

Jetmore graduate ministers to Katrina survivors in New Orleans



COURTESY PHOTO

Myrinda Warner of Spearville hands out grocery bags from a Convoy of Hope truck in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. All Nations Fellowship, for whom she now works, participated in this event. *COURTESY PHOTO*

ADVERTISEMENT

By Charlene Scott

Daily Globe

Posted Jun 18, 2008 @ 09:54 AM

Spearville —

In his book “The Last Lecture,” professor Randy Pausch, who was battling a deadly cancer, wrote a chapter about “enabling the dreams of others.”

Pausch would be proud of Myrinda Warner, 27, a graduate of Jetmore High School and the University of Kansas who has been enabling the dreams of others since Hurricane Katrina ripped through the hearts and homes of New Orleans on Aug. 29, 2005.

“I was working full-time as a caregiver in Lawrence when the hurricane struck,” said Myrinda, the daughter of Spearville ranchers Willis and Ann Warner.

“I came closer to the Lord while I was at the university,” she added. “I felt that God was calling me to do missionary work and when Katrina hit, that was an opportunity for me to step out in faith.”

Myrinda ventured forth on her first visit to New Orleans in October 2005, six weeks after the deadly hurricane claimed more than 1,000 lives in the City of the Saints.

“I went to Louisiana with some members of my congregation, the Heartland Community Church in Lawrence,” she said.

“New Orleans was like a huge ghost city. Coming into the neighborhoods, there was no sound. Everything was dead. The grass was dead, the trees were dead. We could look inside the houses and see their furniture all in a jumble.”

During her first weeklong trip, Myrinda and her companions handed out food, water and clothing to anyone in need. She returned to the stricken city in December 2005 with a group of volunteers garnered from six different churches.

“In December, we cleaned out the homes — pulling out all the furniture — and when we came back again in March 2006, we started gutting the houses,” she said. “We could see some progress, but everything still was in a shambles. Houses were being eaten by mold and moisture and if they were not repaired, they could be demolished.”

When she volunteered in March, Myrinda noticed some improvement in the nearly demolished city.

“What stood out to me was the Superdome; they were repairing the roof that the winds had torn off,” she said. “Workers had cleaned and hauled off tons of debris. Many neighborhoods had turned into nothing but grassland. In one field, we saw many stairways that were leading up to nothing.”

Myrinda returned to New Orleans in August 2006 to join the relief effort full-time at a local Bible college turned relief hub, and she remained until December of that year.

When the college transitioned back to having students again and relief work ended there, she joined a new local church in New Orleans, All Nations Fellowship, as a missionary and administrative assistant.

While doing relief work, Myrinda met New Yorker Zac Povec, 26, who also traveled to New Orleans to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Povec also joined the All Nations Fellowship staff.

Zac accompanied Myrinda to Spearville recently and called her “the glue that keeps us all together.”

The Rev. Anthony Freeman, the pastor at All Nations Fellowship, helped to found the Bible college where Myrinda previously did relief work and is now starting the new church with his wife, Melanie.

“Our emphasis in the beginning was the physical restoration of people and their homes, but now our emphasis is on their spiritual restoration,” Povec said. “We are working with people who are homeless because of Katrina or because of addiction.”

The couple estimated that one-half to two-thirds of the former inhabitants of New Orleans have returned to their battered but beloved city.

“Schools and businesses are open; hospitals and other buildings and roads are repaired,” Myrinda said. “Some sections look back to normal, but the Lower Ninth Ward still is pretty much deserted.”

“Some people are sent to foreign cultures, but we are home missionaries,” said Zac, whose parents, Roger and Rosemary Povec, have taken several short-term mission trips to Argentina over the past 10 years.

In order to do their missionary work, Myrinda and Zac raise all their support from people who stand alongside them.

“We are both so thankful for those who have embraced our mission,” Myrinda said. “Katrina caused so much emotional trauma for the people of New Orleans. Now we are bringing hope and restoration to their hearts.”

For more information about the happenings at All Nations Fellowship, visit its Web site at www.allnationsfellowship.org.