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Musicians Bring Instruments to Gulf Coast Kids

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Camping in a van in still sparsely populated southern Louisiana, two men and a trunk full of flutes, clarinets and trumpets are on a mission. The instruments are donations garnered to replace those lost in Hurricane Katrina. The men are musician Bill Hudson and Michael Meade.

Led by Virginia-based Hudson, their grass-root "Feel Good Tour" performs in New Orleans communities still rebuilding from Katrina, seeking to "heal through music."

Hudson conceived the idea in 2005, and it has since grown to include half a dozen musicians including Guy Davis and David Amram. At first Hudson was hesitant, but sponsorship from the multi-media company Dragonfly.com confirmed establishment of the tour.

"Soon after Katrina, we all wanted to do something," says Hudson. "As musicians, we deal with music."

In the early days of the tour, Hudson and other musicians camped in the woods and slept in vehicles until a local firefighter offered rooms at the firehouse. The group traveled to local establishments and homes, playing wherever they were invited.

"We cheer them up when we come and play music," says Hudson. "We're like firemen. We're first responders."

After a few trips, Hudson brought up a new idea—to replace musical instruments in schools lost during the 2005 storm. In August, after stumbling by chance on the program, New Jersey singer-songwriter Michael Meade joined the campaign.

"When I first started talking to people [about the tour], they showed so much love," says Meade. "The instruments sent down were going to be put in the hands of the kids who didn't have anything to play."

In New Jersey, Meade's mostly word-of-mouth campaign through performances with his band and solo stops along the east coast has garnered over 40 donations, mostly school band instruments.

"I think that music can calm and relieve stress, especially for these kids," says Meade. "We're bringing a healing power to the kids."

The tour in total has donated over 70 instruments to



<http://feelgoodtour.blogspot.com/>)">

Al Coffey And Bill Hudson with Princial Hannah Rucker of St. Tammany Jr. High, where the Tour delivered instruments to the children ((Courtesy of Bill Hudson, <http://feelgoodtour.blogspot.com/>)

Please visit [Bill's blog about the trip.](http://feelgoodtour.blogspot.com/)



three schools in southern Louisiana in two separate trips.

"When we walked [into the schools], the looks on the kids face just brought tears to my eyes," says Meade. "It's very heartwarming"

<http://feelgoodtour.blogspot.com/>)">

The crew that made the trip possible. L-R Vinnie Cerniglia, Sue Altkin, Bill Hudson, Al Coffey, Rich Baumann, Maryellen Healy (Courtesy of Bill Hudson, <http://feelgoodtour.blogspot.com/>)

On their most recent trip, Hudson and Meade donated instruments to two schools in southern Louisiana.

"The neat thing we're doing with the instruments is that we're cheering [the children] up," says Hudson. "We're giving them hope. They know that they're not forgotten." '