

Jean Broaddus

USA

## **Teamwork: A Community's Fight Against Oil in the Gulf - unless it's too late**

When you stand on the beaches of Gulf Shores, Alabama (Gulf Shores, Foley and Orange Beach), it is like watching a surreal scene in an indie film that Hollywood sent straight to DVD. The beaches are virtually empty and the water washing ashore is splashed with red oil. If you keep exploring; however, you will see something else... something amazing. A community in arms fighting to save their livelihoods. Hundreds of people who call this their home have individually paid the \$495 HAZWOPER fee to become OSHA certified and a Qualified Community Responder (QCR). Their mission is to save their beaches, their towns, their tourism, and their way of life.

As you can see (click albums – if not up yet, give me a second), they have a very similar set up to the BP employees in Grand Isle, LA, except for one major difference... the beaches are cleaner. Are they cleaner because there is less oil? No, there are actually larger quantities of oil hitting these shores at one time. They are cleaner because these hundreds of volunteers have literally been standing on the shore with shovels at the ready waiting for the oil to wash up. When the oil did come in mass quantities yesterday, these hundreds of ordinary people (grandparents, teenagers, mothers, fathers, young professionals, couples, young people on their own, black, white, asian, hispanic), with their colorful QCR t-shirts and OSHA certificates hanging around their necks, began their backbreaking work.

Within their two days vs. the 55 days that BP has had on the beaches of Grand Isle, LA where the oil first came ashore, you can see the results of their effort. The beaches are relatively clean. Based on stories shared from these volunteers, just a few hours earlier these same beaches were completely covered in red and black. You apparently couldn't walk one step without having globs of oil stuck to your shoes. They too have been warned to take 45 minute breaks every

hour because of the heat, but because they are adamant about saving their home, they will not do it. They have been working together and working in the mindset of what any normal family, team, and community does... they have each others' backs. If one person looks tired or has noticeably not taken a break, another volunteer forces them to sit under a tent and drink water. This unbelievable teamwork, hope, and love for their home brought me to tears as I stood with my dinky camera wishing I could help (I didn't bring my OSHA certificate – won't be doing that again). These are the people that make me proud to be from the United States. People that FIGHT and STAND UP for their homes and their way of life - you know, the same thing that made America the United States of America way back in 1783.

I asked one of the volunteers if they have received any type of push back from BP for being on the beaches and cleaning. The answer I received, followed by cheers from a few of the people around him, "Let them try!". These people that have been sweating in 110 degree heat, during the hottest point of the day and working for no money, are just waiting for BP to come and try to stop them from protecting their homes... talk about inspiration. That is what a sense of community is supposed to mean - protect those around you and protect your home!

I have several more stories to share, but will be dividing them into categorical blogs. I just wanted to start with something positive today, so stay tuned, because tonight is a night of writing!

Note:

A friend of mine built a beautiful site that will act as a community forum and outlet for those living in the Gulf Coast and a source of true news for people outside of the region.

Again the site is: [perspective.averagejoenews.com](http://perspective.averagejoenews.com).