.

HOW YOU SHOULD PACK

How you pack will be somewhat determined by the weather. LAH recommends that you go to 'weather.com' and get the 10 day forecast for Biloxi, MS in mid-week before departure. Observe closely the high & low temps and predictions for precipitation for the days we will be there, and pack accordingly.

You should pack:

- a. old work clothes – several pairs of jeans & t-shirts & underwear
- b. five pairs of good work socks & pair of work shoes/boots
- c. season specific outerwear (temperatures have dipped below freezing at night)
- d. rain jacket or poncho
- e. two pair of hardy work gloves
- f. eye protection and dust masks
- g. sleeping bag or equivalent with pillow & cover
- h. Showers shoes & robe for the walk to the showers
- i. toilet articles, sun screen and bug repellent
- j. all medications you will need
- k. a hands free flashlight
- l. cell phone or phone card for calling home & use on the job
- m. money for meals traveling to & from D'Iberville & other personal needs

Storage room in the bus bays is limited, so pack everything you need for the week in one suitcase. Roll your sleeping bag as tight as possible and have your name on it. Have a small tool bag with your name on it for in the tool bay of the bus and make sure you have put your name on all tools. The clothes and other articles you need for the bus trip down and back should be carried on the bus in an overnight bag/backpack.

YOUR DAY BAG

Each day you will leave camp around 9 AM and return around 4:30 PM. You will need a day bag that will hold storm gear if the weather is threatening, your daily medications, your brown bag lunch and your tools. A change of clothes is optional.

A backpack has worked well for past volunteers. We will try to make sure that there is a small First Aid kit with each team. However, you may want to put a few band aids, antiseptic cream and an eye treatment in a zip lock bag and keep it with you each day.

WHAT TOOLS WILL I NEED?

Tools that you should bring with you in an easily transportable bag/pack/bucket are:

- a. hammer
- b. wrecking bar
- c. shingle/utility knife
- d. nail bag
- e. 1-16 ft. tape measure
- f. Pencil/marker

Use a Sharpie/indelible ink pen to put your name or initials on tools so that they are returned to you and not mixed up with PDA or VF tools. If you are a professional in one of the building trades, you may want to bring skill specific tools with you.

THURSDAY EVENING TOUR & DINNER

During one of the early bus trips to D'Iberville the LAH group was given a guided tour of the devastation in D'Iberville and neighboring Ocean Springs by a couple that worked at Kessler AFB and lived nearby. This tour was so enlightening that it has been repeated for each group of volunteers. The trip usually begins at camp around 4:00 PM, so work ends early that day to enable teams to shower and get ready. The bus driver will make a stop at the Route 9 bridge to Biloxi for photo opps, and point out other points of interest as you proceed through the area. Remember that you must be discrete when taking photos and not violate the privacy of others.

When the tour is over (1-2 hrs) the bus will stop for dinner at a local restaurant if the group so desires. All such dinners are at the individual's expense, so the group should decide on Sunday if they wish to go to dinner or return to camp for dinner. If they decide to dine out, the Group Leader should notify the camp kitchen so they don't overcook. If you are returning to camp, advise them that you will arrive toward the end of the dinner hour. Your Group Leader will make the dinner reservation for the Thursday tour participants..