



Laura's Legacy

Lighting the way home . . .

Laura Recovery Center Newsletter

January 2006

Hurricane Katrina by David Dannemiller

On Friday, Sept. 1 representatives from the Laura Recovery Center including Bob Smither, David Smither, David Dannemiller, Carlos Canseco and Calvin Arnold made a trip to Hattiesburg, Mississippi to help victims of Katrina.

We prepared the Laura Recovery Center's (LRC) Mobile Recovery Center (MRC) as well as a second vehicle to make the trip. Father Tommy at St. Thomas Catholic Church (Hattiesburg) had been working tirelessly to deliver supplies to outlying areas that were receiving little assistance in the wake of Katrina and needed the means to continue. The MRC would give him a vehicle to carry a large quantity of needed supplies as well as a place to base operations while further from home.

The Christian Alliance of Pearland loaded the MRC and pickup with supplies, mostly drinks – gratis. Bringing the amount of supplies to 3000 pounds! Steve Baughman filled the MRS propane tanks – gratis. Ray Bellew and Sons weighed the MRC – gratis. The family of Courtney LeBlanc (missing/murdered November 2002), Janet & Karl Kocke from Donaldsonville, Louisiana provided lodging for the travelers!

Hurricane damage become apparent as we traveled along IH-12 toward Slidell. Many road signs and billboards were down. Cell service got worse as we traveled north. In Hattiesburg, we saw more trees down, many landing on buildings and vehicles; power lines down; most roofs damaged, many gone; an 18 wheel trailer overturned; and most businesses closed.

We found our way to the church where Father

Tommy was using, in spite of roof damage, as a distribution center. Leaving the MRC, we returned home.

I am once again heartened by the good that people do in the midst of a major catastrophe —something we see often in searches we organize for a missing child.

LRC 2005 Year End Review

Missing Children

- Cases: 139 (Flyers: 121; Resolved: 116; Unresolved: 23)
- Missing Persons Recovered Alive: 102
- Searches Conducted: 5 (2 children returned home, 3 children murdered)

Education

- Skate Programs: 21,000 children; 1200 adults
- Safety Fairs: 5
- Law Enforcement Training Classes: 15
- Teen Choices Programs: 2
- Approx. 20,000 ID Kits distributed

Special Programs

- Emergency Nurses Assoc.
- Friendswood Holiday Hustle Fun Run
- Citizens Police Academy - Preparation for Missing Child Incident
- Greater Houston Search Dog Team Fun Run - Display Booth
- Law Enforcement Expo
- Shell Houston Open - Birdies for Charity

Local Support For Victims of Katrina by Bob Walcutt

Margaret Archer and Nick Lampson contacted the Laura Recovery Center on Sept. 1st requesting assistance at Hilton Furniture in Houston working evacuee shelter support. Terry Arnold, Dawn Davis, Bob Walcutt and Suzanne Slavin volunteered to fill in needed times.

Hilton Furniture had a well organized ongoing shelter supply operation. They collected tons of clothing, food, medical supplies, bedding, beds and water for evacuees. As fast as supplies were coming in, their volunteers were sorting it and turning it around and shipping it out to local shelters as well as sending truck loads of supplies back into Louisiana and Mississippi.

The LRC operated a shelter processing center at Hilton Furniture from Sept. 2nd through the 5th. One situation has stuck out in my mind. A call came from a man who had two rooms in his house available and evacuee's could bring their pets. The couple ran an animal recovery center and had 16 acres of land.

Within minutes we had an evacuee come up and ask for a place to put four members of their family still in Louisiana. I asked if they had pets. One of the ladies started to cry. They too had an animal rescue facility in Louisiana and didn't want to leave their pets behind. So they were going to drive back to Louisiana, pick the rest of their family and pets then return to Texas. A happy ending to what could have been a heartbreaking situation.

We commend Margaret Archer, Nick Lampson and Hilton Furniture for their desire to make a difference and to help in this great time of need!

Search for Aaron Brooks by Bob Smither

On November 1, 2005 we were contacted by concerned citizens in Galt, CA about a missing teen, Aaron Brooks. Aaron had disappeared October 26 from a park near his house. The local police were treating Aaron's disappearance as a runaway. As we talked more with Aaron's family and friends, we found several indications that he had not run



away from home. We decided to organize a community search for Aaron.

Dawn Davis, Suzanne Slavin, and Bob Smither from the LRC arrived in Galt on November 3rd and met with the local police. Officer Mark Crews and Lt. Uptegrove were open and receptive to our organizing a search. It was clear that the police no longer thought that Aaron had run away and were now concerned for his safety.

We met with Aaron's family, approx. 100 local citizens, along with police officers and local media. Friday, November 4th we sent out 20 search teams. Most of the teams reported nothing of interest the first day.

While sending teams out, we trained the core volunteers to handle recovery center functions. In review, some teams that had been assigned areas close to Aaron's home reported that they did not feel they were able to completely cover the assigned areas.

On Saturday morning, at the urging of a local volunteer, we mapped out the area using the reports of incomplete coverage from the day before. About an hour into this search, a team reported that a body had been found. Officer Crews was at the recovery center and was able to respond to the team in the field. The body was identified as that of Aaron.

Some teams were also sent to do a neighborhood canvass. As a result of the information gained, the police were able to make an arrest in the case that same day. We were told by police that the information gathered was instrumental in their being able to make the arrest and get a confession quickly.

No one wanted the search to end the way that it did, but the community search accomplished a great deal. As a result of our efforts in Galt, the Galt city council and Mayor sent the Laura Recovery Center an official commendation.

Thank you volunteers, Officer Crews and Lt. Uptegrove, your efforts truly were a Triangle of Trust.

Flyer Volunteers Needed! *by Bob Walcutt*

When a child is missing time is of the essence. A child who may be a runaway may not get the attention needed to help their family find the child. People often assume they come home after a short time. But what if they don't! Are you willing to help? Identify an area near your home or job where you could post flyers, the call us.

If you live within a 50 miles radius of Houston would you commit to posting flyers within specific radius of your home or work ie. 10, 20 30 mile radius? If you live outside that 50 miles radius, how large an area could you cover? Once we have your information we will map out the areas of coverage and prepare to send out notification when we have a missing child we need immediate coverage on. We will send you a personal email with the name of the child and instructions. When the child is recovered, we will email you again to let you know the child is back home. E-mail us with any questions at info@lrcf.net.

Ron Carter Donates Billboard Space

by Bonnie Alcancia

Ron Carter Autoland Inc. in Alvin, TX, kindly donated 250 billboards across southeast Texas for use by the Laura Recovery Center during the month of December 2005. The poster selected for display was of Michelle Prasek, a 12-year-old girl missing since December 16, 1997, from Spring, TX. The intent of the billboard posters was to bring renewed awareness to the case and possibly develop new leads while also raising public awareness for missing children and inspiring citizens to respond.

Laura Recovery Center is very appreciative to Ron Carter Autoland for their support in our mission to recover missing children and promote preventive education.

Opportunity for the Center!

The LRC has been offered a donation of the house that we are currently renting if we can find a location in

Friendswood to move it to! This would be a great help to the Center since we would no longer have to pay rent for our office space.

If you know someone that could provide us with a small piece of land in Friendswood, please let us know.

The Story Behind the Flyer

by Suzanne Slavin

A 15 year old left home with a 23 year old man she had met while he was working at McDonalds. He was an illegal immigrant from Mexico and employed while using a false name, address, and social security number. Two days after she left, she left a message, said she wanted to come home and was then cut off and had not been heard from for a month. Local law enforcement had traced her cell phone first to a neighboring state and then to a location 6 states away. Since the girl had been classified as a run away, they would do little else.

LRC spoke to the frustrated mother several times a week. We spoke with the local police, contacted Klaas Kids, 6 television stations, 10 radio stations, and 2 newspapers about the case. Mom was then interviewed and the story appeared in 2 newspapers and on the regional NBC affiliate station. We also contacted the regional FBI office who in turn contacted local law enforcement. Law enforcement told them she was a runaway. Because of that, they refused to enter the case.

The missing girl was finally found in another state after someone reported a man beating her outside a residence. They later learned he had repeatedly raped her, starved her, locked her in a room, threatened to kill her and to come after her if she ever told the police. The same man told this young girl that her mom didn't love or want her. His plans were to take her to Mexico in the next few days. The police filed original charges against him for statutory rape, aggravated custodial interference, battery, and giving false information to a police officer. We later found that he was

being charged only with the last two offenses. They said the other state could get him for the first two offenses if they chose. They did not.

Upon return home, the young girl spent over a week in the hospital. Mom repeatedly thanked us, saying we were the only ones who would help her. Share with someone you love.

When The Sun Goes Down

The Lights Come On *by Bob Walcutt*

In September 2005, we were trying to find a new way to use our Mobile Recovery Center (MRC) and put it to better use. The MRC is a 36 ft. motor home used as the Center's initial control center when we start a search in the local area.

After a little trial and error, we came up with an inexpensive way to display missing children flyers on the side of the MRC when we are parked various locations. Once the sun goes down, we can now display missing children flyers on an 8ft X 10 screen on the side of the MRC. We use our laptop computer to generate the flyers and our portable projector to display the pictures on the screen. At the moment we have a little over 50 flyers that are displayed on the screen, one at a time.. After all 50 have been displayed, the computer starts the cycle all over again. Display times typically run from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

These displays have been shown in different locations throughout Houston as well as Livingston and

Lufkin, Texas. Displays can be done at almost any location. If you own a business and would like this display, contact us.

Thank You to Our Generous Volunteers and Donors!

Please submit any articles you would like to see in the next issue of our newsletter to Janice Liggett at email: janiceliggett@lrcf.net or fax the information to 281-482-5727.

On Line Calendar

Please check our on line calendar for opportunities to volunteer with us. The calendar is linked from our home page (<http://www.lrcf.org>) under News and Events.

Donations

Your donations are gratefully accepted by the Laura Recovery Center which is supported solely by voluntary contributions. You can donate on line at (<http://www.lrcf.org>)

Laura Recovery Center

for missing children

www.LRCF.org

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