

OPERATION CHILLOUT

SUMMER 2011 HOMELESS OUTREACH CAMPAIGN



WATER CAMPAIGN UPDATE AND THANKS From Memorial Day through Labor Day, **OCO** collected and delivered life saving water, new tee shirts and caps for homeless people in ten NJ counties. Teams made multiple stops to several locations due to the increase in homeless families showing up for daily meals at soup kitchens and drop in centers and the excessive heat we faced all summer. A big thank you to all our donors, volunteers and partners who made this happen !

LAKESIDE TENT CITY OUTREACH Maj. Tony DeStefano and I launched a long-planned mission to find the legendary Tent City in the woods of Lakewood, down the NJ shore. It did not take much time before we spied a telltale blue tarp covering a small tent in a deep scrub pine grove off the GSP. Down a winding sand road we met David, a former Air Force Veteran who approached and welcomed us. We asked for Rev. Steven Brigham, the coordinator of the community, who arrived shortly driving a yellow school bus filled with supplies for the encampment. Steve cordially embraced and welcomed us as long-time friends - in reality we have never met! Filled with the 'spirit of providence' as Rev. Steve called it, this community of 70 homeless people has survived many challenges and has camped at the present site for 5 years this month. The people now are transitioning from previously built small wooden huts and shacks to larger tents, and from propane heaters to wood burning stoves. The site has a hand-dug fresh water well, a laundry, washer and dryer, shower room, food pantry, communal wood stacks and much more - a real sense of order, purpose and mutual support permeated the grounds. Rev. Steve said that respect is key followed by order and discipline. Most of the residents have jobs or do day labor and return home after their work. **OCO** delivered 40 gyms bags for men and women and 10 Vet's backpacks filled with new summer supplies and apparel. Although a temporary solution, this place is a witness to our common humanity, dignity and worth. May the good Lord bless Rev. Steve and his family.

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