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Meet a Scientologist—How Churlya Wurfel Created Volunteer Minister Partnerships Throughout the Pacific

Scientologist Churlya Wurfel is determined to make Scientology assist technology broadly available to those in need. Her profile is one of more than 200 "Meet a Scientologist" videos available on the Scientology website at www.scientology.org.

A massive earthquake in the mountains of Jambi Province in Sumatra in 1993 changed the course of Churlya Wurfel's life and opened a new chapter in the work of the Scientology Volunteer Ministers program internationally.

There, Wurfel began her work forging partnerships with other relief organizations, setting a standard for Volunteer Minister operations in disaster zones and extending the reach and extent of the help the program provides.

It all began when the Church of Scientology in Sydney contacted Wurfel for help. A serious earthquake had struck in a remote,

mountainous area of central Sumatra. Because Wurfel was born and raised in Indonesia, she was asked to fly to the country to offer help on behalf of the Church's Volunteer Ministers program. She accepted immediately, certain of one thing: the victims and aid workers needed a service only Volunteer Ministers could provide—Scientology assists.

Assists are techniques developed by L. Ron Hubbard that help the individual recover from stress and trauma. It was because of these techniques that Wurfel herself became a Scientologist 10 years earlier when her husband, a Scientologist, used assists to help their daughter pull through a life-threatening case of pneumonia.

"I thought of the mothers whose children were traumatized by the earthquake and I knew I had to help," says Wurfel. "I could do a certain amount of good, but if I could train others to use the technology, they could reach so many more than I could myself."

Flying to Indonesia with her son, also a trained Volunteer Minister, she contacted the Red Cross.

"The Red Cross is always there when disaster strikes," says Wurfel. "I was sure if they knew the benefits of assist technology they would want to train their relief workers to deliver assists to the survivors."

At Red Cross headquarters she asked to speak to the person in charge. The man who came out to find out what she needed looked exhausted.

"At first, he thought I was with the media," says Wurfel. "I said no—I am here to help. The only way to really convey what Scientology assists can do is by example, so I asked him to lie down and my son administered an assist to him. He was surprised how much better he felt and he went out of his way to get clearance from the local police for us to be there and introduced me to the chairman of the Red Cross for the region."

Wurfel and her son gave an assist to the chairman as well, who immediately asked her to train five volunteers who left that night for the disaster site in Jambi Province, armed with skills to help people recover from the effects of shock and trauma.

Years later, at the scene of another Indonesia disaster, Red Cross officials were still talking about the entire village of 300 survivors who returned to their homes and rice fields after the assists these volunteers gave them. Relieved of the trauma they experienced in the quake, the villagers now felt calm and secure enough to leave the safety of the shelter.

That was the first of a series of partnerships Wurfel forged. The second one took place several months later in the Philippines in the wake of a devastating typhoon.

"A friend of mine in Sydney, a lawyer from the Philippines, contacted his brother, a doctor, to let him know I was flying there to help," she says. "When I got to Manila, I was ushered into a conference room where 10 doctors had assembled to find out what I could do. Rather than becoming intimidated I again decided to 'show' not 'tell,' and gave one of the doctors an assist."

Amazed by the results, the doctors arranged for Wurfel to train local disaster response specialists who could use this technology in their work.

Similar scenarios played out in Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and throughout the Pacific. But the experience most indelibly etched in Wurfel's memory was in the Indonesian city of Banda Aceh after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

"It was horrible," says Wurfel. "Dead bodies were carried right into the city by the tidal wave. Mud from the tsunami was everywhere. We were among the first relief workers to gain access to the city. My first priority was to find a stable location from which our Volunteer Ministers could operate."

Introducing herself to local officials and business owners, she arranged a place where the Volunteer Ministers could set up their sleeping bags on the floor and arranged for a large tent in the center of the city where volunteers could begin providing Scientology assists.

The Volunteer Ministers provided one-on-one help and reached hundreds of thousands more by training police, rescue workers, imams—anyone who wanted to help—in Scientology assist technology.

"People want to help each other," says Wurfel. "The biggest barrier to their doing so has simply been the lack of know-how. Assist technology works, and now, with free online courses in 17

languages available through the [Volunteer Ministers website](#), the road to helping others is wide open."

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The Scientology Volunteer Minister program was initiated by Scientology Founder L. Ron Hubbard in 1976. There are now hundreds of thousands of people trained in the skills of a Volunteer Minister across 185 nations.



Scientologist Churlya Wurfel (far left) trained nurses in Indonesia on Scientology assist technology after a 2009 earthquake