

## From the Chair - Andy Altom

On February 5, Arkansans were the victims of deadly tornados. With 14 people dead, hundreds injured and individuals and communities suffering economical and property loss, newscasters reflected on the January 1999 tornadoes that skipped around the state.

So much has changed for the Arkansas Crisis Response Team since 1999 when a national NOVA team was called to provide services in our state. Today our team is self-sufficient and can provide emotional first aid to communities throughout the state. Not only is it self-sufficient, but it is a re-

spected national leader in early psychological intervention.

As communities began the clean-up, requests came from schools, churches, first responders and caregivers. The requests were a direct result of our talented team members that know how to network.

One example is Mickey Shell, mental health therapist from Pine Bluff who is assigned to Red Cross during disasters. Tamra Gore met him in the aftermath of the Dumas tornadoes where he then referred us to the Dumas School District. Mickey was so impressed that he became NOVA trained in 2007.

Again in his Red Cross mental health role, Mickey made the first outreach and referral on Saturday evening, February 9th to the Atkins School District Superintendent. Early Sunday morning, the Superintendent called Ginger and on Monday, Jack Bell lead a team of school psychologists to the Atkins School District.

Collaboration! It is one of AR-CRT's best tools. Our entire state benefits because our members practice it daily.



Andy Altom

## Increased Crisis Interventions

AR-CRT members worked hard as 2007 came to a close. First responders were debriefed on fire-related deaths and drive-by shootings. Hoping that the new year would bring a lull in interventions, responders assisted students, parents and faculty mourn the death of a popular athlete. January ended in a vehicular accident death of a veteran Arkansas State Trooper.

On the evening of February 5, tornadoes ravaged Arkansas. AR-CRT members immediately went on standby. Members worked in the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management's Emergency Operations Center, schools, churches, business and disaster recovery centers. Responders worked with first responders, caregivers, clergy and disaster non-profits.

Most of all everyone waited patiently to be called.



Arkansas Democrat Gazette Picture File - Clinton, AR

## Ongoing Response to the Spring Tornadoes

AR-CRT continues to work with communities through one-on-ones and group interventions. Through the Arkansas VOAD network, Family Assistance Centers [FAC] have been set up in Atkins, Clinton, Little Rock, Bryant and Stuttgart.

As AR-CRT responders work side-by-side with the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, United Methodist Committee on Relief, Arkansas Rice Depot, Arkansas Foodbank Network, Tzu Chi Foundation and FEMA, a new awareness has been established. Because we are acknowledged by our peer disaster relief agencies, AR-CRT efforts and services for communities have been utilized in a more timely manner.

Sue Garner, Wynne - Northeast Arkansas Region, enjoyed the intervention work in Earle. She was equally pleased with how much she learned.

Kendra Simpson, Little Rock - Central Region praised Rev. David Moore's leadership in the Stuttgart FAC. Kendra said, David is a great resource when answers are needed. An added bonus for her was getting to know Carol and David Moore, Hamburg - Southeast Region.

In Little Rock Mary Flo Klein, Joyce Greb and Jack Harris met with families that had lost everything. Together they were a safe listening presence.

Plans are being made for additional FACs for areas that still have needs.



Sue Garner and Phyllis Curtis