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## **BILLY GRAHAM RAPID RESPONSE CHAPLAINS CONTINUE TO HAVE STRONG PRESENCE IN KANSAS**

*Chaplains bring comfort and counsel to flood victims*

**CHARLOTTE, N.C., JULY 18, 2007** — Rapid Response Team (RRT) chaplains with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) continue to have a strong presence in the flood-stricken communities of Coffeyville and Independence, Kansas. BGEA RRT chaplains have been working around the clock alongside local churches and emergency management officials to assist and comfort grieving homeowners and families.

“When tragedies like this happen, there’s not only a physical need, but emotional and spiritual needs as well,” says Paul Saber, Chief Operating Officer of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. “We’re praying for the people of Coffeyville and Independence and want to be there to help bring God’s comfort during these extremely difficult days.”

RRT chaplains visited area shelters providing physical and emotional support to those who have lost everything in the floods. Chaplains also offered words of encouragement to local first responders, many who continue to serve their community, even after losing their own homes in the flooding.

BGEA Chaplain Coordinator Lamar Wick was the first RRT member to arrive in the region and made a strong connection with the local community. In working with the mayor’s office and alongside the Coffeyville Ministerial Association, the RRT continues to support the local Incident Command Center and recovery efforts. In doing so, he ministered in the area with local Chaplain Willie Robinson, and at the request of the local ministerial association, taught four Biblical Grief and Trauma Trainings for the church community in order to recruit and mobilize volunteer chaplains for the Billy Graham RRT. As of today, RRT has trained an additional 88 leaders to serve as chaplains from the local region

More than 20 inches of rain resulted in 18 Kansas counties receiving their worst flooding in recorded history. Flooding began on June 26, and waters only began to recede last week. A flooded oil refinery in Coffeyville caused more than 42,000 gallons of crude oil to spill into local rivers, adding to the already dangerous environment. President Bush declared the region a major disaster area on July 2, and ordered federal aid and relief into the communities. On July 12, local families were allowed back into their homes for the first time.

The RRT will continue to maintain its presence in Coffeyville and Independence as the community begins the early stages of rebuilding. RRT is a corps of volunteers specially trained to pray with and counsel people in crisis situations as ministers of hope. The RRT was originally developed to respond to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York.

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The team has since worked with hurting people nationwide, including the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina; California, after the wildfires around San Diego; and Warwick, RI, after the fatal nightclub fire. Recently, the Rapid Response Team deployed to Blacksburg, VA, following the deadly shootings on the Virginia Tech campus. Since 2001, more than 2,000 chaplains and ministry volunteers have received training and served with the BGEA Rapid Response Team.

For more information on the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team, call 1-877-2GRAHAM or go to [billygraham.org](http://billygraham.org).