

OPERATION BLESSING INTL. ARRIVES IN DEVASTATED JOPLIN FOR TORNADO RELIEF

Volunteers Needed For Cleanup Efforts Beginning Friday

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (May 27, 2011) – The Virginia Beach-based humanitarian organization Operation Blessing International (OBI) has arrived in Joplin, MO for tornado relief efforts. Bill Horan, president of Operation Blessing International, made the announcement today.

The charity's domestic disaster relief team, under the direction of Jody Herrington-Gettys, arrived on Wednesday and set up a base of operations at The Bridge, a Joplin youth ministry (3405 S. Hammons Blvd.). Here, OBI staff are partnering with The Bridge distributing relief supplies, coordinating volunteers and accepting work order requests from local homeowners.

The charity has also set up a work order intake station at the FEMA Disaster Relief Center to accept work orders from residents whose homes were damaged by the tornado.

The charity has already delivered three trailer-truckloads containing over 90,000 pounds of ready-to-eat meals, drinks, canned foods, pasta and hygiene items that are being distributed by hundreds of teen volunteers at The Bridge.

OBI is also transporting a caravan of equipment from Birmingham, Alabama, where it has spent the last several weeks helping local residents recover from the tornadoes that struck there late April. The convoy includes a CAT924 front end loader, 20-ton crane, skid steer, 2 construction and clean-up trailers packed with tools and volunteer supplies, the OBI Mobile Command Center, a mobile kitchen that is capable of serving thousands of hot meals per day, and a box truck full of cots and volunteer housing supplies.

“As we drove into Joplin, the scenes of destruction were unimaginable,” said Jody Herrington-Gettys. “But once we saw how the faith-based community here has rallied together to help those in need, our spirits soared. Hundreds of volunteers are providing comfort to local residents who have lost everything, not only through relief supplies, but also through sharing love and hope.”

Residents Needing Help:

Residents needing help cleaning up their homes and/or blue roof installation can submit work requests with Operation Blessing International at either the FEMA Disaster Relief Center (First United Methodist Church, 501 W Byers) or The Bridge (3405 S. Hammons Blvd). For more information please phone 757.274.8650.

Want to Help:

The charity will be accepting out-of-town volunteer teams (two or more people) beginning on Monday. Volunteers must provide their own transportation to and from job sites and OBI will provide lodging, food, tools, work order coordination and management. Out-of-Town Volunteers wishing to help must call Jolyn Turner, National Volunteer Manger, at 757.226.3407 or via e-mail at volunteer@ob.org. Out-of-Town Volunteer must register at least 48 hours in advance.

Local volunteers (Joplin area) please meet at The Bridge (3405 S. Hammons Blvd) beginning Friday by 8:15 AM. Work assignments and orientation will take place at 8:30 AM. The volunteer/work day will be 8:30AM-4:30PM. For questions please call OBI's on-site volunteer coordinator at 757.374.0944.

ABOUT OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL:

Operation Blessing International (OBI) is one of the largest charities in America, providing strategic disaster relief, medical aid, hunger relief, clean water and community development in 23 countries around the world on a daily basis. OBI was awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4 star rating for sound fiscal management for the fifth year in a row (2009), a feat that only 4% of rated charities have ever achieved. In November 2010, Forbes named OBI as the 6th most efficient charity in America. Additionally, the Chronicle of Philanthropy currently ranks OBI as the 23rd largest charity and the 6th largest international charity. Founded in 1978, Operation Blessing International has touched the lives of more than 235 million people in more than 105 countries and 50 states, providing goods and services valued at over \$2.7 billion to date.

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