

Building the Neighborhood

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By Nikki Shaw,
Director of Communications

On the phone recently, I spoke with retired pastor of Pleasant Run UCC in Indianapolis, Rev. Greg Denk. As we spoke I looked out my windows. A week of spring rain had coaxed out a lush green lawn and swollen creeks and ponds in my neighborhood. That's life-supporting rain. But when the weather turns to overwhelming deluges, that's when Denk's team is ready to respond. He is the Conference Disaster Coordinator for the IKC and Director for the IKC Disaster Preparedness and Response Ministry Team (DPRMT).

Denk became involved in this kind of ministry in 2005, when in seminary as a second career student, he and some colleagues travelled to Louisiana to help those affected by Hurricane Katrina. "God was nurturing me along [toward disaster relief ministry] and Katrina sealed the deal." The first work Denk engaged in? "We cleaned up a park for the kids," he said. Residents were "so tired of the ugly."

Today, he heads up DPRMT, which readies local churches and groups to help across the country and across the street. "Everything is local," Denk says. Having local contacts allows DPRMT to reach out to churches and partners in areas that are affected by disasters like flooding and fires to discern what kind of aid they will need in the near future. Plus, local teams are better situated to call passionate folks into this kind of service. It's the local community who can identify the carpenters, the cooks, the painters, the debris clean-up people who will be able to lend a hand when the immediate crisis clears.

"These people [affected by adverse weather conditions] need anything and everything," Denk said. He explained that the teams the DPRMT gathers are not first responders, but show up 12 months later when the immediate charitable efforts have been exhausted. Denk wants the IKC community to know that the work of responding to disastrous events relies on the work of preparing for them when all is well. DPRMT volunteers focus on preparation and planning so that they can be present when called into service.

It's not all weather-related response. The DPRMT also addresses emergency needs in local congregations. They offer training and advice on everything from active shooter situations to making sure your church policies ensure the safety of those who gather there.

If you want to learn more about the DPRMT, if you want to get a team of your own started in your church or community, if you think you might benefit from the help the DPRMT offers, **[please visit them online where you can download eight resources to help you prepare for emergencies.](#)**

You can also meet Rev. Greg Denk at the DPRMT booth at this year's annual gathering. Come and see the good we are doing together in the IKC neighborhood! You can register for annual gathering by clicking on the red button below.