

SHARING

newsletter

Lutheran Church of Myanmar Encourages Cyclone Survivors

By Elizabeth Truong

Deadly Cyclone Giri made landfall in Myanmar on Oct. 22, 2010. It was deemed the most intense storm to ever strike the country — its strength even surpassing the well-known 2008 Cyclone Nargis. Cyclone Giri killed at least 150 people, left 70,000 homeless and inflicted catastrophic damage across Myanmar.

Through a partnership with the Lutheran Church of Myanmar, a \$15,000 grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care provided food packages that helped 400 families who were affected by Cyclone Giri in Rakhine State. Relief efforts focused on providing food for families in four hard-to-reach villages in the Pauk Taw Township: Upper Manyinkaing, Lower Manyinkaing, Shwin Ywa and Kyein Ni Pyin.

In late February, a relief team traveled via boat to Pauk Taw Township to begin the food-package distribution. Upon arrival in Pauk Taw, the team met with the four village leaders who would direct the distribution of supplies in each of their respective villages.

Each package included rice, oil and potatoes and was estimated to provide a month's worth of food for a family of five.

The WR-HC grant also covered the transportation and accommodation costs of the teams who delivered the food.

Mrs. Khain Saw Nu, from the village of Shwin Ywa, was thankful to receive a food package for her family. When the cyclone struck, Nu's family took shelter in a neighbor's home, because the Nu home was small and unreliable. They later discovered the cyclone

had destroyed their home. Nu expressed deep thankfulness for the provisions. She hoped the food would provide the strength to rebuild their home. Rev. Martin Lalthangliana, mission director of the Lutheran Church of Myanmar, said, "[Nu] thanks God and also our [relief] teams for bringing the aid . . . and for [praying] for the restoration of their life, even though we live far away from each other."

Villagers who received assistance repeatedly expressed their appreciation for the help, and many local village and church leaders wrote notes of gratitude for the supplies.

Lalthangliana noted that some recipients were Christian families and others were not — but all were touched by Christ's mercy as the church shared its blessings in His name. Lalthangliana also explained that the presence of the relief teams encouraged the villages' Christian families, who, as noted, are a small minority.

Lalthangliana wrote this of the ongoing effect of this food distribution: "Because of this project, we are planning to open a new mission field in Rakhine State and place one missionary family to reach out to the people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are hoping that we will be able to plant a Lutheran church in this region in the near future. Please pray for this mission field as we move forward."

For more information about LCMS mercy work in Myanmar and around the world, visit www.lcms.org/worldrelief.



A member of the Burmese relief team hands oil to a village leader. The food packages contained oil, rice and potatoes.



Khain Saw Nu from the village of Shwin Ywa was one of 400 families who received packages. She expressed how grateful her family was to receive help after their house was destroyed in the cyclone.

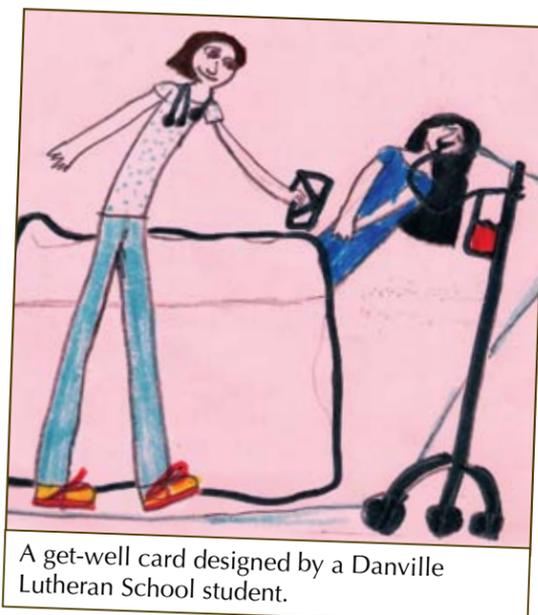
Give God Glory...

. . . for students from Danville Lutheran School in Danville, Ill., who collected \$1,057 in chapel offerings this spring to help LCMS Mercy Medical Team volunteers provide free or low-cost health-care for people in developing countries.

The students also made get-well cards for the patients. Fifth-grade teacher Pennela Tibben, who helped organize the fundraiser, hopes the cards let the patients know that people from far away are praying for them.

"I told my students that people should see Jesus when they see us," said Tibben.

To learn more about LCMS Mercy Medical Teams or to sign up as a volunteer, visit www.lcms.org/mercyteams.



A get-well card designed by a Danville Lutheran School student.

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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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.)



Inner-City Summer Camp Teaches Kids to Love Learning

By Sarah Schafer

About 70 kids from inner-city Rochester, N.Y., boarded yellow school buses July 12 and headed for a day of hiking and Bible study in the countryside. The outing was part of Creative Learning, a six-week summer camp offered by Community Lutheran Ministries (CLM) for economically disadvantaged students.

With a high-school dropout rate of 42 percent and teen pregnancy rate of 70 percent in Rochester, LCMS Eastern District President Rev. Chris Wicher said the program is “intended to take kids out of their environment for a short time to experience programs and places of positive influence. Without this program, the children would have nothing, because there is nothing for them here.”

For 40 years, CLM has provided food, clothing and housing for families in need at its center, an old bakery often referred to as “Maggie’s place” after Executive Director Deaconess Maggie Harris. It’s a safe environment for Christian learning; a place for people to grow in God’s love.

When Harris was called 21 years ago to work for the Lutheran non-profit, she walked the streets, talking with drug dealers and their customers, establishing relationships with them. A few of those young men participated in her program and now some of their children attend the summer camp.

In the Rochester area, 15 LCMS churches are among those that support CLM with financial assistance, supplies and volunteers. The LCMS Eastern District has provided CLM with financial assistance, as has the City of Rochester, county agencies and local non-profits. It also works closely with LCMS Ethnic Ministries.

“I must say at the outset that I do not know of many people who carry the reputation for ministry in the heart of a distressed community as Maggie Harris and Community Lutheran

Ministries. Noted by the mayor and council of the City of Rochester, Maggie has a reputation of being a strong leader, and Community Lutheran Ministries is known for its compassion to the less fortunate,” wrote Wicher.

LCMS World Relief and Human Care also has a history of supporting CLM and in June awarded the LCMS Recognized Service Organization a \$6,000 grant for its Creative Learning program.

More than 130 students registered and faithfully attend the program. By the fourth week of camp, they had visited a dairy farm, a corn maze, went hiking, learned to play golf, and climbed a waterfall.

“We let the kids try new things,” said Harris. The activities are meant to give the students opportunities to build self-esteem, eliminate negative behaviors and create a love for education.

“Our children find every kind of thing to get involved in to keep from learning,” wrote Harris. “We need adult mentors to guide children through the joys of education.”

Local school-district staff serve as Christian mentors and help students connect their daily outings with reading and math skills, as well as Bible lessons.

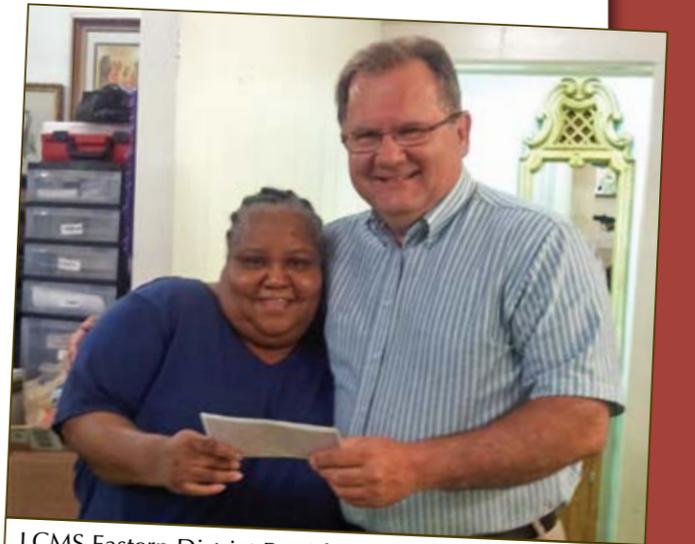
Ultimately, the Creative Learning program aims to lower the area’s high dropout and teen-pregnancy rates, but the program already reports successes. One student confided in Harris that when he started summer camp, he didn’t want to be there. He wanted to stay home and play video games.

“I’m glad I came,” the boy told Harris. “I made friends. I don’t have friends.”

“It’s difficult to put into words the positive difference this effort is making in the hearts and lives of families and communities, but be assured the impact is incredible,” wrote Wicher.



Participants in Community Lutheran Ministries’ Creative Learning program get ready for a hiking trip July 12 to the country outside of Rochester, N.Y. Photo courtesy of the LCMS Eastern District.



LCMS Eastern District President Rev. Chris Wicher presents Community Lutheran Ministries Executive Director Deaconess Maggie Harris with a check for \$6,000, a grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care for a Creative Learning program for inner-city kids. Photo courtesy of the LCMS Eastern District.

For more information about CLM, find them on Facebook at Community Lutheran Ministries, Inc., or email Harris at maggierny@gmail.com. For more information about LCMS mercy work or to make a gift, visit www.lcms.org/worldrelief.

Sowing Seeds through Work We Do Together

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Is. 55:10-11 ESV).

I shall never forget the piercing eyes and strong, calloused hands of an elderly Indonesian who lived in a village devastated by an earthquake. LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC) adopted three hard-hit villages, providing tarps, bamboo poles and sheet metal for approximately 60 homes. I was in this man’s village after the quake to check on the project with Darin Storkson, who is now the Synod’s regional director for South Asia, and colleagues. This hunched gentleman followed as we offered condolences to people who had lost loved ones and homes. When I looked at him, the man’s intense eyes caught mine. He did not return my smile. Finally, he accepted my extended hand, his grip reflecting years of hard work. With Darin interpreting, the Indonesian asked why Christians helped this largely Muslim village. I answered that God has compassion and mercy on us through Jesus, and He sent us to show that compassion to all people. Many Lutheran Christians in the United States care about him and his village, I said, and gave gifts to enable this help. With misty eyes, he expressed thanks.

I think of this gentleman, wondering if he ever sought a local Christian church.

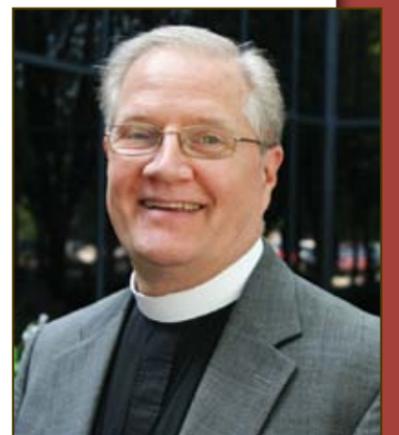
In this *Sharing*, you will read stories of mercy that God has blessed through your gifts and prayers. I hope you share the same joy and thanksgiving that I and all LCMS staff have in this mercy work, particularly when people who do not know Jesus ask to hear more about this One we serve. Lutheran mercy, accompanied by Gospel proclamation, often leads to inquiries about our God of mercy and a Lutheran congregation’s beginning.

God continues to bless your gifts and prayers in this work we do together. We have His Word on that.

Peace be with you in Christ,

Handwritten signature of Rev. John A. Fale.

Rev. John A. Fale
Interim Co-Executive Director, Office of International Mission
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



Mercy forever.