

# Daily Gazette article

**Tuesday, February 5, 2013**

<http://www.dailygazette.com/>

See HTML Version of article

## Schoharie recovery group honored for efforts

*A hand for helping*



Schoharie Area Long Term Director Sarah Goodrich, right, discusses post-flood rebuilding with volunteer Naomi Hoffman in Schoharie on Tuesday.

**SCHOHARIE** — A pile of debris sat outside a home on Fair Street in Schoharie on Tuesday — a familiar sight since Tropical Storm Irene hit the Schoharie Valley.

Meanwhile, volunteer Naomi Hoffman, a member of the Free Spring Church of Van Wert, Pa., smiled as she loaded a dusty toolbox onto a work van.

Volunteers like Hoffman have poured into the Schoharie Valley from all over the country since Schoharie Area Long Term organized a massive post-disaster response. And more than 520 days after the flood, work to find a “new normal” in the Schoharie Valley is nearing the halfway point.

SALT’s board of directors got a morale boost Tuesday after hearing words of praise — and thanks — from national disaster response leaders.

The group presented a tour of progress to the Rev. Joseph Chu, associate director at Lutheran Disaster Response; Zachary Wolgemuth, associate director for the Church of the Brethren’s Brethren Disaster Ministries; and the Rev. David L. Myers, director of the federal Department of Homeland Security’s Center for Faith-based & Neighborhood Partnerships.

In terms of disaster responses, Chu said SALT’s ability to gather support from various entities stands out. SALT has gathered assistance so far from about 120 faith-based groups, 35 schools, 30 community-service groups, 20 corporations and 15 labor unions, in addition to individual volunteers.

“Before the disaster, they most likely would not be sitting together,” Chu said.

Rebuilding after disasters continues even when the disasters themselves fall from the headlines, Chu said. With the more-recent Hurricane Sandy disaster capturing great attention, Chu said he senses some in the Schoharie relief effort may be feeling “forgotten.”

“They need to be encouraged. The amount of expertise, enthusiasm and commitment is pretty much amazing,” he said.

Myers — who represents the White House — said he’s been traveling to rural areas hit by disasters to bring a message from Washington.

“They haven’t been forgotten,” Myers said. “Even though there’s still a lot to be done, it’s easy to forget. But one of the reasons the faith-based center is there is so we don’t forget,” Myers said.

SALT Director Sarah Goodrich said the visit was a welcomed acknowledgement to those who are spending their time helping to bring their community back. Having the work recognized, she said, breathes hope into the effort.

“If people lose hope, than we might as well pack up,” she said.