



Volunteer Spotlight

Don Barlow, Area Coordinator, Austin West

Don Barlow is a jack of all trades. He has worked in a variety of fields, including land surveying, home remodeling and construction, music engineering and management, and the entertainment industry. As Austin West coordinator, he does the same variety of things, from site surveys to procurement to bookkeeping to, yes, weatherman.

Don built his first ramp, for a disabled veteran, on Veterans Day in 2010. He was immediately hooked. A year later he was managing the region. Over the years, the Austin West region, which includes Burnet, Llano and Blanco counties, has provided over 200 ramps, including 32 last year despite the pandemic.

Don's outreach does not end with the Texas Ramp Project. He began taking Red Cross training classes in 1998 and became part of the local disaster response team. A year later he qualified to respond to major national disasters and has been involved in dozens of events over 20 years, including every major hurricane and many western fires. He was assigned to Ground Zero in New York City after 9/11.

Don is joined in these missions by Julie, whom he married in 2003. Julie was a widow with seven children, four of whom were adopted. She had also welcomed about 40 foster children over the years. Don gained a ready-made family that now counts 20 grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

In 2005, Don and Julie retired so they could respond full time to national disasters with the Red Cross. In 2009, they joined the Austin Disaster Network, continuing their disaster response by addressing the spiritual needs of disaster victims. Don is a trained chaplain in that organization.

In ramp building as well as disaster work, Don finds that investing in people's physical needs often uncovers spiritual needs as well. "We make it a practice to pray as a team before and after each build and invite anyone present to join us if it is their wish," he says. "I see each ramp as a testimony of God's love for His people and give Him all the glory."

Don was born during a hurricane in New Jersey (that explains some things!) and grew up there, spending summers in upstate New York. He graduated from York College of Pennsylvania. He moved to Marble Falls in 2000 after 25 years in Austin.

Don has enjoyed his work with TRP over the past 12 years. "There is so much that I enjoy about this mission; fellowship and relationship building are probably the highest on my list. And the connections we make with our clients are very rewarding."