



## **OpEd: Hoosier generosity, service shines bright through the storm**

***by Jim Huston and Aleeah Livengood***

Five Hoosier counties wrecked and ravaged by tornados. Almost 200 homes destroyed, a like number damaged, a school uprooted, 13 people lost their lives and dozens were injured...all in the blink of an eye. This is what marked the tragedy of the storms of March 2, 2012 in Southern Indiana.

But what came next is why I write today. The real spirit of Hoosiers helping Hoosiers is what followed and it needs to be lifted up, thanked, and emulated.

Right behind the tornadoes, emergency responders, police, fire, and EMS deployed. Rescuers followed, coming from surrounding Hoosier counties. Swiftly after them, the Red Cross and Salvation Army set up shelters and provided hot meals for anyone dislocated. With trained personnel and generous hearts, no one had to act alone.

In the immediate aftermath, Indiana's Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (INVOAD) coordinated the outpouring of nearly 5,000 volunteers. These helping hands descended on all the affected communities with people power to clear debris, assist families shattered by storms, and begin the process of remediating homes. These volunteers donated an astounding 37,352 hours of service and lifted hearts in the process.

And let's not forget the philanthropic side of Hoosier businesses, like the Lilly Endowment. Just as the Endowment did in the floods of 2008, it has again stepped up and donated to the cause. Many other corporations provided monetary donations as well, and others brought resources: Tide brought laundry facilities, Duracell brought charging stations, and Sprint and Verizon provided mobile communications centers. It was key to have collaboration of resources and a willingness to step up and help.

In many traditions, it is what follows a tragedy that shows the spirit of community-members living out their faith in something greater than themselves. As so many dropped everything to help fellow Hoosiers in need, those who carried out that generosity need to be thanked!

Service, volunteerism, and generosity are part of what it means to be a Hoosier. Thousands of Hoosiers who could not help their neighbors in person donated their hard earned money to help heal lives in turmoil. Through various organizations, much has been given so far, and the giving and volunteering is not over.

In the months to come, you can provide that depth of care. Our agency, INVOAD, and other community partners will be asking for more help because recovery will require the right mix of skilled and unskilled volunteers.

As everyone prepares for the long haul, please consider the role in which you or your organization may best serve and call the Volunteer Reception Center in Jeffersonville at 502-599-8593 to enlist. If you would like to donate goods, please follow the CARE guidelines and "Donation, Volunteer and Assistance Information" found at [www.iauw.org](http://www.iauw.org). You may also contact the donations warehouse by calling Adventist Community Services at 812-704-8193. And if you get a busy signal, be thankful – it means someone else cares like you and they simply called first.

Lastly, keep these requests in mind and consider taking action each month over the next year. As local organizations and community members organize and set the pace for recovery, we ask potential volunteers and donors for patience because long term recovery is a marathon, not a sprint. Recovery will often test the endurance of the resources and temperament of those involved.

The recovery process will take much effort and understanding, but given the results so far, we must say "thank you, Indiana" for stepping up to help your neighbor.

*Jim Huston is the Executive Director of Governor Mitch Daniels' Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI). Aleeah Livengood is the Chairman of the Indiana Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism (ICCSV), which serves as board of Directors for the OFBCI.*