



# VOLUNTEER TESTIMONIES



**Gigi Laursen:** Christ Follower, Wife, Mother, Registered Nurse, Women's Ministry Director AND Volunteer with Beyond The Storm & Samaritan's Purse.

It's such a blessing to be part of the Beyond The Storm (BTS) team. Pastor Rick and Leslie hold a special place in my heart. Here's my BTS story.

My first trip was October 2015, to Andrews, South Carolina. This trip happened at a time in my life where God was becoming real to me in a whole new way. To have a week off to go on a trip like this would have never been possible for me, except I had been fired from a job and in two months time had not been able to find work. My heart was hard and I was bitter. I felt the need to work, work hard.

While in Andrews I threw all my physical energy into helping clean the houses that had been damaged by flood waters. I woke up in the mornings with every part of my body aching; right down to my fingertips. The physical challenge felt good and made me feel like I was contributing. On the job site we ate southern foods, made by the homeowners, and developed friendships. During this trip one of the things I learned was how to pull nails from wood and stack the wood in a way to preserve it. Believe it or not, I used the skill I learned during my trip to Andrews to repurpose pallets and was able to make gifts to give out at Christmas that year. Actually, I still use that skill as I prep material for a monthly DIY & Devotions Workshop I host at my Church.

The trip to Andrews, South Carolina left a burning deep in my soul. I'm a Missionary Kid, and have always wanted to "do Missions", contribute to Missionaries, have worked raising funds for Missions, etc. BTS Disaster Relief helps fill that role for me, "I said, Here I am, Send me".

I wasn't able to go on another trip with BTS for several years following the trip to Andrews, although I sponsored and supported my husband on several occasions. Finally, in January 2019 the BTS team went to Panama City, Florida and I was able to go. It was almost six months after Cat 5, Hurricane Michael made landfall. The team stayed at City Church, where we saw a Pastor and his team working with Samaritan's Purse to rebuild their city and build the Kingdom of God. It was incredible to see that there was so much work still to do, even so many months after the storm had gone through.

**The BTS team went a second time to Panama City, but it wasn't until Panama City 3 that I was able to go again. This trip started a whole new thing for BTS. Pastor Rick and Leslie had made some changes. The trips would now include "themes", and "team names". I am proud to say that I was part of the inaugural "Awakened" Team, that deployed to Panama City April 6-12, 2019!**

**I learn so much on these trips. In Panama City I learned to use a chain saw. It's definitely hard work! And although I love the physical work, the part of the trips I love most are the Spiritual gains! Team meetings are difficult at the end of the day, but they invigorate and recharge me! I thank Pastor Rick for not wasting my time on these trips; but instead giving an opportunity to learn and grow.**

### **Our Team**

**"Arise, shine, your light has come, and the glory of the Lord shines over you". Isaiah 60:1**

**During Panama City 3 I learned and continue to strive to be:**

**Awakened = Alert (be aware of that which is around me and having the appropriate response); Alert to need, danger, complacency, cultural deception, and the power of influence**

- Christ's Resurrection empowers us to live meaningful lives**
- Christ's Resurrection awakens us to live in the knowledge of God**
- Christ's Resurrection emboldens us to live energized by hope**
- God's glory is described by the elements of the sky - sun, moon, stars, wind, etc.**
- So when we take action (Arise, shine), God's glory (evidenced by the elements around us) will be over us and make it so others notice (like light)!**
- Panama City 3 - things I will never forget: Chainsaw work, Roof work, Friendships, God's Glory, and #120 (Heather gave her heart to Jesus)!!**
- I'm six trips in, and look forward to continuing to be the hands and feet of Jesus as we Go Serve Our King!!**