



# NEWS RELEASE

HANDS ON DISASTER RESPONSE • P.O. BOX 546 • CARLISLE, MA 01741

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## **FROM BUSINESSMAN TO FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER: THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF THE TSUNAMI**

**The most devastating natural disaster in memory motivated people from all over the world to do whatever they could to help; five years later, they're still at it.**

**SUNGAI GERINGGING, INDONESIA 12/17/2009** – Five years ago a 9.0 earthquake, the largest earthquake in living memory, struck Southeast Asia triggering what we all remember as the devastating Tsunami of 2004. For one local businessman, this was not merely a story he read about in the news. David Campbell, of Carlisle, MA, was one of thousands of volunteers who simply showed up in Thailand to help. Five years later, the grassroots group of volunteers that formed in response to the Tsunami is still at it – working around the world coordinating volunteers to make a direct impact on families affected by disaster.

David Campbell, managing director of Innovation Advisors in Waltham and former President of BBN Technologies in Cambridge, knew he had to help. Although he was not an avid volunteer, had never been to Thailand or done anything remotely similar to disaster response work, Campbell packed a suitcase with what he thought he would need – medical masks, gloves and an internet router – and hopped on a flight. His intended one-week volunteer trip turned into a one-month stay. Utilizing his business background, Campbell started organizing the group of other volunteers who had shown up like he had, and created the foundation for what would become the international nonprofit Hands On Disaster Response (HODR).

“If a company grows from five to ten to twenty employees over three years, that is major growth,” says Campbell. “In Thailand we were growing from five to twenty to fifty volunteers over three weeks. I knew we had to get ahead of the curve and create a system to identify the needs in the community and match volunteers to those needs.” Over three months the organization organized more than 200 volunteers and raised several hundred thousand dollars to assist the rebuilding of five Phuket fishing villages.

Five years later, HODR has mobilized more than 4,000 volunteers from 34 countries to assist thousands of disaster survivors in 7 countries, including the US. The organization still utilizes the grassroots model developed in Thailand, and is currently helping families in Indonesia pick up the pieces following the late September earthquakes; to date more than 65 volunteers from 13 countries have pitched in.



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When the tsunami struck in 2004 and when the earthquakes struck a couple of months ago in Indonesia, the whole world was aware of the devastation. But for weeks, months, and beyond the recovery efforts continue.

The Carlisle-based nonprofit's goal is to provide a channel to connect the people who want to help with those in need. With a "get it done" attitude and motto of "maximum impact, minimum bureaucracy" HODR runs volunteer-driven response projects that are effective for both the affected community and the volunteer. Whether volunteers are building well masonry in hurricane-stricken Haiti, rebuilding flooded homes in Iowa, or constructing temporary shelters in Indonesia, the group's programs are directed by the unique needs each community. HODR welcomes individuals and groups of volunteers to pitch for any amount of time from one day to several months.

"HODR was built by and for people whose instinct is to show up and help when they see others in need," said Campbell. "In a situation where there's so much work to be done, there's no greater resource than capable hands to help."

The innovative and flexible model provides volunteers with housing, meals, tools, on-site training and organized work at no charge, allowing affected communities to benefit from the outpouring of goodwill and able hands as they take the first steps toward recovery. When emergency food, medical and rescue needs have been met, HODR steps in, typically bridging the gap between rescue and long-term rebuilding.

For more information or to get involved, visit [www.HODR.org](http://www.HODR.org).

## **About Hands On Disaster Response:**

Hands On Disaster Response (HODR) is a MA-based, 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides hands-on assistance to survivors of natural disasters around the world, with maximum impact and minimum bureaucracy. By supporting volunteers with housing, meals, tools, and organized work at no charge HODR is able to provide free and effective response services to communities in need. The organization welcomes both returning volunteers as well as spontaneous volunteers, people not previously affiliated with any disaster organization, but who are willing to help with whatever needs to be done – from clearing rubble to building homes and schools, from sanitation projects to children's programs. Previous projects include: New York (2009 Flooding), Arkansas (2009 Tornado), Haiti (2008-2009 Hurricanes), Iowa (2008 Flooding), Missouri (2008 Tornado), Arkansas (2008 Tornado), Bangladesh (2007-2008 Cyclone), Peru (2007-2008 Earthquake), Philippines (2006 Typhoon), Indonesia (2006 Earthquake), Mississippi (2005-2006 Hurricane Katrina), and Thailand (2004 Tsunami). For more information or to donate visit [www.HODR.org](http://www.HODR.org).