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Efforts by CCC, DART acclaimed at dinner

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One organization was born out of the devastation that Hurricane Katrina wrought along the Gulf Coast five years ago. The other has its roots in an annual church summer project for high-school students.

Both continue today, making life easier for needy residents of Beaufort County and surrounding areas. For their efforts, the Caring Christian Carpenters and the Disaster Assistance Response Team of Eastern North Carolina were treated to a catfish dinner with all the trimmings — sponsored by Paul Funeral Home — at the Bunyan Ruritan Club on Thursday.

"We have to go to homes when people pass away," Paul Funeral Home owner Bobby Hodges said. "We keep encountering these decks and ramps built by the Caring Christian Carpenters and DART. It helps the homeowners and it also helps us and we appreciate what they do for the community."

The Caring Christian Carpenters started as a summer project for high-school students from First United Methodist Church in 1990. Twelve volunteers donate their time to build decks and ramps at homes for people who are no longer able to climb stairs.

"We would work with the children three or four days during the summer," said 94-year-old coordinator Harold Lane. "After five or six years, the children dropped away and we started building ramps. Through the years, we average about 50 a year."

The ramps are free to people who cannot afford to pay.

"Some want to pay month by month because they don't want to accept charity," Lane said. "Others will make a donation. We've had donations from \$5 to \$1,000."

The CCC has constructed ramps ranging in length from 6 feet to 124 feet. One ramp had to ascend 9 feet to reach a house.

"(Our) people are very devoted to the job," Lane added. "They're always ready to go."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, volunteers from the Church of Christ around eastern North Carolina descended upon Mississippi and Louisiana to help rebuild. In Pearlington, Miss., 36 homes were rebuilt under the direction of DART.

"We made four trips after Hurricane Katrina five years ago," said DART coordinator Kent Gurganus. "We decided to branch out and do local work."

With the financial support of the Church of Christ and donations, 43 DART members travel around the region helping people in need.

"Our members are scattered in the Church of Christ all over eastern North Carolina and they come from every walk of life," Gurganus said. "We have a trailer filled with equipment and ready to go. Mostly we build ramps, but whatever their needs are, we do."

DART members have two important tenets they take to every job site.

"The beauty of what we do is there aren't any bosses," Gurganus said. "And we always have fun doing it. We are doing it for the Lord."



Betsy Hodges (left) with Paul Funeral Home dishes out fried catfish to members of the Caring Christian Carpenters and the Disaster Assistance Response Team of Eastern North Carolina at the Bunyan Ruritan Club on Thursday. Paul Funeral Home recognized both organizations for the assistance they provide residents of Beaufort County and beyond. (WDN Photo/Christ Prokos) ♦

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