

# Mission in Mississippi

Katrina's devastation of the Gulf Coast shocked and saddened most Americans, and many responded to the desperate need residents had for help. Among that caring group were CMA staff, cadets, and alumni. On the mission to Mississippi, CMA teachers LTC Glenn Melberg and MSG Tom Hewitt joined CMA Alumnus Art Dumont and his wife Jennie, well-known benefactors of the Academy. CMA cadets in the group were Joe Land, Craig Barker, James Daniel, Nick Leftwich, Alex Peplinski, Robert Sheffield, and Nick Trott. These cadets were chosen from a large pool of other enthusiastic cadet volunteers. Early one Friday morning in October a mini-convoy left Camden loaded with bottled water, canned foods, MREs, and toilet paper. Also aboard were seven tents for housing the CMA contingent, chainsaws and other tools for aiding in the cleanup, and if necessary, for clearing the road to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, the mission's destination.

In Alabama the CMA contingent joined a Salvation Army convoy. The plan was to reach Hattiesburg on Sunday and return to Camden on Monday night or Tuesday. When they reached Hattiesburg, they set up camp, turned over the bottled water to local officials for distribution where it was needed, helped the Salvation Army distribute food and other items to local residents, and with their chainsaws helped clean up roadways and lots. The CMA volunteers provided much needed assistance and comfort to the local populace.

Art Dumont, Colonel Eric Boland, LTC Armstrong, and LTC Melberg planned the mission. Mr. Dumont's business, Custom Glass, funded it. Other missions to the area are under consideration.

"I think the mission is important," Colonel Boland said, "because we try to teach leadership, caring, and responsibility. Doing this gives them all three." He stated further that he hopes cadets participating in the effort will report to their classmates what they have seen.



**On the Mission:** Julian Conrad, Robert Sheffield, Craig Barker, Nick Leftwich  
**Row 2:** Joel Land, Nick Trott, James Daniel, Hasib (truck driver), MSG Hewitt, LTC Melberg



MSG Hewitt plays with kids who are waiting to get food from the Salvation Army.



A British reporter interviews Nick Leftwich and LTC Melberg.



Tents provided shelter for the group in Hattiesburg.