

SHARING

newsletter

Kyrgyzstan Church Builds Network of Health Leaders

By Sarah Schafer

Many mothers in Kyrgyzstan face a dilemma familiar to many U.S. moms: providing their families with healthy meals on a budget. The issue takes on greater significance for the 31 percent of Kyrgyzstan's residents who live below the poverty line.

Lutherans in Kyrgyzstan are addressing this and other health concerns through Women's Issues (WI), an education, counseling and assistance program, funded in part by a \$14,000 grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care.

In March, more than 70 women from 13 congregations of the Lutheran Church Concordia in Kyrgyzstan gathered at one of the four annual WI seminars to learn about "Healthy and Inexpensive Food" options.

"The goal of the seminar was to give the participants some basic knowledge about what healthy food is, to teach them that expensive food is not necessarily high-quality nutritious food ...," wrote Lena Bykova, WI project coordinator. At the end of the event, participants taste tested healthy meals made from ordinary, inexpensive food prepared by women from six village congregations.

WI workers are also able to reach out to women in need of medical, psychological, juridical and material help during the seminars. In March, 10 needy mothers of newborns received baby clothes.

While WI must be careful not to proclaim the Gospel or pray for participants in public places according to Kyrgyzstan law, seminars held in churches, such as the March event, provide opportunities for participants to worship and pray together. And people are responding to the Gospel message. Just before the March

seminar, three women were baptized and confirmed, and a baby was baptized.

"The WI program is important and necessary because the living and education level remain low in Kyrgyzstan and women, especially in villages, need educational, psychological, juridical and material help. The WI program can offer this help to them. What is more, the WI program can be used as an instrument of evangelism and helps women to grow spiritually. The WI program works well with other programs and ministries of the church; it helps to set up new groups of believers and promotes their growth," wrote Bykova.

The seminars are just one way the Kyrgyzstan church is reaching out to women in Bishkek and rural villages. Since May 2010, 13 local women (all who are now church members) completed 38 weeks of training on topics that included hypertension, diabetes, hygiene and worm prevention.

Seminar participants also take what they learn into village churches, homes and orphanages. Between May 2010 and April 2011, 3,707 women attended 705 seminars held around the country. More than 460 heard the Gospel for the first time.

"It was an excellent opportunity for the [leaders] of the project not only to share with village women what they know about healthy lifestyles, but to mix with them, to make friends and to know more about other Lutheran congregations," wrote Bykova.

For more information about the LCMS mercy work, visit www.lcms.org/worldrelief.



Samara Esenamanova talks to students from Kemin, Kyrgyzstan, about oral hygiene. Many students have cavities, but parents often don't understand the seriousness of dental health or lack the financial means to pay a dentist. Improving dental care is one way the Lutheran church is reaching out with Christ's mercy.



Women's Issues (WI) program leader Gulia Eje measures a woman's blood pressure while leading a village seminar as part of the WI program of the Lutheran Church Concordia in Kyrgyzstan.

Give God Glory...

...for the St. John Lutheran Child Development Center in Seward, Neb., and their donation to disaster relief efforts in Japan! The preschool students and staff sent a donation, accompanied by letters and prayers, to LCMS World Relief and Human Care to assist the "dear people of Japan."

...for New Life Chinese Lutheran Church, in San Francisco, Calif., that also made a donation to disaster relief efforts in Japan! The youth and young adult groups hosted a car wash to raise funds, which also included the opportunity

of washing a local fire engine. Origami paper cranes were folded and displayed in the congregation's fellowship hall for every car washed. Combining direct donations with the funds raised at the car wash, the congregation sent a check for \$4,060.00 to WR-HC!



How Your Gifts Support LCMS World Relief and Human Care

You can help make projects like these possible with your continuing or new gifts to "Where Needed Most." Please use the envelope provided in this issue to send your gift to help LCMS World Relief and Human Care continue to reach out with Christ's mercy around the world. (Note: Thanks to your generous gifts, this publication may occasionally feature projects that have been fully funded.)

The mission of the church through LCMS World Relief and Human Care is to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, motivated by Christ and His Gospel, according to the Lutheran confession of the faith.

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Sharing Mercy after “Disastrous” Spring

By Kim Krull

LCMS members are among the many hit hard by one of the most deadly tornado seasons ever, and their congregations are reaching out in battered communities – with a helping hand from LCMS World Relief and Human Care donors.

The disaster-filled spring included the massive May 22 twister that decimated Joplin, Mo., killing more than 150 people, including two young children from a member family at First Lutheran Church in nearby Neosho. The homes of more than 30 families of Immanuel Lutheran Church and Martin Luther School in Joplin were among the more than 8,000 destroyed or damaged.

On April 27, a powerful string of tornadoes ripped through Alabama, claiming more than 300 lives. Eleanor Allen, a member of Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Birmingham, described how she held her daughter, Ashley, as the tornado leveled their house, one of many destroyed in the killer storms.

LCMS World Relief and Human Care’s (WR-HC) Rev. Glenn F. Merritt and Rev. Carlos Hernandez traveled to both states to work with local congregations to assess needs and provide financial support through grants. The pastors also listened and prayed with people whose lives have been turned upside down.

“The scope and scale of the recent storms across our nation has caused community after community to shutter at the terrible impact of such devastation,” said Merritt, director of Disaster Response with WR-HC. “However, the church has not shuttered but rather has risen to the occasion by offering mercy and peace to those in need.”

The Disaster Response team assisted many congregations and communities, including:

- **Immanuel Lutheran Church, Joplin, Mo.,** where WR-HC grants helped the congregation assist families after the single deadliest tornado in nearly six decades. Martin Luther School quickly transformed into a busy relief distribution center. Merritt and Hernandez



LCMS World Relief and Human Care’s (WR-HC) Rev. Glenn F. Merritt, left, and Rev. Darrell Howanitz, right, rear, and members of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Tuscaloosa, Ala., unload tarps purchased by WR-HC donors assisted during a storm-filled spring.

worked with church and school leaders to provide financial aid for temporary housing and other emergency needs. The church, school and parsonage also were damaged.

- **Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Birmingham, Ala.,** one of several churches in that state where the Disaster Response team, including Rev. Darrell Howanitz, worked with local pastors. In Birmingham, one of the most devastated cities, the team visited neighborhoods with Pilgrim’s Rev. Perry McCullam, who serves or assists four area churches. A WR-HC grant to Pilgrim was one of many that helped Alabama congregations assist families with temporary housing, food and cleanup needs.

By June 2, WR-HC had awarded a steady stream of grants, including:

- \$82,075 to Immanuel Lutheran, Joplin.
- \$45,750 to Alabama congregations and a relief ministry.
- \$19,575 to districts and other congregations for other tornado and flood relief in Iowa, Missouri, North Carolina and Illinois.

More grants for long-term relief are in the works. Recovery from the Joplin tornado, for example, “will be measured in years,” Merritt said. To learn about other disaster response efforts, visit www.lcms.org/disaster or the WR-HC Facebook page at www.facebook.com/LCMSWRHC.

Because the Synod’s mercy arm is getting so many requests for disaster relief, WR-HC ministry leaders are concerned if enough funds will be available to provide needed grants.

To make a gift:

- Mail checks (noting “Tornado Disaster Relief” in the memo line) to LCMS World Relief and Human Care, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861.
- Call toll-free 888-930-4438.
- To make an online donation, visit www.lcms.org/disaster/tornado

Any funds not needed for these relief efforts will be used for other disaster purposes as determined by LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Gifts are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Your Support a Blessing Amid Suffering, Calamity

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:4-6 NASB).

We have all sat back in disbelief this spring as the United States has seen unprecedented devastation from storms, tornadoes and floods all across our borders. In addition, we still remember the graphic images of the devastation of earthquakes in Japan, Australia and New Zealand. LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC) staff has crisscrossed our country and the world as we have responded to multiple disasters that overlap each other. Even as I write this, Rev. Glenn F. Merritt, the Synod’s director of Disaster Response, is accompanying me in Japan to discuss with our partners a long-term relief strategy as that country continues to assess recovery needs.

On a number of occasions, WR-HC staff has wondered when this string of disasters will end. Maintaining this pace, coupled with our ongoing work of mercy, gets physically, emotionally and spiritual tiring, particularly for those on the ground working to help people whose lives are turned upside down.

In the midst of our service, we receive the encouragement of God’s promises through Christ. Through daily chapel services at the LCMS International Center and staff devotions before meetings, we receive the refreshment, perseverance, encouragement and hope of the Gospel.

We also receive encouragement from our Lord through you. Your reassurance of prayers, your kind letters of support and your financial gifts have been a constant reminder to us that the Lord always blesses — especially in the midst of calamity, chaos and suffering.

Thank you for your expressions of encouragement. Thank you for joining us, lifting up one voice of thanksgiving to God for His enduring mercy.

Peace be with you in Christ,

Dr. Matthew C. Harrison
President of the Synod

