

MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE

REPORT

DETROIT



Diana Shoulders was one of the 400 plus homeowners served by volunteers during MDS's two and half year flood recovery project in the Detroit area. Shoulders spoke earlier this year at a commemoration ceremony recognizing all the muck out and repair work done by MDS. She shared her thanks and appreciation during the

ceremony. "I praise God for angels unaware in our lives – MDS volunteers came and changed our lives," she said. "The volunteers loved us like we were family. Their presence will live with us indefinitely. Keep them in your prayer as they now go somewhere else." More than 1,000 volunteers worked on the Detroit project.

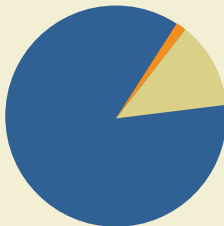
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

On August 11, 2014, up to six inches of rain fell in the Detroit area within a few hours. Tens of thousands of basements were filled with contaminated water mixed with sewage. Residents who were unable to clean out their flooded basements developed severe mold, which is known to cause respiratory issues.

Estimated Damage	\$ 1 billion+
Years of MDS Long-Term Response	2014-2016
Number of MDS volunteers	1,095
Project Leaders	90
Crew	1,005
Volunteer days worked	5,103
The value of volunteer time at 8 hours per day*	\$ 961,000
(*\$23.56 per/hour based on independentsector.org)	
Homeowners served	421
Home clean ups completed	326
Home repairs completed	95

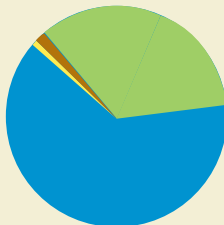
EXPENSES 2014-16

2016	\$ 635,704
2015	\$ 110,377
2014	\$ 7,244
Total Expenses	\$ 753,325



INCOME 2014-16

Donations	\$ 278,159
Grants	\$ 5,000
Merchandise Sales	\$ 2,010
General Fund	\$ 468,156
Total Income	\$ 753,325



All figures are in U.S. dollars



WHEN I SPEAK TO GROUPS about MDS work in Detroit I often get the question, “Why Detroit? What happened in Detroit?”

Detroit suffered the largest natural disaster in 2014 in all of Canada and the U.S. On top of that, almost four in 10 people in Detroit live in poverty, according to numbers released by the U.S. Census Bureau, making it the most impoverished big city in the U.S. Apart from a few hundred households still carrying sodden, ruined belongings to the curb, the disaster’s impact is no longer visible from the street. And that is why we were in Detroit and why I continue to talk about it.

The sheer enormity of the need in Detroit called MDS there. At the same time, working with this vulnerable population required an extra skill set that MDS did not have. So, we were grateful to be in partnership with Michelle Jackson and her East Side Mother’s Club of the Osborn neighborhood. Michelle lived in the community. Her house was flooded as well. She knew the situation and experienced its pain. She identified several case managers and we trained them to be our eyes and ears in their neighborhood. Without their partnership, we would not have been able to build trust in the community. The residents initially thought we were with FEMA or Child Protective Services.

Another key partner was Mary Lloyd from the Jefferson Chalmers area of Detroit. Similarly to Michelle, Mary provided countless hours as a case manager and was our “cultural interpreter.”

During their time in Detroit MDS volunteers enjoyed meeting the homeowners and learning about life in the inner city. For the homeowners



Why Detroit?

it was intriguing that strangers would come from across Canada and all parts of the U.S. to assist in their plight.

At the closing ceremony on January 18, 2017, homeowner Jocelyn Harris said, “Our homes are meant to be castles; instead they have become prisons of disrepair. However, we know that when disasters happen, God will provide a ram in the bush. Mennonites have been our ram in the bush.”

Even though our flooded basement work has come to a close, the impact lives on. Mary Lloyd and Ken Sutter, MDS Michigan unit chair, have held educational classes in Mary’s neighborhood on home maintenance tips and flood prevention. The residents learned a bit about mitigation by keeping their rain gutters cleared and the rainwater running away from the foundation of the house.

During our 18 months in Detroit MDS led a feasibility study on what possibilities there might be for other Anabaptist-related organizations to become more engaged in the city. Periodic conference calls are occurring to communicate and collaborate. MDS will keep a presence in the city with Abigail and Kevin Von Seggern serving as long-term volunteers to walk with the members of Community Christian Fellowship congregation and identify needs where we may respond with volunteers.

Our time of mucking and cleaning out basements, then repairing the space to make it livable again, is done. As with all MDS projects we move on, but not without being changed and blessed by the people of Detroit. We praise God for the gifts of love and caring they shared with us.

—Kevin King, MDS Executive Director



PROJECT: DETROIT, MICHIGAN
DISASTER DATE: AUGUST 11, 2014
PROJECT OPEN: OCT. 2015 – DEC. 2016

ON AUGUST 11, 2014, six inches of rain fell on Detroit within four hours flooding the city sewer and sewage systems and inundating tens of thousands of homeowner basements with contaminated water mixed with sewage.

This was the largest Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared disaster of the year, yet it received little publicity despite the massive damage.

Already faced with significant housing, financial, and employment problems when the flood hit the storm compounded and magnified these problems impacting the poorest residents of Detroit the most.

Roughly 200,000 homes were damaged by the flooding causing an estimated \$1.8 billion dollars in damage to property and roadways. In the aftermath more than 128,000 people applied for assistance from FEMA. The total individual assistance cost is estimated to be over \$2.15 million. The total public assistance cost was nearly \$16.8 million.

Because the poor were impacted proportionally more than any other group, this meant that thousands of homeowners simply could not afford to clean up and repair their homes. This was particularly true for the elderly, single women with children, widows and the disabled. The lack of resources and assistance meant their homes developed serious mold conditions causing health risks to children, women and the elderly.

"It was a blessing

MDS RESPONSE

Because an estimated 5,000 residents did not have the means to clean and repair their homes, MDS units from Region 2 quickly responded with teams of volunteers ready to muck out, clean up and begin repair projects. The MDS volunteers focused especially on homeowners without resources including the elderly, disabled, clients with special needs, and those under insured or lacking insurance.

With volunteers on the ground the MDS Detroit project officially opened in November 2014 as a Region 2 response. Volunteers came from throughout the Great Lakes region of the U.S. and Canada, including Ontario, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and other states and provinces.

Initially MDS worked in partnership with All Hands Volunteers until the summer of 2015 when MDS connected with the local recovery community, the Northwest Detroit Flood Recovery Project. Throughout the year and into 2016 the MDS Detroit project became an organization-wide effort with multiple partners working to bring hope to those in need.

Volunteers worked primarily on cleaning and repairing basements and preventing water from getting in again. This consisted of mucking out, rebuilding interior walls, replacing flooring, fixing plumbing, and rebuilding spouting and gutters. The average basement took six working days to complete over a period of about one month.

Lawrence Matthews, of Bluffton, Ohio, one of the early project directors, said responding to such a disaster required many hardworking and committed individuals. "It takes a lot of people with willing hearts to pull off a project like this," he said. "This is not just an MDS onetime thing. There are a lot of folks who really pitched in and got involved here in Detroit."

In the nearly two years of work in Detroit more than 1,000 volunteers from all five MDS regions

although it was a disaster."

in the U.S. and Canada worked a cumulative 5,103 days serving more than 400 homeowners. The value of volunteer hours over the course of the three-year project was more than \$960,000 USD.

NEXT STEPS

The MDS Detroit project closed in December 2016. While MDS will no longer be sending volunteers crews in response to the 2014 disaster, there are two long-term volunteers remaining in the city for several months. They will be working specifically with church leadership and members of the MDS host congregation, the Christian Community Fellowship Church (CCF), on various home repair and maintenance projects. In the future there is a hope and possibility of a broader Anabaptist community response to the larger socio-economic challenges in Detroit.

CELEBRATION

A community and church celebration recognizing two and a half years of MDS flood response work in



the Detroit neighborhood of Osborn was held January 20, 2017 at the CCF church in Osborn.

The event, which featured presentations and remarks from local homeowners, church and MDS leaders, signaled the completion of the MDS flood project in the area. Certifications from MDS's two partners, the CCF church and the Eastside Mothers Club and the Emergency Neighborhood Outreach Food organization were given to MDS volunteers.

Mary Lloyd, Disaster Case Manager and a member of the Southeast Michigan Long Term Recovery Organization said the presence of MDS gave people hope in the midst of disaster. "It is important for you to know that you have encouraged, you've inspired, you've given us hope when we didn't have it," she said at the event. "And because of that we see now what we have to do to help ourselves."

Homeowner Malaika Nsoimoa, expressed her thanks and said it was the spirit-driven love from volunteers that touched her most. "What really impressed me was the love that was demonstrated by all the people that came to assist and we had all kinds of people, the Amish, and people I have never met before in life," she said.

"It was a blessing, although it was a disaster. There were many blessings that came out of it. I had the opportunity to experience the goodness of human nature," Nsoimoa said.



Essie Westbrook, Detroit homeowner, stands in the doorway of her home. Volunteer crews from MDS worked at mucking out her basement after it was flooded in 2014. All her possessions in the basement were destroyed, but she still remained hopeful. "I thank God for all things because I tell you without him we couldn't do anything," she said. "It's a beautiful day. And I thank you all, everyone of you for all that you've done."



Working as a project director in Detroit

Lawrence Matthews shares his thoughts and experience as a project director.

Q: WHEN DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE WORK IN DETROIT?

A: In the fall of 2014. We started off as a regional project and had volunteers from all over the Great Lakes area, including Ontario. We worked with several other partners in Detroit cleaning out basements. We stayed at Community Christian Fellowship (CCF). A year later in the fall of 2015, headquarters in Canada and the U.S. got involved and turned this into a binational project.

Q: WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE LIKE FROM VOLUNTEERS?

A: For the first four months, MDS regional volunteers had an amazing partnership with All Hands volunteers. Later, partnerships and support devel-



oped with the NW Detroit Flood Recovery Group (United Methodists), the Salvation Army (food support), and neighborhood associations on the east side of Detroit. The initial MDS response in Detroit was coordinated out of MDS Region 2 but there was a need for someone to be on the ground coordinating volunteers and being a liaison with FEMA, city officials, and other organizations. That turned out to be me. Initially volunteers were mucking out basements and later repairing basements. Many of these volunteers came back to Detroit multiple times, bringing others along with them.

Q: WHY DETROIT?

A: After learning about the tens of thousands of homes that were flooded with storm and sewage water many of us wondered if we could or should respond. From the outset, CCF not only welcomed MDS to operate out of their facility but they made us feel like we belonged. We became partners in their mission of reaching their neighbors and neighborhoods. They invited us to join in with what God was already doing.

Q: WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?

A: It takes a lot of people with willing hearts to pull off a project like this. This is not just an MDS one-time thing. There are a lot folks who really pitched in and got involved here in Detroit. The people of Detroit themselves are amazing. They've been through a lot, through the economic downturn and so forth, but these people are resilient and faithful. They never lost hope. They never lost faith.

Q: REFLECT ON THE FUTURE OF DETROIT?

A: MDS was a small part of the flood recovery but overall we're excited about what the future holds. One of the interesting aspects of coming to Detroit in the fall of 2014 is that the city itself had declared bankruptcy. So we were part of that transition coming out of bankruptcy in the city and we saw good things begin to happen with infrastructure and so forth.



Jocelyn Harris, a Detroit homeowner, shares her thoughts at the MDS commemoration ceremony held at Christian Community Fellowship church earlier this year. Harris spoke about how grateful and hopeful volunteers made her feel. "You MDS gave us hope when we didn't have it," she said. Volunteers worked at removing mold and replacing drywall to insure a safe and secure residence once again after the 2014 floods destroyed her basement.

Harris says our homes are meant to be castles but after the flood they became prisons of disrepairs. "We know that when disasters happen, God will provide a ram in the bush." She said. "Mennonites have been our ram in the bush. When all things are gone, when hope in a God is gone, God knows we need visible evidence. You MDS, renewed the hope, you (MDS volunteers) are true Christians and believers of the word."



Your work has stood for itself, people are raving on what you have done; they are very appreciative of what you have done. REV. MINNIE PIERCE-TATE

Thank you!

This report shares the story of how your gifts of time and financial support impacted and restored hope to homeowners devastated by the flood in Detroit and the surrounding area in August 2014. Your partnership in disaster relief and recovery helped bring people hope and bring them home once again.

All of us at Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) want to thank the volunteers and donors for their hard work, dedication, prayers, and support for the

work completed during the Detroit project. Each one of you played a critical role and for that we are grateful. Without you, MDS would not be able to continue working in communities like this.

Thank you once again for standing with disaster survivors and with Mennonite Disaster Service as we work together to respond, rebuild, and restore hope to those in need.

—Mennonite Disaster Service



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