

Christian Counseling Ministries of WNY, Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

FALL 2005

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Dr. Timothy P. Chambers, Executive Director

IN KATRINA'S WAKE

When Katrina's fury left her indelible impression on the vulnerable cities along the Gulf Coast people were riveted. With the insane bravado of the media we could actually see homes torn from their foundations, water levels rising above second and third floors and people clinging to rooftops for a chance to be rescued. Those of us not in Katrina's path sat comfortably in our homes and stared in amazement at the scenes that flashed before us. We could not imagine what it would be like to battle such a fierce force. We could go on with our lives as if what happened to the Gulf Coast was just another media frenzy blown out of proportion for a good story.

But not so for the victims. As we continued to become aware of the full-blown devastation of our own "tsunami," we saw the utter destruction and desperation of its survivors. People lost their homes, possessions, loved ones, pets, clothes, family photos, books, important papers, their financial institutions, churches, and some, their very lives. If we allowed ourselves to walk in their shoes, we could begin to empathize with the anger they felt as they baked for days on an abandoned highway, the highest point that could be found, without water or food and any hope of relief. We could see why people were ransacking abandoned stores that still had salvageable items – anything to help them cope with the trauma they were living and feel like they had some control over their future. To rebuild those lives and reclaim a place to call home is going to take years. Most likely they will never recover all that has been taken from them by this act of nature. We are moved by their tragedy and feel, on some level, their anguish.

Television allows us a glimpse into a horror of this magnitude. We are given opportunities to help in any way we can – send money to the Red Cross or Salvation Army, go through our closets to find clothes to send, donate to Christian organizations that will comfort the "soul wounds" that will continue to endure, and certainly to pray for these people who have been so ravaged by this grave disaster. We are

able to take part in their grief because we have seen the victims and visually witnessed their misery.

However, where are the television cameras when other disasters are ravaging innocent victims every day in secret? Where are the truckloads of supplies to help people who have been just as brutally besieged? And where are the police and government officials to help restore order where chaos still prevails in the silent hidden corners of everyday life? It is this population that seeks out Christian Counseling Ministries and to whom we minister as we passionately pursue their hearts, which have been taken hostage by abuse. We have a great challenge because not only was no one there to verify that a hurricane had come through, but there are no obvious visible signs that abuse has occurred. These multitudes of people have had to suffer in solitude, on the one hand, to hold onto the reality that the trauma actually occurred in order to preserve their sanity, and, on the other hand, to fight the truth of the event so that they can forget about the pain. There is no way to win in a disaster where no one is raising the banner of help.

The losses resulting from abuse are far more damaging than the losses from Katrina, as burdensome as those will be. But Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi will eventually rebuild their cities and people will begin to rebuild their lives. They will find work, fill their stomachs and closets once again and find places to live. The newness of their lives will be bitter sweet but they will be consoled that they have been cared for and understood and that their story will gallantly be told for generations to come.

Not so for abuse victims. Who really wants to hear about the horrific memories of a 6-year old little girl whose mother slept peacefully in her own bed while the little girl's dad frequented hers? Who wants to see the layers of grief and confusion that ensued because daddy told her that if she ever told anyone, he would kill her mommy? Who really wants to witness the cries of a little boy, whose father comforted his own grief from losing his wife, by drinking himself into a stupor and using his son as the object of his anger? No one wants to believe that anyone could be so cruel,

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especially since there are no lasting visible scars to show for it. But there are definitely scars, the kind one learns to cover up and the kind that take on a different form, a more socially acceptable form, but just as numb and tough as scar tissue. No one is around to hear their stories, especially not in church where joy and peace dominate the pews and ugly, bitter wounds from the past remain unspoken.

The doors of CCM, sad to say, will always see such people coming in and out, for evil will always show itself in the most insidious ways. CCM offers healing from the wounds of the past that continue to haunt survivors who want permission to tell their stories. The Good News we offer is not to forget but that Jesus will revisit the remnants of our memories so that He can restore dignity where brokenness has settled. Joy is not the absence of pain, but the realization that Jesus has healing salve that will cleanse, soothe and renew strength where weakness once ruled. The Good News of the Gospel is that no matter what form the flood takes, Jesus has already felt it on the cross so that we don't have to write it on our epitaph. Pray for us as we continue to offer God's grace and hope to the many people who come to us for healing as we help them not only to tell their stories but also to rewrite them.

(Cheryl Chambers, MA is Associate Director of CCM.)

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810 Union Road
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BOUNDARIES WORKSHOP

- Learn to say "NO" without guilt
- Find your voice at home, work and church
- Break down walls in your relationships
- Take charge of your life!

Thursdays - 7:00-9:00 PM

Oct. 13, 20, & Nov. 3, 2005

Transit Middle School

Transit Road, Williamsville

COST: \$60 for all 3 classes

Presenter: Cheryl Chambers, MA

To register or obtain information:

Call CCM at 674-6747

DR. GARY SMALLEY

"The DNA of Relationships"

November 4-5, 2005

Fri., 7-10 PM & Sat. 8:30AM 12:30 PM

Eastern Hills Wesleyan Church

8445 Greiner Road, Williamsville

Call 1-800-84TODAY or 688-7165

Or go to: www.smalleyonline.com