



# IT'S ON THE

**For the past five years, Susan and Monty Scales have been lending a helping hand in storm-stricken communities. Now it's time to give them a hand as we applaud their service with our annual RVer of the Year Award** BY JOHN SULLAWAY

**L**ike a lot of Good Sam Club members, Susan and Monty Scales love camping in their RV. Their two dogs—Samson, a Chinese crested hairless, and Itty Bitty, a Chihuahua—love it too.

But when dawn breaks over the Texas campground where the couple's Forest River fifth wheel is currently parked, they don't have sightseeing or souvenir hunting on their itinerary. Instead, the Scaleses set their sites on gathering lumber, nails, drywall and volunteer labor. While the sun is still low, they climb into their pickup and drive less than a mile to San Leon, a coastal commu-



# HOUSE

nity that was devastated by Hurricane Ike in 2008. The couple's mission: to help the residents of the town rebuild their houses—and their lives.

The Indiana natives, both of whom are seasoned contractors, aren't new to working in hurricane zones. They embarked on storm-relief work in 2005 when they journeyed from their Bloomington home to coastal Mississippi, which was reeling in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Despite having done this for five years now, every day is a challenge.

## Our Runners-Up

All of our nominees for the 2009 RVer of the Year Award deserve accolades

### Fred and Suzanne Dow

Sharing their love of U.S. forests by compiling campground directories



Some RVers never stop working after retirement, and Good Sam members Fred and Suzie Dow are no exception.

After Fred cleaned out his desk at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Suzanne taught her last lesson as an instructor at George Mason University, they pursued their dream of visiting Forest Service campgrounds across America.

Soon, their passion for these national gems turned into a labor of love. Driven to create a comprehensive Forest Service campground directory, the Dows visited and researched 2,345 campgrounds on 153 Forest Service lands.

The Dows share their meticulously compiled data in their *National Forest Campground Guides*, which contain information on campsite fees, RV accommodations, scenery and surrounding recreation. Available in soft-cover books and on CDs, each of the four volumes covers one of the Forest Service's regions. Campground information can also be found on their website, [www.forestcamping.com](http://www.forestcamping.com). Next in the works: a guide to U.S. National Grasslands campgrounds.

When the Dows aren't documenting national campgrounds, they reside in Bisbee, Arizona.

### Tom Gonser

Leading the drive to implement RV lemon laws



Good Sam member Tom Gonser racked up an impressive legal career that included working as a corporate attorney and serving as executive director of the American Bar Association. Since retiring, Tom has kept an iron in the legal fire. As chairman of the Good Sam Club's RV Owners' Advisory Council, Tom spearheaded an effort to draft model lemon law legislation, a project that involved the RV industry, the International Association of Lemon Law Administrators, the Good Sam Club and others. Once it's adopted by state legislatures, the law will give motorhome owners significant protection.

Under Tom's leadership, the four-year-old RVOAC has focused on surveying RVers and conveying their priorities to the RV industry and legislators.

"Sometimes you cry when you see the devastation," says Susan, who's lost count of the number of houses she and Monty have helped rebuild. "But God puts people in your path to help out."

Susan and Monty's unflagging determination to help needy storm victims inspired members to select them as the Good Sam Club's RVers of the Year for 2009 during online voting in September. The Scalesses were among five nominees vying for the honor, which recognizes outstanding achievement benefiting RVers and the community at large. Susan and Monty will take a break from their busy schedule to accept the award at the 2010 Rally, July 22 through 25 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Susan and Monty never intended to work in disaster relief. Prior to Katrina, both had steady construction jobs in the private sector.

"I grew up on a farm with three brothers," says Susan, recalling her Columbus, Indiana, childhood. "When you grow up in that environment, you work a lot, and I learned a lot of skills."

She honed her craft as a trim carpenter and moved to Bloomington. There, a friend she met at church offered her some work. "He thought a woman could do a better job," she says.

Later, Susan took the helm of an employment agency that specialized in placing qualified workers in construction jobs. It was there that she met Monty, a contractor whose expertise in a wide variety of fields made him highly sought after by employers.

"I had the perfect employee, and the only way to keep him was to marry him," she says with a laugh.

After tying the knot, the Scalesses settled into suburban life with a comfortable home, good jobs, church activities and family gatherings. But that all changed in 2005 when they saw the televised images of Hurricane Katrina and the resulting floods and destruction. The couple signed up to join other members of Vineyard Community Church in Bloomington on a relief mission to Mississippi. They quickly realized that any help they could offer as part-time volunteers would never be enough.

"We said to ourselves, we're going to do this," says Susan. "We quit our jobs—the whole nine yards. Not retired. Just quit."

They commandeered a Jayco Hawk trailer from Susan's brother and established a base of operations in Pascagoula, Mississippi, on the Gulf Coast. "The town was hit with 30 feet of surge water and had lost 26,000 homes," says Susan. Confronted by such a daunting challenge, the Scalesses quickly understood that coordination was needed among the volunteers.

"We realized that there were thousands of people who wanted help but had no one to coordinate," she says. So they devoted their efforts to purchasing supplies, rounding up labor and helping storm victims obtain the necessary FEMA funds for rebuilding. Money for their work also comes from donations made by friends, families and churches, thanks to the help of such agencies as International Gospel Outreach.

After spending two years in Mississippi, Sue and Monty helped organize rebuilding efforts in New Orleans' Ninth Ward. They also handled relief work in Columbus, Indiana, when floods swamped the Midwest in 2008. When Ike hit, the Scalesses traveled down the Gulf Coast to Texas, where they've become fixtures in hard-hit San Leon.

To learn more about Susan and Monty Scaless, read their blog at [www.msmission.blogspot.com](http://www.msmission.blogspot.com). Better yet, meet them in person at the 2010 Rally in Louisville this July. ●

Tom and his wife, Stephanie, founded the popular website [www.rversonline.com](http://www.rversonline.com), a public-service information resource for RVers. The Good Sam members live in Bend, Oregon, and travel regularly in their class A motorhome.

## Becky and Johnny Torres

Helping Navajo youth succeed in school and beyond

As a half-Navajo child growing up near a reservation in rural New Mexico, Johnny Torres was constantly reminded of the challenges facing disadvantaged Native Americans. So he and his wife, Becky, made time in their schedule to travel to the Southwest to mentor Navajo youth through the nonprofit Futures for Children organization.

As mentors and sponsors, the Torreses have helped Navajo young people navigate the journey from grade school through high school and into college. The couple supports students through encouraging phone calls and e-mails, frequent visits, donations and help with college admission.

The Torreses have balanced their mentoring and a love of RVing with busy professional careers. Becky works for IBM, and Johnny serves as chairman and CEO of an industrial and agricultural machinery dealership. In his spare time, he volunteers as the online moderator for the Class A, Class B and Dinghy Towing forums at [www.goodsamclub.com/forums](http://www.goodsamclub.com/forums).



## Joe Works

Busting the recession with community service, not layoffs

As the recession hit businesses across North America, executives found a simple solution to trimming costs and getting budgets in line: employee layoffs.

Joe Works, president of B&W Hitches in Humboldt, Kansas, took a different approach. When assembly lines slowed, he set his staff to work on projects that benefitted the local community such as repairing sidewalks, building a youth baseball field and erecting bleachers at the local sports arena.

For Joe, a Humboldt native, helping the local community and providing jobs is as important as making equipment for the RV and farm markets.

Although the donated labor accounts for 10 percent of the company's losses, Joe, an occasional RVer, explains that because B&W is the largest employer in the town, the company has an obligation to the community at large. Chalk it up to the tight bonds created by small-town living. ●

