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Katrina Convoy

The John Tesh Radio Show delivers shelter and goodwill

By Scott Meyers

Last month The John Tesh Radio Show organized “Katrina Convoy,” an effort that delivered trailers, RVs and campers to families in need in the communities of Long Beach, MS and Slidell, LA. The three-day trip originated in Birmingham, where the Tesh camp and radio partner WYSF/Birmingham set up a donation drop-off site. Tesh conceived the trip to inspire other people to help communities in need through food drives, fundraisers or simply volunteering. On board was TeshMedia Group Director/Affiliate Relations and Associate Producer Scott Meyers, who this week shares with us the details of the trip.

After Tesh researchers in Los Angeles did some of the legwork by combing online want ads for campers, motor homes and trailers, they sent WYSF GM Dale Daniels a list of vehicles to inspect. If a vehicle was in good condition, Daniels purchased it on the spot with money TeshMedia had wired him. He’d then hook the trailer to the back of his pickup truck and tow it to a storage area.

Listeners from around the country who heard about Katrina Convoy through Tesh affiliates also got involved. KVNA/Flagstaff, AZ listeners Jon and Norbert loaded two trucks with janitorial supplies and sundries, joined the convoy and donated everything — including the trucks — to hurricane victims.

Charles, a WJCD/Norfolk listener, took a week off from work to make the trip and ended

up extending his stay to help at the hospital in Slidell. Other listeners who made the trek came from Minnesota, Michigan and Florida. “You really feel the impact of our show when you see our listeners take action,” Meyers says.

Here is his recap of Katrina Convoy.

Tuesday, Oct. 11

The Tesh crew arrived in Birmingham on the afternoon of Oct. 11. We went straight to the staging area where the RVs were located. The WYSF morning show team, Rick & Bubba, helped promote the event and announced that we were collecting new and used tools; musical instruments for the schools; and new, unwrapped toys.

We filled a rental truck with the supplies to be distributed to the people of Long Beach and Slidell. Morning show producer Speedy was onsite doing call-ins, which proved to be quite valuable. Some of the RVs had brake-light problems, so Speedy called that in to the morning show, and, boom, we had a couple of mechanics show up instantly to help us.

Everyone was eager to help out. Chip Davis from Mannheim Steamroller, a longtime friend of Tesh, donated \$10,000 worth of musical instruments for the schools. One of the organizations The John Tesh Radio Show works with is Operation Blessing, which donated money to the convoy.

Local school kids came and painted the RVs with messages of encourage-



ART ON WHEELS John Tesh (l) and Scott Meyers stand in front of a beautifully decorated RV ready for delivery.

ment. It was a great way for the kids in Birmingham to get a sense of helping others, which is what our show is all about. We worked until about 8pm.

Wednesday, Oct. 12

At 6am we started all over again. Kids came before school to finish up the painting, and quite a few more tools arrived. We used this time to make sure the trailers were properly hooked to the vehicles and that the RVs were in working order — the final check before takeoff, as they say. Rick & Bubba were onsite that day, doing a remote broadcast.

We lined up all the vehicles and were ready to hit the road. We had an escort of Alabama state troopers driving in front of the caravan and behind. They stayed with us for the entire drive that day, as we traveled to Long Beach. At the Mississippi border we picked up two Mississippi state troopers. It was a scene right out of *Mad Max*.

During our drive people would pass us on the highway and honk their horns in support. There was an outstanding sense of positiveness en route, but as we drove further south we saw more and more damage.

The stuff you see on television is nothing compared to what we saw. Along the side of the road the trees were broken in half like matchsticks and houses were reduced to concrete slabs and frames. It’s a profound thing.

We arrived in Long Beach at dusk. We met with the mayor and other town officials. We then handed off half of the trailers, as well as a donation from our partner Nestle.

We then trekked on to Slidell. Upon arrival, we pulled all the trailers and RVs into Slidell High School’s parking lot. We were treated to dinner at a local hospital, where the nurses cooked a traditional Louisiana meal for us. It was the best meal I had during the entire trip.

Thursday, Oct. 13

We started out the morning by handing off the trailers and RVs to city officials. We distributed the toys, musical instruments and supplies. After the ceremony with the local officials we delivered a motor home directly to a family in need.

The RV was donated by Dale and Diane, KDAL/Duluth, MN John Tesh Radio Show listeners who decided to drive to Birmingham and join the convoy. We thought it would be really special if Dale and Diane could hand off their RV directly to the lucky family.

It was remarkable and inspiring to see the look of gratitude on the faces of the family. At that moment I could see in the eyes of Dale and Diane that their cross-country trek was beyond worthwhile.

That night some of us flew back home. I took our bus back to Birmingham, which gave me time to reflect on the past few days. The people of Long Beach and Slidell were ecstatic and grateful, but most of them felt that New Orleans was the focus of media attention, even though the devastation was even worse in these areas.

They felt as if they were under the radar, so we’re glad that we were able to create some additional awareness of these areas. It really makes your heart grow warm. This is the kind of thing that’s an integral part of what *The John Tesh Radio Show* is all about.



Scott Meyers



GRATEFUL RECIPIENTS John Tesh (r) delivers a temporary home to a Slidell, LA family. The RV was donated by Tesh listeners Dale and Diane of Duluth, MN.



COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU Radio partner WYSF/Birmingham was an integral part of the Katrina Convoy. Pictured at the starting point are (l-r) WYSF morning show producer Speedy, GM Dale Daniels and PD Chip Arledge and TeshMedia’s John Tesh and Scott Meyers.