



Episode 1,248: Free People and Disaster Relief

Guest: Brent DeRidder

WOODS: All right, I'm telling you, folks love what you're doing. And I mean to include in that people who don't even know about what you're doing yet, because in principle, all libertarians want to see this kind of thing happen. Because this is, I think, one of our own indictments of ourselves, is that we talk a good game about this wonderful new society we're going to create some day, but there's always emphasis on the "someday," and there's always emphasis on, "Well, when the revolution comes and the state is gone, then I'll get off my rear end and volunteer and help people." But you know, chances are, that means you're going to be on the couch your whole life. And maybe we're a little bit too impatient for that, and what you're doing, I think, really — first of all, it helps the brand to show that libertarians do things, you know? I mean, that's actually very refreshing to see. So let's start actually with the origin of the Liberty Coalition for Disaster Relief. And we've talked about it briefly on the program before, but refresh everybody's memory as to what were the circumstances and whose idea was it.

DERIDDER: Well, everybody remembers Hurricane Harvey last year, I'm sure, and we were at my house, I was working on other liberty projects, and my daughter, my 13-year-old now — she was 12 at the time — walked into the bedroom and, with very concerned and serious look on her face, demanded that we do something about the relief efforts in Texas with Harvey. And I tried to do a canned food drive, I think is how it started, and then a lot of other libertarians jumped on board, and liberty activists got the ball rolling a little bit further. And it turned into what it is now.

WOODS: All right, so let's talk about what it is now and how it's back in the limelight. What are the circumstances — I mean, obviously there's a hurricane going on right now that affected you personally, as a matter of fact. So at what point did the Liberty Coalition for Disaster Relief jump back into action?

DERIDDER: Well, yeah, there was some talk about the LCDR getting back rolling again. The problem with disaster relief is that, once the disaster is over and the mainstream media stops paying attention, volunteers and donations drop off. So everybody went back, after Harvey, the relief efforts there, everybody went back to their campaigns and liberty projects., and everybody was really busy. And when this one came around, my family, you know, a category five — we live directly on the water in Hampstead, right outside of Wilmington, and my family had to evacuate. And once we had evacuated — again, we were still talking about doing some things when we got back, but we evacuated and ran into some serious trouble out on the road in Alabama, and people started putting funds together to get me back home. And that's how I

got back into it again this time, me and the family. And as much as everybody did for us, we were determined to push LCDR into the future here.

WOODS: That's really something else that you actually felt it personally, you and your family. I saw the GoFundMe thing, and I thought, geez, this guy, he's just trying to help people, and now he's on the receiving end of something like this. So tell me the kinds of things that the aid you guys do takes.

DERIDDER: Well, during Harvey, like I said, we had a lot more volunteers then, and during Harvey we had some folks going down in boats and did water rescue and drop offs and things like that. And this time, so many people evacuated the affected areas that volunteers were hard to come by. And we didn't have water rescue happening here. The Cajun Navy jumped in and were actually sent away by I think several counties in North Carolina, so that it was a much more restrictive process this time. But we did have a volunteer here, a few volunteers, but one I'd like to highlight: Ryan Teeter was here in Pender County, helping people evacuate before the storm, doing supply drop-offs and wellness checks during the storm. And after the storm, was still kayaking out of his flooded home with supplies to drop off to neighbors. And we actually had some looters here, and he was guarding neighborhoods here in Ventura County, making sure that they didn't get hit.

WOODS: Wow. Boy, that's an unsung job right there. People think about the dramatic water rescues and things like that, but doggone it, you've got to keep people secure in their homes.

DERIDDER: Right, right. He's an impressive young man.

WOODS: Wow, that's amazing. That's great. That's great. So I think one of the things I want to accomplish by talking to you is to try to recruit more people. Now, how would this work? I mean, you're headquartered in North Carolina, you personally?

DERIDDER: I am, yeah, and most of our team actually is, I think, in New York, and that's where the nonprofit is out of, is New York.

WOODS: Okay, so you could take the infrastructure that you have, like your ability to reach people and recruit people, and apply it to any disaster anywhere in the U.S.

DERIDDER: We should be able to, yes, sir. Right now, like I said, the mainstream media, when the media doesn't pay attention to a disaster, the community doesn't pay attention. So volunteers and donations were hard to come by this time—not for me personally, which was amazing. My family really appreciated it. But it's an election year, an off-election year, so everybody's working on their projects, and it was kind of tough. So we definitely need volunteers, and if folks want to volunteer, they can always go to the Facebook page, Liberty Coalition for Disaster Relief, or the Facebook group Liberty Coalition for Disaster Relief Networking Group. And either one of those is a great way to volunteer. We've got a sign-up sheet for boots on the ground, and we can always use virtual volunteers.

WOODS: Right, exactly, so people shouldn't be afraid that they have to engage in extraordinary heroics or anything. Just volunteering in any way, even from your computer is heroic in its own way. And you're saying that once a disaster like this passes, the hurricane is over and it's out of the 24/7 news cycle, people tend to forget about it, and that has a very

negative effect on volunteers and donations. So tell me about what exactly are the needs that people have now — I mean, I guess it's probably obvious, but it probably bears repeating — that they have now that the disaster has passed. What is it that you would be looking to accomplish with the LCDR at this very moment?

DERIDDER: At this moment, we are focused much more on volunteer efforts than funding right now. People are still flooded out of their homes. So once the storm passes, the media kind of lets it go and doesn't pay a lot of attention, but the waters were still rising over the last week, even after the storm was gone. On our way back in from Alabama, my wife and I saw flooding up into the mountains of North Carolina. You could see mud on the trees three feet high where the rivers had flooded and roads were washed out, and it was pretty tough getting back home all the way through. So it affected the entirety of the state.

Right now, what we need is cleaning supplies, food, water, and volunteers, boots on the ground, helping to get things done. So you don't have to be able to get to North Carolina. Most people know someone on the East Coast. If you know somebody that might be able to help, contact them, put them in touch with LCDR. If you can get your community together to gather up cleaning supplies or food or toiletries and things like that, we could definitely use them here, and we can put you in touch with a drop off point. So those are the ways people can help now.

WOODS: What's transportation like now? Can we assume the waters have receded enough that it's normal?

DERIDDER: It's definitely not normal. So I drove through in the pitch black for the most part, close to the coast, and as we tried to get back out to get some pictures and video for LCDR, it was — there's a lot of flooding here. There are a lot of homes and roads still flooded up to the roof. So traffic is moving in some areas, but not like it should.

WOODS: Wow, okay. Okay. You know, one thing I would also add to this about the merits of volunteering here is that I'm virtually certain — in fact, if people listening are at all like me, they feel like they want to give more of their time to something worthwhile, but they don't know exactly what, and they're not sure they want to donate it to something where they would just be some faceless number, some cog in a machine where they wouldn't even be able to get a sense of what their real contribution is. But here, you would be able to see pretty directly what your contribution is, because every single person on the margin is making a substantial contribution. You would be changing somebody's life, and there'd be no doubt about it. And you'd be doing it with people who share the ideas that you defend, and you'd be working with people who are not in this for the money or aren't driving around in limousines like the heads of some nonprofits out there, but who just genuinely want to take their ideas and put them into practice. That's a rare opportunity. So I would say that if that little voices in your head right now starts thinking, *You know, maybe I should do that*, that's right. That's a good voice. That's one of those voices in your head you listen to and you take notes.

DERIDDER: Definitely. I mean, it's twofold here, like you like you said earlier. As a victim ourselves of this hurricane, when people reached out to help get us back home, we were amazed. I mean, we're not usually the ones with our hands out. My family likes to help other people, and it was an experience being on this side of things, and it was incredible, and it made me so much more dedicated to the cause of liberty. I work on a lot of projects. I try to

keep myself busy, moving the idea of individual liberty forward. And people reaching out to help me, to help our family really made us more committed.

And it shows that what we believe can actually come to fruition. I mean, we preach all day about less government or no government, some of us, and you get questions like, "Well, without government" — and that's how this all started — "without government, who would build the roads? Who would help disaster victims?" And the answer to that is: we will. We will. Libertarians are not the selfish, coldhearted people we're made out to be. Some capitalists are; some libertarians are. But most of us are pretty philanthropic, and we donate a lot of time and money to the to the movement, and this is a great way to help both the movement and get our point across, but also help people who are desperately in need and have lost — some of us have lost very little. I was lucky enough to not be hit so hard at the homestead. But my neighbors, a lot of my neighbors have lost everything. Everything is gone.

WOODS: I think one of the reasons we have trouble recruiting — and I don't mean we libertarians, necessarily, but just society at large has trouble recruiting volunteers for a lot of areas. I mean, anything from disaster relief to literacy programs — is that we've kind of been trained to assume somebody is already doing these things. You know, I think most people now think, *Well, it's a terrible shame about that hurricane, but I know that the experts are there on the ground, and government officials are taking care of things, so now I can move on to the next thing.* And unless you've experienced a disaster like this, you don't realize how untrue that is. Because now, there are some cases where the government really is doing something. They are actually building the roads; however ineptly, they are actually building them. But in a lot of cases, we just have this presumption that something is being done by somebody.

But sometimes it's not. Or if it is, it's not being done by people you'd want it to be done by. But it paralyzes us. It makes us think, *Well, I made my text contribution, so that really ends it for me. But is that really how you want to interact with your fellow man is to think, Well, I sent it a check, so some other guy could go help people while I sit on the couch?* Is that really the kind of person you want to be?

DERIDDER: Right. I mean, like you said, it's not always being done well, even if it is being done. FEMA does not so great work, you may have noticed [laughing]. There's a group called Stop FEMA Now that has a lot of great information as to why FEMA is not a great organization. And when you say to yourself, you know, *Somebody else is handling it*, it's very likely true, but it's very likely true that they're not handling it as well as they could with your help. So we try to do things here, and we're working on it. We've got volunteers. We are putting our principles into practice right now. But certainly, with some extra hands or extra funding or extra supplies, we could do a lot more.

And then there are there are groups that are out doing things that are doing minimal work, and, like you said, it gives people the idea that things are happening when they're not. So a couple of FEMA meals don't go very far. A couple of FEMA tarps don't go very far. We need real, human action here.

WOODS: Now, do you guys have a website or something we can use to spread the word about what you're doing?

DERIDDER: Like I said, volunteers drop off after the relief, so the website is still in the process of getting done, but we are working on it. We do have the Facebook page and the Facebook group right now. Both of those are great ways to see what we're doing and to get involved. There's a volunteer signup sheet. It's an open Google Doc. It's all grassroots efforts. It's on the honor system. Don't put "Daffy Duck" and give me a 555 number. But we've got as much information on those two platforms as we can, and we are working on the website.

WOODS: Would it help if you got a volunteer to help you even with the website?

DERIDDER: It would. We've got one volunteer that's working for the Larry Sharpe campaign that's helping us out now. Another one of my candidates here in North Carolina has given us a hand with that. And we do have higher-level volunteer positions available. We need a donations coordinator, we need a social media coordinator, a public relations coordinator. There are definitely positions open if you want to help. And certainly, if anybody is interested in helping to build the website, we are working on the team to do that now.

WOODS: All right, because I would almost — I don't want to be presumptuous here, but I would almost guarantee that you'll have that in hand by the time this episode airs. Somebody is going to step up and help you with that. Is the Facebook page URL memorable enough that you could say it on the air?

DERIDDER: I can't remember it myself, because I'm awful at it, but I can pull it up real quick.

WOODS: Okay, why don't we do that? And in the meantime, I'll tell people that I will link to it regardless of what it is at TomWoods.com/1248.

DERIDDER: Excellent. And it is, on Facebook, the Liberty Coalition for Disaster Relief, but the URL is Facebook.com/LibertyCoalitionDR, is the Facebook site.

WOODS: Okay. [LibertyCoalitionDR](https://Facebook.com/LibertyCoalitionDR), okay, Facebook.com/LibertyCoalitionDR. All right, so do that, or just go to TomWoods.com/1248, and I'll link to it there. All right, tell me: what are other aspects of the story that I haven't hit on that are important that we should tell people about?

DERIDDER: We really touched on the majority of what needs to be touched on. We are desperately in need of volunteers, both boots on the ground and virtual volunteers. And if you are a libertarian and you've ever been asked the question — or a liberty activist in any way — if you've ever been asked the question, "Without government, who?" we have to be able to answer that question. We tend to be coldly logical and explain to people that they are their own responsibility, and we talk about individual responsibility. But the fact of the matter is, we do live in a society, we live in a community, and we have to reach out and help each other. And at the very least, even if you're not philanthropic, if you want to see liberty advanced, you've got to do something to do that. And we've got to make people believe that the things that they need will still be there even without the presence of government. So getting involved in this, donating time, donating money, donating supplies, virtually, physically, however you can do it, will truly advance the cause of liberty.

WOODS: And I happen to think that if you're trying to persuade people that libertarianism is the way to go, that what you do goes a lot farther than what you say. And I would think that

being able to say, "Yeah, I do this," is going to mean an awful lot more to people than whether you can show that the partial repeal of Glass-Steagall was not related to the financial crisis. That's not going to stay with them, but the fact that you do this is. And they'll say, "You know, maybe I don't agree with that fellow over there, but wow, that guy walks the walk. He really, really believes what he believes, and he acts on it." And that's really something. The first step has to be they've got respect for you. Because how do you not respect somebody who helps out with disaster relief, for heaven's sake?

So it really, really is a very, very worthwhile and important cause, so the Facebook page, [Facebook.com/LibertyCoalitionDR](https://www.facebook.com/LibertyCoalitionDR), linked at TomWoods.com/1248. And remember all these folks who, once the news reporters pack up and leave, they're still there picking up the pieces, and there's a lot you can do to help. So Brent, thanks so much for your time, and I can legitimately say to you: thank you for your service.

DERIDDER: Thank you, Mr. Woods. Thanks for having me. And thanks for your personal donation. We really appreciate it. You are really helping to make a difference here. Thank you.

WOODS: My pleasure.