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# Orphan Grain Train

Relief for Human Need Worldwide

## *OGT Spotlight*

### *Houston Branch*

***YEAR ESTABLISHED:***

2020

***BRANCH MANAGER AND BACKGROUND:***

*Mike Rathje*

I was asked by OGT's Pastor Ralph Schmidt to consider heading up a new OGT Branch in Houston in 2020. Having worked as a Lutheran school educator and administrator for 40 years I was ready to embrace another ministry in retirement. As a '76 graduate of Concordia University Nebraska and received a MEd at San Diego State University, CA. Priority-one was the spiritual wellbeing of high school students at Lutheran High San Diego, CA; Lutheran High, La Verne, CA; Lutheran High/Lutheran High South/Lutheran South Academy (school name changes due to growth in Houston, TX) – Go Pioneers! My wife Marti and I serve together in anticipation of God using the hands and feet of many volunteers to grow OGT Houston.

***LOCATION AND HOURS OF OPERATION:***

Open every Saturday 8:00am-Noon to receive donations. Packing days are announced as needed.

OGT Houston collection and distribution is currently operating out of a shipping container strategically placed in the parking lot of Zion Lutheran Church 5050 E. Sam Houston Parkway S. - Pasadena, TX 77581

***WHAT INTRIGUED YOU TO VOLUNTEER AT OGT:***

The Christ-centered passion to help those in need while being good stewards of finances keeping OGT a volunteer run operation. Also, after hurricane Harvey the support given by OGT to aid the Houston area during the rebuild with shower and bunkhouse units along with much needed building materials. While involved in



other disaster relief work Marti and I saw the first-hand involvement of OGT around the country.

### ***CHALLENGES:***

Two-fold:

Operating out of a container – very limited in space.

Raising funds to build a collection/distribution center.



### ***BIGGEST REWARDS:***

A huge blessing came from Zion Lutheran Church when the members of Zion voted unanimously to gift an acre of land to OGT. Never have we seen such unity of the Spirit by church members! We're talking \$800,000 worth of land on a major beltway artery circling Houston.

### ***FAVORITE SHIPMENTS OR DELIVERIES:***

All deliveries have brought special blessings, but it is the out-pouring of donations which becomes emotionally overwhelming as we see God's people giving generously whether it's flip-flops, hygiene supplies, blankets or clothes. Lutheran South Academy will be hosting a clothes drive for 2 weeks, March 21-April 1.

### ***SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR BRANCH:***

OGT and Houston are made for each other! We are excited OGT is a presence in Houston since H-Town is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in the United States, a major shipping port and located on the disaster prone Gulf coast. Building plans will encompass a warehouse as well as bunkrooms and showers for relief workers.



### ***NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS:***

Such a wealth of human resources – 60 plus! We have enjoyed working with other Christians from numerous, local congregations. The fun-loving and passionate volunteers have joined hands and feet to collect, haul, sort and pack – they enjoy the donuts and coffee too. During Lutheran Schools Week we were encouraged *and* entertained by the energetic sorting and packing accomplished

by students who attend Lutheran South Academy.

## Houston Branch

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