

Free the Next Generation

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” James 1:27

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina Gulf Coast ministries were faced with what seemed to be an insurmountable task: how to coordinate the efforts of ministry teams trying to address the needs of disaster victims. Out of this was born the Christians Organized for Relief Efforts, or C.O.R.E. Base camp. Through C.O.R.E. literally thousands of volunteers used tons of materials and thousands of volunteer hours to make a difference.

We want to use the base camp model as part of a minimum 10-year effort to radically improve the quality of life in Houston’s Third Ward. We want to be God’s hands and feet in Houston’s Third Ward community.

The Third Ward is considered one of the poorest communities in the United States. It hosts the highest percentage of HIV/AIDS cases in the city of Houston. In addition, it has large populations of single-parent families, orphans and the elderly. They are surrounded by crime, poverty and hopelessness. As Christians we are commanded to meet the needs of these people. But, in the past the efforts have been sporadic and ineffective. We believe the failure is not due to a lack of desire as much as a lack of coordination. This project will enable everyday Christians to enter the mission field in their own backyard.

Many ministry teams come to the Third Ward with great expectations, only to be worn down by the size of the task and a lack of direction. That is where the base camp model would come into play.

Our first and most critical step will be to establish the base camp. This facility will be a community center that will include a kitchen, classrooms for after-school programs, job training programs and other ministries. The facility will also serve as the staging area and housing for ministry teams of up to 50 volunteers who will do everything from administering food programs to rebuilding homes to running sports programs for local youth.

Youth will be a major focus of the ministry. The target group will be children between the ages of 4 and 8 years old. The objective is to take the Gospel to these children and show them that they matter to God and that he can use them to make their community better. Through relationships with Christian workers, they will be encouraged to make use of the opportunities they have for education as a means to break the cycle of poverty. Mission objectives can be measured in graduation rates, employment rates, homes rebuilt, sports programs, lives changed, and souls saved.

The facility will be manned by a live-in staff that will coordinate all ministry efforts. Having people on site all the time would ensure that all work will be scheduled and done as efficiently as possible. We gained valuable experience at C.O.R.E. Base camp and are experienced in coordinating even the largest projects. The ultimate objective isn’t just to handout Gospel tracts and sandwiches. It is to eradicate poverty in the Houston area. As the ministry becomes established it will expand into other communities. Eventually this ministry will take the Gospel to all of Houston.

Once the facility is established, it will become self-supporting. It is much easier for an existing entity to obtain funding. At C.O.R.E. Base camp we learned that business and other organizations are more willing to fund projects that have a proven track record of success and are active and effective.