

# WYO CISM NET



January 2009

## *A Newsletter For Critical Incident Responders In Wyoming*

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*This article presents a personal account and reactions about an assignment with the Red Cross in response to Hurricane Ike in Texas in 2008. It is an After Action report by the author.*

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**Approaching Hurricane Ike - Texas Gulf Coast**

## **COMMUNITY IN TIMES OF DISASTER**

Bruce L. Andrews, MS, CCMHC, LPC, LMFT, NCC ,  
Sheridan, Wyoming

From September 18 to October 8, 2008 I was deployed as an American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Provider in response to Hurricane Ike. I served in an area of operations around Galveston Bay. During my deployment, I was repeatedly reminded of three of the six basic principles espoused by Unitarian Universalists (Unitarian Universalist Association, 1993).

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3. The respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

In regard to communities, a person could probably list hundreds of characteristics of communities, but, don't worry, I won't. Martin Luther King wrote of "beloved community" (Smith and Zepp, 1998). Beloved communities and the multiple communities I witnessed are quite similar. Here some of the characteristics they share:

1. They are welcoming, inclusive, & hospitable.
2. They build and maintain community.
3. Community is a means to spiritual growth.
4. Gratefulness and warmth are abundant.
5. A sense of belonging exists.
6. There is a replacement of oppression with inclusion.
7. People are more genuinely integrated.
8. Agape is apparent, i.e., an understanding, redeeming good will for all.
9. Sanctuary is provided.
10. Reverence is expressed for all.
11. Equity and compassion are pervasive.

These are very positive characteristics upon which I will focus. However, to paraphrase, during disasters, there exist "the best of behaviors and the worst of behaviors". Thus, there are looters and those who would shoot them right alongside heroes trying to save lives. Reality is what it is and cannot be denied.

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The Crisis Management and Traumatic Stress Report <http://www.nc-cm.org/The%20Report/The%20Report%205.0.pdf>



Hurricane Ike - wrecked boats on Bolivar Peninsula, Texas Gulf Coast



Hurricane Ike – Galveston Island, Texas

Understanding the structure of the American Red Cross and the Phases of Disasters will help to give you context for the multiple communities I experienced and, simultaneously, to give you context for the examples of their interactions over time and space. For descriptions of the structure and phases, I am drawing heavily on *Disaster Mental Health Services: An Overview* – The ARC Participant’s Manual, 2005 Edition that is used for training Disaster Mental Health Providers.

The Red Cross is made up of various departments serving various purposes during disaster response. These departments, as in any large organization, all have their acronyms. The main department upon which I will focus is Disaster Mental Health Services (DMHS). DMHS was initially established in 1992 as an entity separate from Disaster Health Services (DHS). I was in the inaugural group of Disaster Mental Health Providers (DMHP) who trained in 1992 and responded to Hurricane Andrew in that same year.

The two main goals of DMHS are to meet the emotional needs of the people affected by the disaster (clients) and to help assure the emotional well being of Red Cross Disaster workers (staff and volunteers). Two key ways DMHS workers achieve these goals are by serving as a part of immediate disaster response teams and by providing specialized assistance for people who need mental health care beyond everyday emotional support. DMHS workers supplement and assist, but do not supplant, local community mental health care delivery systems and personnel. DMHS work is crisis intervention rather than therapy. It may feel therapeutic, but it is not therapy. Crisis intervention helps people to emotionally stabilize and to begin again to use their own emotional resources to cope. The intervention is time-limited until, if needed, local mental health providers take over.

All Red Cross workers are trained in the phases of disasters. These include:

1. The **Heroic Phase** that occurs before, during and immediately after the disaster. During this phase many emotions or behaviors may occur. For example, risk-taking to save lives or property, confusion, shock, denial, grief, anxiety, and fear.
2. The **Honeymoon Phase** occurs during early relief efforts when there are feelings of relief, hope and high expectations of assistance.
3. The **Disillusionment Phase** evolves as the relief effort continues during which frustration and increased stress possibly lead to behaviors such as abuse of children, spouses, and elders or increased alcohol use, drug use, and looting.
4. The **Reconstruction Phase** occurs after the relief effort ends and when the acceptance of personal responsibility for recovery or resignation may begin.

This is a generic description of the phases. Individuals and communities may experience these phases at different speeds, in different sequences and in different ways.

The “multiple communities” I mentioned earlier varied significantly. For me, these ranged in size from two to 200 or more. They were my partners and I, the DMHS team in a specific area of operations, client and staff shelter members, Red Cross Headquarters staff, North Carolina Men’s Convention kitchen operators and client communities. I shouldn’t exclude the million or so people in the Houston metropolitan area. There was also a Vietnamese fishing community on Galveston Bay, as well as a small bayou community isolated from others. Even now I almost neglected to mention nature’s “communities” including horses, cows, dogs, cats, armadillos, water moccasins, alligators, fish, trees, bushes, grass, water, etc.

I found that community is not defined by time, or space, or culture, or disasters, or other demographic data or environmental events alone. I now believe that community is defined more by the relationships that occur within these human and environmental parameters. These relationships include a primary, if not the primary, community, which is with one’s self. If one cannot commune with one’s self, community with others is far more difficult. Clearer connections with one’s self allow clearer connections with all else. Like John Muir, the great naturalist, said, “If you try to pick something up by itself, you’ll find it is connected to everything else in the universe.”

I have learned and known that through different experiences for some time. Life just seems to keep reminding me. I think Life is patiently providing me repetitions of life experiences until I really see and understand the connections.

Now for the part of this paper to which I have been looking forward – telling stories that reflect Unitarian Universalist Principles and Beloved Community. More formally, these are examples to make the point, but thinking of them as stories is a lot more fun.

That reminds me. One of the primary skill sets for DMH workers is to remain flexible and to keep and express a sense of humor. If one doesn't, one cannot provide support and solace without greater risk of experiencing compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is when one absorbs so much of others' pain that one cannot function as effectively as needed in one's helping role. When a person's cage has been rattled, that person needs a helper whose cage is firm. If there are two emotionally wobbly cages, it is akin to "the blind leading the blind" emotionally.

NOW for the stories. I find it difficult not to tell all of the stories. However, space requires that I tell only one or two associated with each of the three UU Principles I mentioned.

### **The Inherent Dignity and Worth of Every Person**

My partner and I were assigned to check out a report of a man who lived alone in an isolated place and who may not have had food or contact for several days. We made a wrong turn and came upon another man whose home at the water's edge was torn in half. He had built it himself and was already determined to build again. In fact, he wanted us to take pictures of the damaged home and to walk with him as he described how he would rebuild his dream home. The resilience in these people is amazing. Having shared his dreams, he directed us to the home of the man whom we were seeking. He said that the man wasn't "quite right in the head, but a good man". He went on to say that we needed to be aware of that "redneck next door who was unpredictable, but mostly made noise". The "redneck" did not show or make a sound.

We found the man for whom we were looking at his home where he was mowing the lawn. We were immediately aware that the man, whom I'll call Bo, was mentally challenged. He was cordial and invited us into his home. It was clear he kept his home clean. Bo's brother had died right after the storm and he needed to show us his brother's funeral program. It was clear he had water, but we weren't sure about food and other necessities although he assured us he was OK.

As we were leaving, a couple of men drove up and dropped off a case of Meals-Ready-To-Eat (MREs) and told him to come to their house two doors down to learn how to use them safely. One of the men had been Bo's employer for many years although Bo was now retired. The other was a neighbor who also kept an eye on him. They also added that Bo's sister-in-law lived right behind Bo.

Bo was safe and well. He, literally, had a community watching out for him. Not only does it take a community to raise a child, but it also takes a community to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every person in order to take care of each other. Where would we be if that were not so?

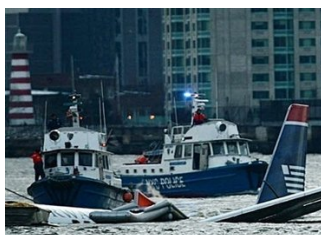
### **Justice, Equity and Compassion in Human Relations**

One day we were assigned to follow an Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) crew as they fed people in the community. One of their stops on previous days had been at a huge garbage dump where debris was taken. There they provided meals and water for the truck drivers at the dump. On this day some headquarters (HQ) people had business there so the ERV crew led them to the dump. After arriving, the HQ people told the ERV crew they couldn't feed the garbage men because the garbage men supposedly should have had access to food and water through their employers. They didn't have access, but the ERV crew followed orders and went on to serve in other places on the west side of Galveston Bay. The mental health team helped with the serving. While I was serving, one of the women on the crew standing next to me broke into tears because she was so worried about the garbage men with no food or water in the heat. Believe me. These ARC volunteers are not IN this work for the money. They are in it for the 18-hour days, exhaustion, and lack of sleep.

Another day while I was serving meals from another ERV, a man came for a meal. I asked him how things were going. He replied that he had cleaned out his home because all the contents were lost. Yet he said he was working. When asked for whom he was working, he said that he didn't have a job. He was just helping others clean out their houses because they needed help. "Just helping"? He had lost everything, was thinking of others, and asking, "What else is a guy to do?"



A US Airways Airbus A320 jet with about 150 people on board came down into the frigid Hudson River off Manhattan, NY after apparently hitting a flock of geese on Thursday. Officials said everyone was rescued.



Boats come to rescue

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I'll be mentioning a couple of surprises later, but this one fits here better. While working in an extremely poor neighborhood, we came upon a group of somewhat unkempt-looking white people each of whom had a beer in hand. Remember that I mentioned clearer connections with one's self? I am ashamed to admit that at that moment I had a reactive stereotypic response to these people as possibly being bigoted or racist. They proved me wrong in about five seconds. They had introduced me to another Vietnam vet who, like myself, had been in an airborne unit. Jose and I chatted. Then I was told the story of their awareness of Jose's war injury that made walking very difficult for him. When water was rising rapidly during the storm, they knew Jose would need help. They went to his home at their own peril in waist deep water to bring him to safety. Justice, equity, and compassion? You bet! I also learned something about looking into the mirror rather than looking out the window and pointing one's finger with preconceived notions!

### Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence

While working the very rural east side of Galveston Bay, I saw all sorts of wildlife as well as cattle, horses and other domestic animals. People were gathered to help round up stock to return them to safety as miles of fencing had been destroyed. Sadly, there were dead cattle, armadillos, snakes and others of the animal kingdom.

In most disaster operations volunteers of different local organizations help to locate and, if possible, return pets to their owners. Of course, pet owners also desperately search for beloved pets. One day we were serving in a town called Seabrook. We saw a man with a cat in his arms and took a meal to him. Just before we took him a meal his cat had come to him out of the pile of lumber that had been the man's home. The cat had been there for almost two weeks while the man searched for it every day. At that moment, the man didn't give a darn about his house. He wanted us to take pictures of his cat in his arms with the "pile of splintered lumber" house right behind them. We took a picture with his cell phone so he could send it to his friends.

In addition, talk was already beginning regarding restoration of the land. Although reclamation of the bottom of Galveston Bay had to be addressed later, I knew the bottom of Galveston Bay must have been a junkyard if the debris on land was any indication of the extent of debris spread across the bottom of the bay.

### Surprises, Learning, and Relearning

There are many surprises and much learning in these conditions. One of many instances of learning for me was that community is not limited by time or space.

One day I was covering the Mental Health "desk" next to the port-a-potties near the kitchen area when I saw a nurse striding purposefully toward me. She was clearly and intently looking at me. I immediately thought that we had a mental health crisis situation with which to deal. However, as I stood up, she asked, "Do you remember me?" As I frequently am, I was embarrassed to say, "No." She then said that we had served together 16 years before at Hurricane Andrew. I then recognized her and we had a wonderful "mini-reunion." We had had no contact since Hurricane Andrew. She had recognized my boonie hat that I had worn at Hurricane Andrew and tracked me down.

That boonie hat led to another humbling experience of self-awareness and learning or reminding. A person must be aware of one's self while also being open to the perspective of others. That may not sound especially profound or difficult, but living it in the moment is another matter.

While visiting a small Vietnamese fishing village on Galveston Bay, we met with a Vietnamese woman whose seafood business had been devastated. I greeted her in Vietnamese. She thanked us profusely for checking on her village. Then she noticed my boonie hat and asked if I had been in Vietnam. I said, "Yes." She hugged me and said, "Thank you for coming." I had received many hugs and thanks for coming to Texas at that point and it took me a moment to realize that she meant to thank me for coming to Vietnam 40 years before that day.

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US Airways Airbus A320 jet with passengers on wing awaiting rescue. Foreground is the USS Intrepid Aircraft Carrier [Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum](http://www.usni.edu)

Below: Emergency Workers moving passenger to aid



Forty years ago I was so lost in my hate for that war or any war that I couldn't or wouldn't see that it was a life saving event for some. In forty years a Vietnamese person had never thanked me for my service. This lady's home and business had been destroyed. She was grieving her loss. Yet she took the opportunity in that moment to thank me for my service so long ago. How humbling.

It seems that when one is at the "tip of the spear in combat" or, in this case, in the path of the devastation of the "eye of the storm", something basic in human relationships happens. Their focus narrows to what is really primary and important and, simultaneously, beloved community expands to include all that is really primary and important. That which is secondary or tertiary falls away at least for a moment in time. Words like cooperation, commitment, connection, compassion, community, humanity, and, yes, love come to the fore. They are more completely and consistently alive and well in relationships. I believe that each of us can help to expand that moment in time. I really do. I invite you to join me in trying every moment of every day to do so.

In conclusion, I want to share a reading sent to me by one of my mental health team friends from Hurricane Ike. It is entitled *A Part of You - A Part of Me*. As you listen, please allow "You" to be singular and plural and permit "Me" to be "Us" as well. I ask this because I believe it applies to you with yourself, with another person, or you with an entire community whatever form that community takes.

#### **A Part of You – A Part of Me**

Every moment that we are together I am learning something and that knowledge becomes a permanent part of me. Though my feelings will be different a year from now, or ten years from now, part of that difference is you.

Because of you, I am a different person and the person I will grow to become, with or without you by my side, will have [grown to become that person] partly because of you. If you were not in my life right now, I could not be who I am right now, nor would I be growing in the same way.

Much of what I grow toward and change within myself, has to do with what I respond to in you, what I learn from you, what I understand about myself through you and what I learn about my feelings in the dynamics of our relationship. I do not worry about our "future together" since we have already touched each other and affected each other's lives on so many levels that we can never be totally removed from each other's [experience].

A part of me will always be you, and a part of you will always be me. That much is certain, no matter what else happens.

#### **References**

American Red Cross, *Disaster Mental Health Services:An Overview" - Participant's workbook, 2005*

Smith, Kenneth L. and Zepp, Ira G. Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community:The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, 1998 [See the chapter on "Vision of the Beloved Community"]

Unitarian Universalist Association, *Singing the Living Tradition*, Unitarian Universalist Association, 1993

**WYOMING CISM TEAM UPDATES****Sweetwater ASSIST CISM Team - CISM MEETING MINUTES:**

DATE: 12-16-08

Wauneta Lutes, Steve Sorenson, Jill Johnson, Renee Schroeder, Shirley Slaugh, Winston Slaugh, Jason Wright, Judy Roderick, Ben Fausett, Ron Atkins, Bob Cottrell,

Judy and Steve discussed the Little America call out of the suicidal subject. They advised it went good. Judy said she got a little lost with the Spanish speaking issue. Six subjects attended the meeting but the Fireman Tippy from Granger did not attend but was there. The Spanish female (who found body) was referred on to Southwest Counseling as she had a lot of issues not resolved by the Debriefing.

Discussion on Spanish hand outs was brought up and Steve said he thought he could help making them but the team did not think we should or need them as we are for first responders and we do not have problems with this issue. Mike Bauer had advised Steve there could be a liability if our team did debriefings for the public. Steve did tell him the person who called this in was from Granger Fire. The team discussed this and decided that we should clarify who has a ticket when someone asks for a Debriefing.

Jill, Renee and Ben discussed the Debriefing on the "Death By Fire" in Clearview Acres. There were approximately 15 in attendance and all had the 'A' ticket. They had Fire, EMS and Law Enforcement. This was a positive Debriefing and the reaction was very encouraging.

Debriefing at the hospital for baby death was by Christy Doak and Bonnie Rice and they were both absent.

Winston and Shirley had feedback on the hunting Debriefing in Daggett County and said positive reactions came from this incident between agencies.

Refreshments were provided by Wauneta's sister, Diana. The fudge and cookies were delicious.

NEXT MEETING JANUARY 20TH

WE MISSED YOU RANDY!!! - WAUNETA

**Campbell County CISM Team - December activities**

1. Monthly meeting was on Monday, December 1. In lieu of our regular business/training meeting, we met at the Golden Corral for a Christmas dinner. Spouses were invited. And gifts were exchanged that reflected some aspect of CISM. Thanks to Dave King for the gift idea.
2. No CISM pre-incident educational presentations this month.
3. The CISM Group Crisis Intervention course scheduled for January 16/17 with ICISF approved instructor Gordon E. Harper has 21 registered, of which 9 are in the mental health profession.
4. Pre-incident brochures got a final polish. Obtained permission from several entities to use in-state testimonials. Specifics and identifiers were removed to accommodate confidentiality concerns. Thanks to Rod Warne for bringing up the permission concern.
5. Team put in a total of 16 volunteer hours for December.

Respectfully Submitted: Bob W. Rudichar, Team Coordinator

**BOOKS**

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Available March, 2009

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## Yellowstone Earthquakes

Yellowstone National Park contains the floor of a gigantic volcanic cauldron. It rises and sinks with the forces lying beneath. A wave of recent earthquake activity has raised fears that have origins 642,000 years ago. At that time, Yellowstone was a "supervolcano". It exploded so violently that it created the caldera itself. Such an explosion today - 1,000 times more powerful than the explosion of Mount St. Helens in 1980 - would not only cover most of the U.S. with ash but also throw so much dust into the atmosphere that the world's climate could change. In December geologists at the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory (YVO) recorded a "notable swarm of earthquakes under way since Dec. 26 beneath Yellowstone Lake." The strongest tremor among the hundreds in that week measured 3.9 on Dec. 27. Most of the readings above 2.8 were felt by park employees and visitors around the lake area. The activity relaxed in magnitude but then flexed upward again to top 3.0 by early New Year's Eve. "This December 2008 earthquake sequence is the most intense in this area for some years," YVO reported, "and is centered on the east side of the Yellowstone Caldera," the ancient collapsed volcano beneath Yellowstone Lake. Scientists said they cannot immediately "identify any causative fault or other feature without further analysis." ([recent volcanic eruptions.](#))

The Yellowstone Caldera was formed by the massive upheaval 642,000 years ago that spread airborne debris all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. It is not extinct. Areas of the park's topography inflate like a bellows due to magma infusing into volcanic chambers about 6 miles beneath the surface. An average of 1,000 to 2,000 tremors a year (mostly small) have been recorded since 2004. At that time, interpretation of satellite imagery with GPS readings indicated the caldera had been rising as much as 3 in. a year. The late December number of tremors - about 400 - is considered unusual. Such activity could have a whole range of consequences. In a study released last year, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said possible hazards could include [hydrothermal explosions](#) (when steam breaks through the surface and forms a crater). That has happened 26 times in the Yellowstone's 127 years of record-keeping. USGS has discounted chances for a cataclysmic eruption of the caldera. They point out that the hot, active magma chamber below Yellowstone has turned into "largely crystallized mush." However, the same study also said: "Depending on the nature and magnitude of a particular hazardous event and the particular time and season when it might occur, 70,000 to more than 100,000 persons could be affected; the most violent events could affect a broader region or even continent-wide areas."

Jake Lowenstern, Ph.D., YVO's chief scientist, who also is part of the USGS Volcano Hazards Team, has said that a supervolcano event does not appear to be imminent. "We don't think the amount of magma exists that would create one of these large eruptions of the past," he said. "It is still possible to have a volcanic eruption comparable to other volcanoes. But we would expect to see more and larger quakes, deformation and precursory explosions out of the lake. We don't believe that anything strange is happening right now." Last summer YVO installed new instrumentation in boreholes 500 to 600 ft. deep to better detect ground deformation. Says Lowenstern: "We have a lot more ability to look at all the data now." ([How scientists monitor volcanoes.](#)) In the summer of 1959, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake occurred, causing a mountain to slide down into a campground, killing 28 people and damming the Madison River.

In 1991, when [Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines](#) erupted, it was the largest eruption in recent memory. The effects on the atmosphere are still being measured.

In 1883, the eruption of Indonesia's Krakatoa led to cooling on a global scale. The deadly winter of 1886-87 wiped out the short-lived open-range cattle bonanza in the Montana Territory. In 2000, Ken Wohletz, a scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory, postulated that an even bigger Krakatoa eruption in 6th century A.D. may have sent a tall plume of vaporized seawater into the atmosphere, causing formation of stratospheric ice clouds with superfine hydrovolcanic ash, which resulted in casting a pall over much of the world at the beginning of what became known as the Dark Ages.

The YVO alert code for the Yellowstone Caldera stands at green. However, if it ever elevates to yellow or red based on seismic readings, Lowenstern says, "Ultimately it's my responsibility to put out alerts. The National Park Service and local officials would be responsible for civil defense measures and evacuation plans. For now, life goes on. The system is generally automated, and a seismologist at the University of Utah is on call to make sure it's a real event should it be anything unusual."