

YOAM NEWSLETTER

4-6-09 2009 vol1. no.1

Slidell, Louisiana

TAKE OFF – TWICE!!

Sunday, April 5: It was initially an uneventful takeoff. Almost 60 of us had made it to the rendezvous point at Howard High, then onto BWI airport, through security with only a few bottles of various liquids left behind, and gotten into our assigned seats on the AirTran flight to Atlanta with a connection to New Orleans. We had been airborne for about 5 minutes and the plane was climbing normally when - BANG! - there was a loud noise that seemed like it came from everywhere. The plane suddenly and noticeably slowed down and listed to the left. After a few seconds it was clear that the plane was stable and continuing to fly straight, though it was no longer climbing. The pilots didn't say anything (at least not that we could hear), the flight attendants didn't say anything, most of the passengers didn't say anything. It was very quiet as we all listened to the whine of what we assumed was the one remaining engine and hoped and prayed that whatever happened to the first engine didn't also happen to the second one. Some of us looked out the windows to see if there was any smoke, but the engines on our plane were mounted back by the tail and we couldn't see them. The pilot turned the plane around and headed back in the direction we had just come from, in the process making a turn out over the Chesapeake Bay. It was hard not to let adrenaline-flashed minds flit over memories of the Hudson Bay landing. It was then that the pilot finally spoke over the intercom and informed us that, "One of our engines is not performing up to its normal high efficiency," ...Oh really? Ya Think!? "And we are going to head back to Baltimore to let our mechanics check it out before getting on our way

again." His voice sounded calm. The flight attendants spoke over the intercom a few minutes later and let us know that the landing should be perfectly normal. And it was. Until we noticed the fire engines racing down the runway after us to surround the plane as it stopped. After the plane was thoroughly checked out by firemen wearing what looked like space-suits, we proceeded to the gate and were invited to board another plane for our trip to Atlanta. Perhaps surprisingly, almost everyone did.



Apparently the conversation between the pilot and Air Traffic Controllers is available on Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBRMXNhoKMI>

YOAM 'Take-2' proceeded smoothly, although about 1 ½ or 2 hours later than planned. Because we had such a big group, AirTran re-planned the connections in Atlanta so that our new plane would proceed to New Orleans. We arrived, picked up our vans from Enterprise (Thanks, Kim Bowman!), and made our way to Slidell, where CiCi's pizza stayed open for an extra 2 hours waiting for us (Thanks Mark Hardin!). We retrieved our baggage from the U-Haul trailer (Thanks Chris Vitek!) and found our way to the bunk rooms at

Aldersgate Methodist Church to crash for the night (oops – bad choice of words...).

WELCOME BACK!!

Monday, April 6: Dale Kimball, the Executive Director of the North Shore Disaster Recovery organization, started things off as he always does by thanking the 100 or so people that are visiting Slidell this week to volunteer their time. It has been over 3 ½ years since Katrina took out 150 miles of the gulf coast. Since then, the North Shore Disaster Recovery organization has organized 4.5 million volunteer man-hours to repair 13,800 homes, rebuild 975 more heavily damaged ones, and build 10 new homes from scratch. Almost all of these are for the poor, underprivileged, elderly, or others that have fallen through society's 'safety-nets.' The point that Dale made repeatedly is that the volunteer work that we are doing is essential for the recovery of Southeast Louisiana and the rest of the gulf coast, and that much work is left to be done. The people here that are still in need are scared that people will stop coming. That's when the recovery will end – not when there's no more work to do, but when there's no one here to do it.



THE WORK (AND MISSION) BEGINS

After Dale's talk, we picked up our tools and headed off to do the Lord's work. The first day of a mission trip is typically described as "Mosey Monday" because a large part of the day is spent getting organized and it doesn't feel

especially productive. However, our first day of work turned out to be more involved than we expected, to the pleasant surprise of most groups. Most of us are hanging and finishing sheetrock. Two groups prepared a site to pour 7 foot concrete piers that will hold up a new house, today was mostly moving and leveling dirt which the youth really "dug". Another group worked sorting shingles and helping clear out the Southeast Recovery warehouse for Dale, then worked with a group dry-walling a home on 12 foot pillars (Katrina had flooded that home to a five foot height) and will be working in a home installing a new floor starting tomorrow. There were no injuries except for a single case of sunburn. The most amusing story of the day came from Crew A. They are doing sheetrock work in a house with a small farm in the yard. The owner has dogs, chickens, a duck, a turkey, and a cow. During the day, a member of the crew looked out the back window to discover the cow had gotten a feed-bag stuck on its nose. Crew A rose to the occasion and rescued the animal – after all, we're here to help in whatever way we can.

This evening's dinner was a delicious baked ziti and garlic bread (Thanks Robin Phillips and Gloria Larson!) with choice of pink lemonade or water, and then everyone filed off into whatever they would, whether it was heading off to Starbucks, Wal-Mart, or chilling around the Aldersgate complex. All-in-all a wonderful first day. Everyone is looking forward to getting a better night's sleep tonight (after getting to sleep last night around 2:00 Eastern and 1:00 here (AM, mind you...) and then getting up at 7:00 this morning. It was breezy and chilly this morning, and we're looking forward to warmer weather the rest of the week, too.