

Nehemiah's Vision helps Southeast Texas recover from Rita

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VIDOR—Texas Baptists continue to help restore homes destroyed by Hurricane Rita, even as Southeast Texas residents make their way through another hurricane season.

This summer, volunteers from around the state lent a hand through Nehemiah's Vision, a nonprofit organization facilitating disaster recovery ministry in Southeast Texas.

Nehemiah's Vision, a nonprofit organization started with the help of BGCT disaster response funds, has brought volunteers from across the state to help rebuild portions of Southeast Texas.

"Nehemiah's Vision has given our entire Southeast Texas region a focal point to work in channeling those resources," said Charles Pierce, a member of Nehemiah's Vision board of directors. "It's the coordination and focus for folks who want to donate goods, services, building products or food. We work with a lot of organizations, and we are the focal point for relief coming in."

Golden Triangle Baptist Association leaders started Nehemiah's Vision to share God's love by assisting in recovery efforts in Texas and in future crises elsewhere. The Baptist General Convention of Texas assisted the groups' launch with disaster response funds.

"It was born in the midst of a very acute thing that happened with Katrina

and Rita hitting the same summer and overwhelming our nation's ability to cope with disaster," said Andy Narramore, executive director of Nehemiah's Vision. "Our Baptist people were able to give hope and respond to those people who had no answers because it was such a big thing."

Since Hurricane Rita hit, Nehemiah's Vision has completed 125 jobs.

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“Directly, we have received 375 requests, with numerous others coming indirectly, of names and information of people asking for our help,”

Narramore said. "Our goal is to rebuild a hope in families that are hurting in disasters and point to Jesus in that process."

Volunteers from churches, associations and Baptist Student Ministries continue to call Nehemiah's Vision, asking how they can help. The association then finds the strengths of specific churches and sends them where they will be needed most.

A nursing home in Vidor was donated to Nehemiah's Vision as housing for volunteers. When reconstruction of the nursing home is completed, it will provide lodging for up to 175 volunteers.

"God used hurricanes Katrina and Rita to accelerate and clarify both the needs and a means to meet them," Narramore said. "Nehemiah's Vision provides an avenue to go beyond relief into rebuilding and recovery."

Volunteers are able to clean up the damage and form relationships with people who are "not only accepting the help but the gospel," he added.

An emergency food-service unit is being built to feed between 8,000 and 10,000 people each day.

Mobile shower, laundry and sleeping units also are being built to be used by volunteers and workers, allowing them to serve longer periods.

Texas Baptist Men has helped Nehemiah's Vision with the rebuilding, as well as providing disaster-relief training for local volunteers in specialized areas, such as work with chainsaw and mud-out crews.

The local Red Cross asked Nehemiah's Vision for volunteers to help replace the blue roofs put on homes soon after the storms hit. The old tarps are tearing and shredding and will not stand up against upcoming storms.

To serve through Nehemiah's Vision or for more information, call (409) 769-1616, e-mail nehemiahsvision@sbcglobal.net or visit

www.nehemiahsvision.com.

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