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www.ntzchs.org

Katrina trip sparked multiple mission trips for Indiana resident, church group



Cynthia Schafer is second from left.

When Red Cross volunteer Cynthia Schafer spent several weeks in Natchez after Hurricane Katrina, she didn't suspect that would be only the first of 10 trips to Natchez by the spring of 2014.

During her initial visit, Cynthia formed an enduring bond with Natchez Children's Home Services. She saw its accomplishments in "saving lives, one child at a time," and realized that here would always be work to be done.

After returning home, Cynthia shared the story of Natchez Children's Home Services with Central Christian Church, her home church in Carmel, Indiana. The Church has now sponsored 9 mission trips to Natchez, each one focused on serving NCHS.

The groups, ranging in number from 7 to 17, have driven down from Indiana to clean gutters, organize school rooms, move furniture, paint, sweep the floors and do anything else that needed doing. Their cheerful labor has indeed been a blessing to NCHS and has represented an enormous savings to us.

Leading mission trips comes naturally to Cynthia and her husband Don Schafer, the Executive Director of Camptown, a non-profit organization that has been benefitting disadvantaged, urban children and youth in Indianapolis for 23 years (www.camptown.net).

Camptown's mission is "to challenge, mentor, and teach youth about life through outdoor adventure and nature programs that help build confidence, character, and hope."

Through after-school clubs, camping and wilderness adventure programs led by Cynthia and Don, Camptown teaches such skills as leadership, teamwork, and conflict resolution, all in the guise of good fun. Autistic children have been especially benefitted by participating.

Cynthia and Don may soon bring Camptown to Natchez for the benefit of the new programs being developed for special needs and autistic children through the new NCHS partnership with Mississippi Children's Home Services.

You never know when or where you will find the beginning of a beautiful relationship.