Status Report:
Hurricane Katrina Relief Efforts
IAHV & Art of Living Foundation

This report is an account of the Post-Katrina relief and rehabilitation work done by IAHV.
Background

On August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit southern Louisiana, evacuating millions of people throughout the Gulf coast region of the United States. Many who left that week would have nothing to return to, for the extent to which this disaster affected the area was unprecedented. In its wake, neighborhoods were destroyed, families were scattered and separated, and the government was left to tackle an unparalleled tragedy.

Katrina left survivors who were traumatized by the suddenness, sheer unreality and magnitude of the devastation. While about 1,500 people perished in the flood, thousands more were battling an internal trauma. The loss of family, shelter, and livelihood created aftershocks that still continue to grip New Orleans and the surrounding areas. For many, the emptiness of a once vibrant city coupled with memories of evacuation was too much to bear. Even upon returning, many people could not cope with driving down the streets and seeing the debris. More importantly, many could not sleep or close their eyes; they had no peace of mind and no security. This is where IAHV sprang into action. While many organizations were providing necessary material and physical relief, IAHV recognized the need to release the trauma, fear and psychological unrest in the minds of the affected people.

IAHV Intervention

Phase 1: Immediate Relief

Under the guidance of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, volunteers from the International Association for Human Values and the Art of Living foundation rallied together to provide an unprecedented wave of love and service to the Katrina evacuees. Volunteers in Houston organized materials and went to the Astrodome to serve food and help organize the evacuees, while volunteers around the country donated money and organized projects to raise funds for the Katrina Relief efforts. In that first critical week, IAHV volunteers reached out to approximately 200 children in the relief camps throughout the city of Houston.

Within 30 days IAHV volunteers were teaching stress and trauma relief workshops to evacuees in Baton Rouge, Houston, Dallas and Austin. His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of the Art of Living Foundation and IAHV, flew from India specifically to visit and bring relief to the Katrina evacuees in Austin.

As Dr. Reginald Shaw, Director of GBL Inc. Youth Ministries said, “I’ve noticed that with each day, after completing the program the kids are happier, less restless and their minds are so much more settled. I have personally experienced the benefits of the Art of Living techniques during this experience, and found it very helpful in clearing my mind.”

Comments of youth who took the workshop:
“Now I even find the convention center a more fun place to be.” YES! participant
“I sleep better, feel more energetic; I feel like a new person.” YES! participant
“When I feel bad I just do what I did here (in class), and I feel better.” Art Excel participant
Looking at the Impact of Trauma:

“Unless the trauma is released, food and medicines won’t work. People can’t eat or sleep because their mind is full of the terrible tragedy that has befallen them.”

– H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Thus IAHV began to implement Stress and Trauma Relief Workshops free of charge to the residents of Louisiana. These workshops help people overcome the shock and trauma by offering emotional solace, providing immediate relief from anguish and depression, reducing dependency on alcohol and antidepressants, curbing violent and suicidal tendencies.

Essentially, while many people were aware of how to scrub mold off of their house, they didn’t know how to get negative thoughts out of their mind.

From “1 Dead in Attic” by Chris Rose:

“It has been said to me, almost a dozen times in exactly the same words: ‘Everyone here is mentally ill now.’ Some who say this are health care professionals voicing the accumulated wisdom of their careers and some are laymen venturing a psychological assessment that just happens to be correct.

With all due respect, we’re living in Crazy Town.

The only lines at retail outlets longer than those for lumber and refrigerators are at the pharmacy windows, where fidgety, glassy-eyed neighbors greet each other with the casual inquiries one might expect at a restaurant:

‘What are you gonna have? The Valium here is good. But I’m going with Paxil. Last week I had the Xanax and it didn’t agree with me’…Everybody’s got it, this thing, this affliction, this affinity for forgetfulness, absent-mindedness, confusion, laughing at inappropriate circumstances, crying when the wrong song comes on the radio, behaving in odd and contrary ways.”
Phase 2: Trauma Relief in Baton Rouge

IAHV began relief efforts in Louisiana in September of 2005 in Baton Rouge. Just 70 miles north of New Orleans, Baton Rouge was overwhelmed by the evacuees of New Orleans. In the aftermath of Katrina, Baton Rouge’s population doubled overnight and the school system, roadways, and businesses were over-taxed. Hence while the city of New Orleans was still mostly vacant, IAHV sent its volunteers north to Baton Rouge.

From October 2005 to January of 2006, IAHV reached out to approximately 200 people in Baton Rouge. The participants went through the Art of Living Trauma Relief Course, an 18 hour workshop that teaches how to get rid of trauma as well as handle the mind and emotions. Even one year later, many participants attend the weekly sessions that IAHV holds for everyone who has take the Art of Living Trauma Relief Course. IAHV helped to transform a displaced population into a community of belongingness, human values and compassion. In fact, in Baton Rouge the programs spread by word of mouth. There were soon people driving hours from other cities to attend our trauma relief workshops.

“(The Art of Living Trauma Relief course) allowed me to release a lot of stress and chaos that I was feeling prior to that. It just allowed me personally to go really deep within myself, and it was very peaceful and serene and relaxing.”

–Kelly McGuire, displaced resident of New Orleans

Phase 3: Taking attention to New Orleans

While the implementation of Art of Living Trauma Relief Course in Baton Rouge was running successfully, IAHV continued to keep a watchful eye on the city of New Orleans. IAHV volunteers traveled to New Orleans bi-weekly to meet with participants who had recently moved back to the city. In December of 2006, IAHV held its first Art of Living Trauma Relief Course in Algiers, where the floodwaters had not hit.

The full time program in New Orleans started in March of 2006 with two main focuses: the residents of the city and the relief workers who were there to help rebuild.

IAHV taught free trauma relief workshops to members of the following agencies:

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<tr>
<th>COMMON GROUND</th>
<th>EMERGENCY COMMUNITIES</th>
<th>VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA</th>
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<tr>
<td>UPWARD BOUND</td>
<td>AWESOME GIRLS PROGRAM</td>
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Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP)

In June 2006, IAHV conducted a Youth Leadership Training Program with a group of 30 students from universities around the United States. This YLTP was a 6 week program which encouraged youth to spend a summer in service, training to teach and organize stress reduction workshops. The program was highly successful and created strong leaders who continue to volunteer with IAHV’s Katrina Relief project.

YLTP was crucial in the growth of IAHV’s work in the city of New Orleans. Having a large number of skilled and motivated volunteers allowed IAHV to offer a greater number of free trauma relief workshops to the residents of New Orleans.

Another intensive 10-day YLTP will be offered in New Orleans, Dec. 27, 2006-Jan. 14, 2007, followed by field work.

Programs for Youth:

In collaboration with Common Ground, IAHV volunteers ran a summer camp for children at the Woodlands, a low income housing project in New Orleans. This summer camp involved working with some of the city’s most neglected children. Volunteers faced daily outbursts and behavioral issues from the kids and would often begin the day by cleaning up hypodermic needles and other trash from the camp area. The IAHV volunteers also had to repair the meeting room where the camp was held, as it had been devastated by neglect and Katrina. As part of the program, IAHV provided breakfast, lunch and wholesome activities for some 30 children. IAHV also gifted backpacks filled with school supplies and arranged a free educational field trip.

During summer 2006, IAHV offered a variety of free trauma relief programs to youth of all ages. Programs for youth ages 8-12 were offered at the YMCA in Kenner, while programs for teens were taught at Upward Bound at University of New Orleans and Southern University, the Awesome Girls Program, and the Terrebonne Parish Juvenile Detention Facility.

In preparation for the school year, IAHV volunteers assisted at the John McDonnah school cleanup, as many of the schools had been shut down and were in disrepair.
Professional Outreach:

One major crisis facing New Orleans was the labor market. Essentially business owners and employees were being stretched, as there were more demands than there were employees to perform the tasks. Hence, with this pressing concern, IAHV’s stress and trauma relief workshops were in demand in the professional sector.

IAHV has offered stress management workshops at:

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<td>Whitney Bank</td>
<td>Jewish Family Services</td>
<td>Unity Church</td>
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<td>Cabrini High School, faculty</td>
<td>Cannon Hospice</td>
<td>Ochsner Hospital</td>
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<td>West Jefferson Medical Center</td>
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“The course gave me much more than I expected. I was able to feel free and relaxed. I was able to find some peace where I had none. I had a feeling of peace, greater awareness, and relaxation: something I didn’t think I would feel again.”

– Anonymous, Whitney Bank

“I was feeling GREAT this morning. Why? Cause today was my first day in 8 straight that I did my Kriya in the morning - WHAT A DIFFERENCE. I started doing a daily stress-relieving breathing technique resulting from a workshop here last week. Initially I thought ok, I’ll just swallow it and do this bs but, now I like it :) It is a neat organization and two gals came to give us a “work-place” stress course.”

– John Beaulieu, USDA
The Numbers:

Since Hurricane Katrina hit, IAHV has had 2 full time employees and 100 volunteers working at various stages of this outreach to tailor programs to fit the needs of the community. IAHV has taught programs in 3 cities in Texas and 4 cities in Louisiana, and have invested over 40,000 hours of volunteer time into this relief project. IAHV worked with about 400 people in Texas in the weeks immediately following Katrina. In Louisiana in the past year IAHV volunteers have taught 200 people in Baton Rouge and 300 youth in the city of New Orleans. Furthermore, over 500 people have taken an Art of Living Trauma Relief Course, while another 2000 have been reached by various initiatives of IAHV.

Get Involved:

At present in New Orleans, IAHV has a committed group of volunteers who continue to offer free trauma relief workshops as well as maintain follow-up with past participants. The relief work done by IAHV volunteers in the past year has been a tremendous gift to the city of New Orleans. In order to further this relief effort, IAHV is currently organizing another Youth Leadership Training Programs to begin in late December 2006 and go through mid January. This will bring in another large influx of volunteers to New Orleans. IAHV is also applying for a grant from the Youth Services Division of the Office of Youth Development of the State of Louisiana to work with at risk youth in New Orleans.

Anyone interested in volunteering with IAHV or training to teach trauma relief workshops can contact the IAHV office in New Orleans at (504) 994-4990.

Involvement is also possible in form of a sponsorship. To make a donation to the Katrina Relief efforts, visit: www.iahv.org or email info@iahv.org.

For YLTP Information contact Bill Herman at

(530) 277-5230 or billhermanjgd@yahoo.com

For ongoing New Orleans relief efforts info contact Natalie Kaharick at

(216) 536-5026 or natalie@iahv.org.

www.iahv.org | www.iahvneworleans.org
Programs for Trauma Relief

The Art of Living Trauma Relief Course
The Art of Living Trauma Relief Course offers specific breathing practices and techniques that infuse the body with energy and harmonize the natural rhythms of the body, mind, and emotions. Taught over 18 hours, the course includes Sudarshan Kriya, which uses specific rhythms of breath to re-establish balance in life as it simultaneously floods the cells of the body with oxygen and energy. Course participants report that with regular practice (15-20 minutes a day), there is a vast improvement in physical and mental energy.

Breath Water Sound for Trauma Relief (BWS)
Breath Water Sound for Trauma Relief is concise, 5-6 hour, introductory stress reduction workshop offered free of charge as a service of IAHV. The workshop provides tools that improve overall health and wellness and increase enthusiasm and mental focus. These tools include breathing exercises, sound relaxation, meditation techniques, talks on healthy living, as well as games and singing, all of which help to alleviate physical, mental and emotional stress.

Youth Empowerment Seminar (YES!)
The Youth Empowerment Seminar is an innovative and dynamic educational program for high school students. YES! includes experiential processes designed to help youth feel at ease in challenging situations and fosters increased confidence and inner strength needed to better handle criticism and peer pressure. Participants also plan and execute service projects giving students the opportunity to learn social responsibility and to work in a team setting.

All ‘Round Training in Excellence (ART Excel)
ART Excel is a highly effective stress management and human values training program for youth ages 8-12. Through play, fun and laughter, children learn valuable lessons on how to share with others, work and play in harmony and develop a sense of belongingness. They become more self-expressive, as they learn yoga and powerful breathing processes which help to eliminate fear, anxiety, depression and other negative emotions.

Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP)
YLTP is a 10 day training which creates a platform for youth to make a difference in their world. At the core of this rigorous program are powerful breathing techniques that eliminate stress in the body and mind. This is coupled along with various processes, including daily yoga, meditation and team building techniques. Participants of YLTP learn to teach Breath Water Sound courses. During the fieldwork component of the program they work to organize and teach BWS in the community. Thus, YLTP succeeds at reviving and enriching communities through first strengthening the individual.