

Church of Christ Group Still at Work in Henryville

Written by George Browning
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By Kris Konick

Special Correspondent

You may have never heard of an organization named I.D.E.S. (International Disaster Emergency Service) but one could easily bet that you have heard of most of the cataclysmic events this group has responded to since its inception in 1973.

In fact, one recent disaster relief project hits pretty close to home, the tornadoes that struck parts of Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and Alabama on March 2.

Director of Media Relations, Ryan Chapman was on the ground in Henryville as early as March 3 in a project management role to assist with relief efforts.

Chapman said the initial assignments were things like dealing with roofs, siding, and building storage sheds.

He said that when most people think of disasters they focus on clean up which is essential; however, if those effected have any belongings left a place is needed to store them. Chapman added that in the clean up stages after a disaster, with so many structures being torn down, even something as small as the sight of a storage shed going up seems to give people hope amidst all they are faced with.

I.D.E.S was founded by Milton Bates in 1973. According to the I.D.E.S. website, Milton grew up poor, raised by a single mother who struggled to provide so he knew what it meant to be in need. Milton served in the Navy, got married, had a child, and moved to Marion, Indiana to work for General Motors.

Seeing the civil war (via television) Bangladesh suffered in 1972 changed everything for Milton. While he had always been generous and helpful to those in need, he felt a strong calling to unite Christians and their resources so that they might then be able to make a global impact.

Thirty nine years later the International Disaster Emergency Service has worked in more than 90 countries and contributes to an average of about 250 projects per year (per the I.D.E.S. website) with approximately 80+ so far in 2012 in the areas of disaster relief, medical relief, hunger relief, development projects, and evangelism.

Chapman was on his way home to Indianapolis from the Joplin relief efforts when he got the call about the March 2 tornadoes.

He said that while you learn how to do things better and more efficiently with every experience, the response to each disaster and each community is always different.

According to Chapman the initial work was, as mentioned, the cleanup of roofs, siding, and followed up with the building of storage sheds.

I.D.E.S. workers, both skilled and unskilled, have worked in the Borden, Pekin, Henryville, Marysville, Hanover, and Otisco areas since March.

Chapman said that one home is being rebuilt by I.D.E.S. in the Henryville area with a plan for a second home in the Pekin area and there is even the possibility of a third home.

They are hoping to have the financial support as well as volunteers to be able to rebuild one of

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the local churches.

When asked how long the I.D.E.S. group plans to continue working in the area the response was two fold.

“As of right now there is sufficient funding and manpower to complete another 15-20 storage sheds and to complete the two, possibly three homes mentioned,” Chapman said. “But additionally, I.D.E.S. will remain at work in the area as long as there are funds coming in to support the mission.”

Chapman said that is one thing of many that he loves about I.D.E.S., if someone makes a donation to the organization and designates that they want it to go to a particular project, disaster, area, etc... then 100% of those funds go directly to what was specified. He said that normally and understandably organizations take out administrative and/or operating costs but with I.D.E.S. those are taken out somewhere else so that the donation can have the greatest impact as it was intended by the donor.

When asked how the affected areas have progressed from March 3rd until today, Chapman said that Henryville seems to have had much of the focus directed there so there is obvious progress that has been made.

However, he added, some of the outlying areas, the more rural areas are virtually untouched leaving the residents still struggling and frustrated. He said that at first skilled and non-skilled labor was needed for clean up efforts, but that now there is more of a skilled labor or at least a known need, the kind where church mission groups or anyone interested can usually schedule certain teams to work at designated projects.

Chapman said that confidentiality is very important to their organization but he said there are many, many stories that show God's hand still at work in these troubled times.

Some they see often are stories of people who should not have survived but somehow did. He said it is touching to see the volunteers and the community connecting.

“The presence of the church nationwide helping, communities coming together, people leaning on each other and trying to get through things as best they can,” is something Chapman says he always enjoys seeing even amongst the chaos and devastation.

For more information on I.D.E.S., the amazing story of its history and its founder visit <http://www.ides.org>.

The I.D.E.S. website offers a place to make donations or you can email ides@ides.org to get involved, to volunteer.

If you do not have internet access, you can call the I.D.E.S. office at (765) 947-5100 for information or mail a donation to: International Disaster Emergency Service, P.O. Box 60, Kempton, IN 46049-0060.