# Spirit Rising



#### Acadiana

Louisiana Spirit Hurricane Recovery

#### On the Cover:

Hurricane Katrina Survivor and native of New Orleans, Mr. Royal Allen.

#### Introduction

As Katrina survivors began their exodus out of New Orleans, thousands journeyed westward along the I-10 corridor to the small towns and cities of Acadiana. With the landfall of Hurricane Rita following closely on the heels of Katrina, Acadiana experienced devastation in coastal regions and a second migration of survivors from outlying parishes. The Acadiana parishes centrally located between New Orleans, to the east, and Lake Charles, to the west, made for safe ground in the aftermath of the storms.

Vermilion and Iberia parishes sustained immense wind and water damage from Hurricane Rita. Small towns such as Delcambre, Erath, Cow Island, Pecan Island and Esther and are still struggling to recover from the storm. Acadiana found itself faced with neighbors in need at the front door and catastrophe in the backyard.

The seven parishes of Acadiana; Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin and Vermilion all have their own roles to play in both storms and they have their own stories to tell. Mobilized in September of 2005, Louisiana Spirit, Volunteers of America—Greater Baton Rouge staff provides crisis counseling and outreach services throughout Acadiana. We worked the recovery and held steady through the relief. We listened to stories and gave aid at a time of great heartache and heartbreak. We witnessed acts of great kindness, bravery, strength and resiliency and those are the stories we seek to tell.

We could not possibly profile every individual or organization who provided aid during this time of unprecedented need. The profiles included represent just some of the individuals and organizations that Louisiana Spirit has worked with directly. In advance, we acknowledge the omissions and ask for understanding. We offer thanks to those who worked quietly and diligently in the background, as their contributions helped to forged yet another link in the chain of recovery.

This book is divided into a three sections; the Healing Spirit, the Human Spirit, and the Holy Spirit. The following pages offer stories of hope, courage and determination. Together we endured, and together we will thrive and prosper.

Beth Desonier Louisiana Spirit - Community Cultural Liaison - Acadiana Volunteers of America, GBR

## The Healing Spirit



#### Project HurrilaRE



When Katrina survivors began migrating into Crowley, Reverend Donald R. Burnett, Sr., was searching for a way to welcome them. He put a call out to Dr. Ezora J. Proctor and Mrs. Laurita D. Pete, two prominent local activists, known for their innovative and spirited community service. In their hands, Project HurriCARE was formed.

Concerned with the plight of survivors and determined to provide them with a warm welcome, Dr. Proctor and Mrs. Pete quickly mobilized. Their mission was two-fold. First, they wanted to ensure that the community embraced survivors and that survivors could feel at home. Second, the women knew it was important that survivors were made aware of the local resources that were available to aid them in their recovery.

To accomplish their goals, the ladies organized "Meet Your Neighbor Night". Local civic, business and religious leaders, along with residents, gathered to welcome and support the distressed and traumatized newcomers to their community. The event drew a large crowd and the informational exchange helped to orient survivors to their host city. Outstanding music, good food, along with gifts and prizes, made for a night that shed/focused light on Crowley's 'Rice and Easy' reputation.

Through the work of Dr. Proctor and Mrs. Pete, the people of Crowley were able to welcome their new neighbors and assist them in their recovery.

Community Cultural Liaison

#### Aspen Cares, Northside Shares @ Dakotas Dancehall

The story of Dakota's, a dance hall on Old Highway 14 in Erath, is an unlikely one. It begins in late August of 2005, in Aspen Colorado, where a high school student watched the events unfolding in Louisiana. Alayne Kane, a Junior at Aspen Colorado High School, was not able to just watch. She had to do something.

This teenager started a clothing drive by contacting family, local businesses and schools. Along with friends, she collected donations to rent an eighteen-wheeler to deliver clothes, household goods, toys, and school supplies to Louisiana. Alayne kept her eyes on events and saw the migration out of New Orleans to the west which placed many survivors in Acadiana. She targeted this region as the destination for the 18 wheeler.

Northside High School in Lafayette accepted Alayne's donation. By the time the shipment arrived, Hurricane Rita had just passed. NHS staff realized they did not have the room or personnel to handle the volume of goods. They searched for an organization to accept the donations. None expressed interest or were too busy at the time. Northside began to think they would have to dispose of Alayne's good work. They needed the space back for students.

Anna Racca, a Lafayette resident, worked at Northside High and was aware of the situation. She knew there was a great need in Vermilion parish. She talked to her sisters who lived in Erath and told them about the supplies. The four sisters, Anna Racca, Mary Delcambre, Lori Domingue, and Cissi Bares, whose homes all sustained damage from Rita decided to finish the job Alayne had started. They began searching for a site to set up a distribution center. "We knew we had a big job on our hands. We had no operating money so we would have to do it on our own with volunteers and donations," says. Cissi Bares. The sisters asked about and finally connected with their friend Travis "Dakota" Watkins. He owned *Dakota's Dancehall* which had been closed due to flooding. Travis allowed the woman to use *Dakota's* as long as there was a need, free of charge.

Family, friends and neighbors cleaned up the dancehall and prepared for a late November opening. Cissi and her sisters settled on the name 'Aspen Cares – Northside Shares' for the distribution center. "The building had no electricity or restrooms but we were going to run it that way because we could not afford electricity," said Cissi. Thankfully, their relatives, Joe Meaux, Mary and Gerryl Delcambre, helped pay the electricity costs. They placed ads in local newspapers and church bulletins announcing their opening and the need for volunteers.

"Knowing that we were helping people replace some of what they had lost made a permanent mark on my heart and life. I made many new bonds of friendship that will be lifelong," says Cissi. "One day before we were even open, I was in Dakota's sorting clothes. A lady walked into the door. She introduced herself as Suzie Roberts. She said she was from Michigan and she wanted to help. Her church, family and friends had financed her trip to Louisiana so she could volunteer. Suzie stayed a couple of months and spent many hours working at Dakota's. Gloria Sonnier, a long time family friend called and said she wanted to volunteer. Our teams grew very fast. My sisters came in as often as they could".

"Our youngest helper was five years old. My granddaughter, Kaitlyn (Miss Olivia) would not miss a chance to follow Grani to Dakota's. She loved greeting people at the door and very politely asked them to sign our guest book. She could also point any customer in the right direction to find what they were looking for. My oldest volunteer was a blessing. Even though Dee Butler had lost everything and was busy trying to put her home and life back together she always showed up with a smile on her face and very eager to help".

Cissi also recalls her involvement with Volunteers of America's Louisiana Sprit workers, "My new Volunteers of America friends came into the picture the first week we were open. How could I ever forget them? We always had one or two dropping by to see if they could do anything for us or to interact with our customers to see what their needs were. They shared Dakota's with us and used it as one of their contact bases."

"We continued to get donations from all across the USA. What was supposed to be a one or two month deal turned into an awesome seven or eight month, life altering adventure. Even after we shut down, we sent the clothes we had left to the VA Hospitals in Jennings and Alexandria and some to a shelter for abused women in the New Orleans area".

"Our customers were special people. We looked forward to seeing all of them. We may not always remember their names, but never forgot their faces and what style and size they were looking for. We had the very excited bride who found her wedding dress and an elderly gentleman who wanted polo shirts because he couldn't handle too many buttons. I'll never forget the family of sisters and cousins who all found dresses to attend an aunt's funeral."

"After two years, I still run in to people who thank me and say 'remember these clothes I'm wearing? I got them at Dakota's'. I was taught it is better to give than to receive, but never knew the true meaning until I was put in the position of having to give of myself. So I came away from this adventure with a great feeling of self worth and a lot of humility. I feel that those people who came in looking for help gave more to me than I could ever give to them".

A high school student in Colorado, an 18 wheeler full of supplies, a deserted dance hall, four sisters and their friends helping neighbors in need. Alayne Kane, Cissi Bares, Mary Delcambre, Lori Domingue, and Anna Racca are ordinary people who accomplished extraordinary things.

#### Champagnes Distribution Center

Lisa Frederick and the Volunteers of Champagne's Distribution Center

Hurricane Rita's floodwaters and high winds put Vermilion Parish's convenience stores, groceries and supermarkets out of business for months, leaving survivors without access to basic needs, such as food, water, toiletries and supplies. At one point, buying groceries required a trip to New Iberia or Lafayette.

Father Wayne Duet, Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Erath, saw the tremendous desperation and need and began emailing every contact he could, requesting food and supplies. Promptly, the following day, 18 wheelers full of food, toiletries, cleaning supplies, blankets, diapers and clothes arrived at the Erath City Park Building where distribution began. Lisa Frederick, a long time volunteer in the community, served as the manager for the distribution site. One month later, as donations continued to pour in, they needed more space.

Lester Champagne, owner of Champagne's Grocery Stores, wanted to reopen his stores. The stores were empty shells but a floor, walls and roof were in place. Learning that Father Duet and Lisa were looking for a bigger space he offered them the use of his store in Erath, at no cost.

Workers from other parishes stepped in, which allowed local volunteers to concentrate on rebuilding their homes. Financial backing, came from The Diocese of Lafayette's Office of Justice and Peace, United Way, American Red Cross, Elder-Voice, FoodNet, Woodmen of the World, Council on Aging, Office of Emergency Preparedness and many generous citizens. The site remained open until January 2006.

Outreach - Vermilion Parish

#### Bonnie Richard

Bonnie Richard has had a tremendous impact on the town and people of Delcambre. As the local librarian, Bonnie had occasion to meet Katrina survivors as they came in to use the internet, searching for news of their homes or looking for family that had been lost. Though originally from Delcambre, Bonnie lived in Dallas for many years, and was able to appreciate how people from New Orleans felt about their new rural community. Her insight, sincerity, and compassion coupled with her knowledge of current events made Bonnie an invaluable resource to Delcambre's "new neighbors".

A few short weeks later, Rita made landfall and she herself was in a boat being rescued from floodwaters. Like so many other Rita survivors, when recalling the sister hurricanes she says, "We never imagined..." During her rescue, Bonnie met her new landlord, and she never tells that story without a laugh. From the boat, she called out to a man on the second story of an apartment building. "You got any room up there?" "He did," she says, "and I never went back". She now rents the second story apartment where she and her brother sought refuge after the storm.

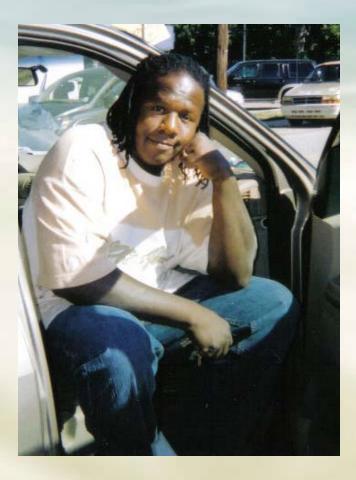
As recovery for another hurricane began, Bonnie again had the opportunity to serve storm survivors in her role as librarian. She knew many Louisiana Spirit team members long before the first support group was held and the library's reputation as a place to go for the most recent recovery-related information became well-established. Even now, the library still plays an important role in recovery. In addition to being the meeting place twice a month for Louisiana Spirit's support group, the library has also been used to hold important functions such as Road Home informational sessions.

When mentioning her contributions, she simply says, "It was important" or "They really needed that," her emphasis always on the community. As she reflects on her own life circumstances and recalls that her position at the library was initially only a temporary one, she says, "I guess I needed to be here".



Michelle Murr – Team Leader/Crisis Counselor – Louisiana Spirit

#### Van



the Man with the Van

Van – it's the only name he's been known by since his arrival from New Orleans in September 2005. His name is only too fitting, as very early on he became known as "the man with the van". A Hurricane Katrina survivor himself, Van originally took shelter at the Cajun Dome with thousands of fellow survivors. Once the Cajun Dome closed as a shelter, the remaining evacuees were relocated to the Domingue Center. Here, the group was smaller, with the number of survivors just over one hundred. It was at this point in time that Van's community leadership, kindness, generosity, and organizational skills began to emerge.

Van began by offering transportation services, all at his own expense, to evacuees in the center, driving them to doctor's appointments, drugstores, disaster relief centers, and on other errands around town. He has provided rides for countless survivors throughout Lafayette who are living outside of the public transportation system.

Van's made frequent trips to the Food Net food pantry where he would pick up several boxes of dry goods. He would then return to the FEMA trailer site where he resided and set up a table with the food to serve as a "community" pantry.

Van was also instrumental in organizing the Lafayette Hurricane Coalition, an organization that formed in the early aftermath of the storm. By providing rides, he fills the coalition meetings with citizens who had no means to attend.

#### Van continued ....

He even provided refreshments for the meetings at his own expense.

Van never hesitated to give out his cell phone number and he encouraged Louisiana Spirit workers to provide it to survivors so he could help even more people. Now, over two years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Van is just as committed and as energetic as he was in the beginning.

He continues to bring the latest information from New Orleans to the evacuees living in the greater Lafayette area, continues to provide transportation to the coalition meeting on the second Thursday of each month, and continues to transport the elderly and disabled to doctor's appointments and on other errands.

Needless to say, Van has gone, and continues to go, above and beyond the call of duty to help those in need. He has constantly put his own recovery needs on the back burner to aid those around him.

Just for the record, Van's last name is Parker. Author? - Outreach - Outreach - Lafayette Parish

Another successful and creative transportation solution is told in the following story of FamilyNet.

#### Family Net

John Hebert, a resident of Lafayette, arrived at the Cajundome intent on helping in some form or fashion. He inquired about volunteering with the Red Cross and his name was placed on a list. He wandered the dome looking around for something useful to do. He wanted to be helpful but he didn't know how to go about it. Things were very chaotic and most people seemed too busy to find a place for him to work.

Soon after, while listening to UL's radio station, KRVS, he heard an announcer say that drivers were needed at the Cajundome to help transport people to different cities so they could be reunited with family. John followed up. He approached the Red Cross again and was given a short list of people who had signed up to offer transportation.

"The first name on the list was my old buddy Lloyd Nickelson. I got on the phone and called Lloyd to see if he could drive someone to Baton Rouge. He was standing ten feet away from me in the dome trying to arrange the same thing. We hung up, got together and began to talk". The men knew that transportation was essential to recovery. They felt that the best way to help people in trauma was to reunite them with their primary safety net, their families. FamilyNet was formed from that conversation.

Early on, Mary and Lloyd Nickelson, Alyce Morgan Wise, John Sharp, Leeann (Name?), Donna Onebane, Jackie Lyles, Nancy Schaeffler (?) and Erin (Name?) joined the effort and became core members of the group. (instrumental to its success).

FamilyNet began to attract more volunteers along with generous donations. St. Thomas Moore High School heard of the effort and was the first to donate the use of a school bus. Lafayette Parish supplied buses as well as security for each trip. Hub City Ford of Lafayette loaned vans and drivers to transport within Louisiana. A casino (Name?) also provided a bus free of charge. A \$10,000 grant from Our Lady of Lourdes Foundation quickly followed. Additional school and charter buses were secured. Flights were also arranged.

A business woman from California donated funds and flew her personal assistant to Lafayette to volunteer. Cajundome staff found space in the convention center for the FamilyNet and made sure Internet connections and phone lines were available. Volunteers stepped up to man the table and handle logistics and put in long hours.

Hebert provides details on the process: "It was important that we made sure the survivors had a connection in the city we were sending them to. We had to call and confirm that someone was on the other end waiting for them. Then we had to find enough people going to the same destination to fill up the bus. Once we had a full bus, the challenge was to locate the people and get them on the bus. As things progressed a system developed. Signs were posted to alert survivors to destinations and departure times which helped to alleviate confusion.

A website was developed which allowed people to donate and sign up as drivers or riders. Hebert said, "The idea of the website was to create some sort of model that could be utilized in the future. We felt this was a framework that could be implemented again." All told, FamilyNet provided transportation for nearly 1,000 survivors to destinations as close as Houston and as far away as Chicago, California and Canada.

Beth Desonier - Community Cultural Liaison



### Rachael August Vermilion Council on Aging

When Hurricane Rita hit, the Vermilion Council on Aging was overwhelmed with phone calls. "I froze because I didn't know where to start first. I begin just doing whatever was necessary to help the elderly people in my community because that was my job. I am an advocate for the elderly" says Executive Director, Rachael August.

The Council on Aging was able to transport the elderly back and forth to shelters, the Department of Human Services, and churches where they received food and clothing. August also arranged for her organization to provide and prepare food for the elderly at the Senior Center in Delcambre.

Many of the Council's employees had to take a leave of absence because their homes were badly damaged. The remaining team worked overtime to reassure and offer assistance to the elderly.

At this time, the Council on Aging is making preparations to provide the elderly with emergency personal care bags and important disaster related information. "We want our elderly to be educated and informed about where to go and to be sure if something of this magnitude happens again, they know exactly what to do," said August.

Jovian Hopkins – Outreach - Vermilion Parish

## assist agency

The ASSIST Agency (A Self Sufficiency Improvement Support Team) was not designed to handle major disasters, yet their response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita may lead one to believe otherwise.

The yellow building on North Parkerson Street in Crowley instantly became a hub of activity in the days, weeks and months following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. ASSIST gathered resources and coordinated volunteers in their efforts to meet the needs of storm survivors. Food, water and clothing were collected, organized and efficiently distributed. Grants from the United Way of Acadiana allowed for financial aid to be given to citizens. This allowed survivors to purchase gasoline, medicine, toiletries and other essentials. Further grant funding provided for building supplies and furniture.

As one volunteer from Washington D.C. wrote "In a time when coordination has been sighted as one of the biggest failures of the aftermath, your organization was willing to be connected and looking for opportunities to assist other organizations that may have needed your help. The ability of Assist to gear up for an unexpected demand for services was amazing and something that could serve as a model for others".

Beth Desonier - Community Cultural Liaison



Back row, L to R: Sharon Clement, May Rose Bourgeois, Kerry Stutes & Michael Washington. Front, L to R: Faye Widner, Zubaida Elahi and Audrey Lewis.

#### Lafayette Coming Together



Lafayette Coming Together was formed in March of 2005 with the stated mission of providing technology access to the underserved in our community. When Katrina hit and the Cajundome opened to receive New Orleans survivors, David Goodwyn and Glenn Lambert, members of the group, realized the need for information would be great and that LCT had the equipment and resources to meet that need. He called John and Layne St. Julien along with other members to begin mobilizing the effort.

Layne and John St. Julien said:

"LCT's computer room was up and running by Thursday, Sept. 1, three days after Hurricane Katrina made landfall. We provided Internet access on 15 – 20 computers and assistance with the technology to residents for whatever uses they had. The biggest success was in making Internet access available so

quickly to people in a crisis situation. The need was immediate and enormous, and it was very gratifying to see how many difficult situations could be alleviated by access to the internet.

Members worked to bring technical resources in to supply FEMA, the Red Cross and other service organization with telecommunication equipment and connections.

For many, their interest was filing applications with FEMA, but other uses included searches for jobs, housing, missing friends and relatives; communicating through e-mail; getting news about their home towns and seeing post-hurricane aerial photos of their neighborhoods; searching for hotel accommodations; researching other areas of the country to make decisions about where they were going; and entertainment (games, especially for the children, and watching music videos, etc.).

We provided one-on-one assistance to residents who had minimal or no computer skills, including, in many cases, giving "crash courses" in use of the technology. We also had four Voice Over IP phones in the center which residents could use to call long distance at no charge; this service was extremely valuable in the first days when there was no other public phone access.

Many residents who came to the computer room were able to file for FEMA help days before FEMA set up in the Dome and as a result received their checks quickly. Also, we were able to help anyone who had filed for help from FEMA check the status of their application on-line, a service the FEMA contract workers didn't offer in the few days they spent at the Dome. Helping folks find family was made much easier in the early days by online resources and we gave people direct access to those.

Beth Desonier - Community Cultural Liaison

#### Greg Davis and Staff



Greg Davis radiates a sense of calm and peace. His straightforward, open demeanor communicates a level of strength and competency that inspires immediate trust.

As Director of Operations for Lafayette's Cajundome, Mr. Davis and his staff redefined what the word 'shelter' could mean for the thousands who sought relief.

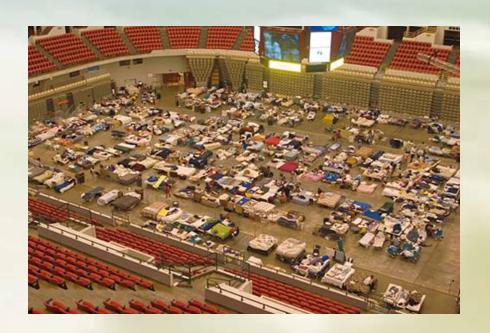
Davis called those seeking shelter "guests" or "residents."

The phrase "Mega-Shelter" entered our lexicon in the fall of 2005. Prior to Hurricane Katrina large arenas had never been required, or used, for sheltering operations. Over 17,000 survivors arrived at Lafayette's Cajundome wet, tired, hungry, and scared, in need of medical attention and certainly in shock. Mr. Davis and his staff worked 20 hour days.

From the start, Davis put out an 'all hands on deck' call to the community. He fostered an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation amongst all providers and efforts. Most importantly, he and his staff provided the supports community efforts required to realize successes in their work. The door to their offices was always opened.

The Red Cross, Homeland Security and the International Association of Assembly Managers gathered together in July of 2006 to develop plans for future "Mega Shelters" based upon the successful Cajundome model. Davis chaired the committee.

Beth Desonier - Community Cultural Liaison



#### Jill Laronssini RN, MSN

On the first day that the Cajundome opened as a shelter, Jill Laroussini, was there. She didn't wait to be asked nor did she ask to enter the Cajundome. A faculty member of the College of Nursing at the University of Louisiana, Jill recognized an opportunity to be of service and realized that it accompanied a perfect 'teachable moment' for her third-year Community Nursing students. She quickly gathered up her nurses and reported for duty.

Jill placed her students in the middle of a self contained community of thousands that had materialized overnight. While providing comfort and care her students gained disaster response nursing experience in the best possible manner, by living it.

Jill's expertise in community health nursing was a vital component of the Cajundome success story. From assembling a resource guide, to locating, within three hours, safe housing for nine families with infants Jill proved to be an invaluable community resource. When 20 paramedics drove in from across the country, they were tired and in need of a place to sleep. Jill secured them dorm rooms at ULL. One of the paramedics tried to tip her for finding them lodging. Jill just laughed and said 'That's not how we do things down here'. Later, when someone tried to relocate these same medics to Baton Rouge, she intervened and was successful in retaining them where they were most needed.



## Operation Minnesota Lifeline

In an amazing outreach effort by the Mayo Clinic of Minnesota, in collaboration with the American Refugee Committee and the College of St. Catherine, a team of approximately 75 personnel came to Louisiana and provided critical medical care to survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Mobile Health Units with the 'Minnesota Lifeline' logos were seen throughout Acadiana during the fall of '05. From the time the first team arrived in September until the fourth team departed in November, Operation Minnesota Lifeline had amassed some amazing numbers: 5,263 patients examined, 18,384 patients vaccinated, 24,017 immunizations given, 5,887 prescriptions written, 3,323 medications given, 529 mental health consultations, 244 referrals to specialists or advanced care facilities provided.

The teams also helped to staff the Heymann Center's Special Needs Shelter and the public health clinic at the Clifton Chenier Center in Lafayette. They treated evacuees at a picnic shelter in Ville Platte, operated a mobile pharmacy, provided OB/GYN care, visited schools and worked with local health clinics.

As impressive as these statistics are, when the teams departed what remained behind was an understanding of the compassion and concern these medics provided to the people of Acadiana. Members of the Minnesota Lifeline Team ensured that the patient came first even if they lived half a continent away.

Emily Clayton - Outreach Lafayette Parish

#### Carmichael's



Survivors who evacuated New Orleans without their medicine or who only had a few days supply quickly found themselves in another dangerous situation. Access to medical records was impossible immediately after the storm leaving many survivors wondering how they would get needed medication. Ted Carmichael decided that no one requiring medication would be turned away. Survivors gathered in long lines which wrapped around the block in order to get their prescriptions filled at Carmichael's Pharmacy in Crowley. Over 2400 prescriptions were filled in less than two day's time. For months after the storm Carmichael and his staff were still working 19 hours days.

Meeting the need in Crowley was one focus, meeting the need of nursing home residents from the New Orleans was another. Carmichael and his team traveled to storm damaged nursing homes in and around New Orleans to retrieve Prescription Medical cards and records. They then returned home and worked late into the night filling prescriptions for the elderly who had been evacuated to Acadia parish.

He is quick to point out that every pharmacist in town responded in the same manner. "We all did it, we did what needed to be done". He also gives high praise to his dedicated, hard working team. "I'm very proud of my people. We did everything we could possibly do. There's a lot more to life than money. We as citizens are responsible for helping our fellow man in times of need, not the government, we ultimately are responsible for each other."

## Acadiana Motorcycle Riders Club

The Acadiana Riders Motorcycle Club is a social group, which meets once a month in Lafayette and rides together whenever they can. A love of motorcycles brings them together but riding is not the only thing that they do. The Riders like to use their strength in numbers to help out whenever they can.

Christmas 2005 seemed to come too soon after Hurricane Rita's devastating winds and flood waters. Families were struggling. It did not look like it was going to be much of a Christmas for many in Vermilion Parish. The Riders wanted to help change that.

One of The Riders' members is a Louisiana Spirit outreach worker who works in Vermilion Parish. She helped the group connect to families in need. Each Rider chose a family and bought Christmas presents for the children and their parents.

The Riders caused a quite a stir that day as Santa led the pack, delivering gifts throughout the parish. The group didn't forget their families when the holidays were over. They still keep in touch and continue to look for ways to lend a hand.

Margaret Hebert - Outreach - Vermilion Parish

## San Antonio Quitt Guild

Sylvia Jolet, along with 10 of her good friends love quilting. She said that she kept watching all the Hurricane Katrina news, seeing people on the bridge and all that was happening in New Orleans. Less than one month later, Hurricane Rita hit, and she was able to witness the destruction and devastation first hand because her mother lives in Sulphur.

She knew that there were many Katrina survivors in San Antonio, and that they wanted to reach out and assist them also. Even before Hurricane Rita, they had made numerous small quilted blankets, with children in mind, thinking that they just wanted them to be able to hold onto something that they could call their own, after having lost everything. When they asked where they could deliver them, they were instructed to deliver them in this big building where other donations were being dropped off. After doing so, however, most of the ladies were disappointed and frustrated because they wanted to be able to actually give them to some children, to show them the compassion they had for them, that went into making the quilts.

When Rita hit, again those ladies wanted to donate quilted blankets for a worthy cause. They wanted to do it differently though, to ensure that it would have more of a "personal" touch. They contacted a nun through their church group, who in turn contacted a nun at the Diocese of Lafayette, who received the blankets. Seeing that they were smaller blankets, she brought them to Louisiana Spirit's Children's Services team, and said, "Use them as you see fit." As children's crisis intervention groups were being held throughout the affected parishes in South Louisiana, they were used as a metaphor to "choose a blanket, and create your safe space to share your stories and your feelings." At the end of group, the children were asked to wrap up everything they heard in group (supporting confidentiality), along with any sad, angry, or other uncomfortable feelings, wrap those up in the blanket until the group would meet again.

About a year later, the San Antonio Quilt Guild was contacted for more blankets. They were informed as to how the children were utilizing them, and the need for more, as they were being used over and over again throughout numerous groups in the school systems. They were excited to learn that they were serving such a valuable purpose in the recovery process. They made and donated 13 more beautiful quilted blankets.

Kay Guillory - Team Leader - Children's Services

#### Acadiana Outreach Center

When most Lafayette citizens think of the Acadian Outreach Center (AOC), chances are they picture the beautiful mosaic mural that decorates the side of one of their buildings. The mosaic itself depicts a stream that travels throughout the length of the mosaic, passing by several individuals, symbolizing the devastation left behind by the hurricanes of 2005 which touched and inspired millions of people throughout our country.

Following Hurricane Katrina, the AOC staff immediately recognized that there would be a great need from hurricane survivors who had been displaced to the Lafayette area. Being a community center whose main focus has been to assist the poor and those struggling with addiction in Acadiana, the AOC put into action a plan to create a special case management team that would be able to address the concerns of hurricane survivors without interrupting the services that AOC continually provide to the local community. AOC formed the Transitional Recovery Action Center (TRAC). While FEMA and the Red Cross were providing emergency assistance, the Track team focused on more long-term solutions for individuals and families. Some of this assistance included housing and employment needs, work-readiness tools, substance abuse recovery, mental health counseling, medication assistance, and transportation needs. How did they do all of this?

As Vicki Boudreaux, the Chief Operations Officer for the AOC explains, it all came down to flexibility. It was their ability to be flexible enough to adapt within the organization, at times going to the rural areas affected by Hurricane Rita, to networking with local, national, and, at times, even foreign partners and donors, that allowed the center to address the needs of hurricane survivors.

A key tool for the center's outreach was determining whether the needs brought before them were a "crisis" or an "incident" This was of most importance, as sometimes the needs presented to them by survivors had much deeper roots than were first apparent. The mission of the AOC has always been getting to the core of each individuals needs, so that they can better assist them in finding a place of self sufficiency as well as helping them to remember their self worth and purpose.



To date, the AOC's TRAC team has served more than 4,000 hurricane survivors, with \$1.5 million in goods and monies targeted for recovery needs. AOC have received, stored, and delivered approximately 700,000 lbs. of freight. Through a partnership with Goodwill Industries, AOC stocked and staffed a large resource center in Southern Lafayette with non-perishable foods, special food for infants, the elderly, and those with diabetes, as well as clothing, personal hygiene items, cleaning goods, bed linens, non-prescription medications, etc. In the three months immediately following the storms, nearly 5,000 evacuees were assisted.

The AOC strives to "shake every tree" and find the resources needed to assist hurricane survivors in finding resolution to their concerns.

Aura Pinto - Outreach Worker - Lafayette Parish

#### FoodNet



FoodNet was a lifeline for thousands displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In Lafayette, when the overwhelming need of hurricane survivors became evident, FoodNet quickly and efficiently stepped up to the plate. The agency immediately began distributing food, water, cleaning supplies and special boxes for those with dietary restrictions.

Within days of Katrina's landfall a drive through pick-up site was opened. An incredible 675 cars, with up to three families per car, drove through the line each day receiving generous amount of food and personal care items. Once the drive through closed at 3:00 pm the day was only just beginning for staff and volunteers. They would continue working through the night to prepare another 1500 boxes for distribution the following day. The drive through was in operation for months providing food to survivors of both Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. During this time, local area residents who relied on FoodNet before the storms were not forgotten. FoodNet continued to meet their obligations while providing for the food of thousands of survivors.

FoodNet's Executive Director, Mary Ellen Citron, points out that while FoodNet was the conduit, it could not have happened without the contributions of many wonderful people. FoodNet employees, volunteers from the United Way, Second Harvest, students from the University of Louisiana, Boy Scouts of America, Lafayette Parish Sheriff's trustees and even survivors themselves, all volunteered their time and resources.

FoodNet continues to assist survivors residing in Acadiana via distribution to area food pantries.

Emily Clayton - Louisiana Spirit - Outreach

#### Melville Shetter

Melville residents Melissa Montgomery and Melania Ducote learned that a local family had taken in about 30 evacuees and they wanted to assist in some way. They approached Melville's mayor, Willie Haynes, to discuss the families in need. The Mayor informed them that the local civic center had been opened as a shelter, had received one family, and then appointed Melissa as the shelter director! Melissa recruited Michelle Hartford as her assistant.

The next day, donations of cash, clothing, bedding, and personal hygiene items began pouring in from local citizens. Shortly after midnight that Wednesday 2 days after?, Melissa got a call stating that 2 busloads of evacuees with a caravan of family filled cars had arrived at the shelter, and to expect more people from Plaquemines Parish who were in route.

Melissa relates that they were astonished to see evacuees still wet from floodwaters, as well as elderly and sick individuals in need of treatment. She states that local EMTs and nurse Frances Hayward began to triage the group, and the local pharmacist supplied prescription medications to those in need. Shortly thereafter, the shelter was in full swing, and remained open until December, holding as many as 300 evacuees at maximum.



Michelle's family and other locals cooked meals for the shelter, with the help of some of the evacuees, until Acadiana Works Placed two of the evacuees on the payroll to handle these duties. The women running shelter pitched in to find housing, provide transportation to critical appointments, and did all they could to assist their charges to get on their feet

## Human Spirit



Above: This couple has settled in St. Martinville

In this second set of stories, survivors speak to us through the pen of Volunteer of America's Louisiana Spirit workers. These stories recount physical, emotional and spiritual circumstances encountered during times of crisis and loss and reveal the strength and resiliency of the human spirit.

#### Mr. Thomas Daniel - Survivor



"I can only be thankful that God let me live, so that's what I'm doing. I'm living."

An, Air Force veteran, Thomas Daniel once called New Orleans home. His most poignant memory of Hurricane Katrina is the sound of the storm. He recalls it sounding like Air Force jets flying closely over head, followed by the rumble of trains. Mr. T will tell you that after the storm passed he felt a great sense of relief, believing the worst was behind him. However, the next morning he awoke to a bubbling sound coming from beneath his door. In minutes he was waist high in flood waters. Unable to swim, Mr. T. faced his greatest fear head on, grabbed a plastic chair, a water bottle and waded to a neighbor's home which stands 10 feet off the ground. When Mr. Daniel reached the house, he realized no one was home. So he sat his chair on the porch and waited, alone, for three days.

Mr. Daniel suffered great hunger and thirst. Even so, he refused to break into his neighbor's home where he knew food and water would be available. He thought about it as time wore on, but his own apartment had been broken into several times, and he just couldn't fathom his neighbors returning to a vandalized home, no matter what the circumstances.

Daniel remembers sitting on the porch watching people in canoes making their way up the street, but no one had room for an extra passenger. Thankfully, on the third day, he was rescued by a sheriff's boat and taken to I-10. He waited six hours for a bus which transport him, along with hundreds of others, to the Cajundome in Lafayette. Soon, he became gravely ill and his condition required surgery. When his health improved Louisiana Spirit connected him with a Katrina Aid Today case manager who assisted him in finding a safe and secure senior apartment. Daniel didn't not only found a transitional apartment, he made a home.

Strength and resilience are qualities that most people hope to possess. Happiness is something that most people wish to achieve. It's been said, "It's not the hand you're dealt, but the way you play your cards," Daniel said.

Aura Pinto - Louisiana Spirit - Outreach

#### Nettie Browssard



Nettie Broussard makes an impression on anyone who's paying attention. Both her caring nature and her frank manner of speaking have earned her a place in the hearts of many – those who survived Hurricane Rita as well as those who have assisted with recovery.

Despite the loss of her home, and later, the loss of her only sister, Nettie's faith has only grown stronger and her attitude has remained remarkably positive. She is an inspiration to others and her life is an example of what "goodwill to men" really means. She makes time to help people in her community and does so with a smile. She is courteous and treats all people with respect. I once heard someone say, "It just feels good to be around her".

Michelle Murr – Team Leader – Louisiana Spirit

## Bandoin Family



The Baudoin family was living in a FEMA trailer due to flood and wind damage to their home following Hurricane Rita and were determined to sell their home. After two years and still unable to return to the home they had known for over twenty years, it seemed impossible to rebuild. They had over three feet of water in their home and the flood waters carried away all their personal property and memories.

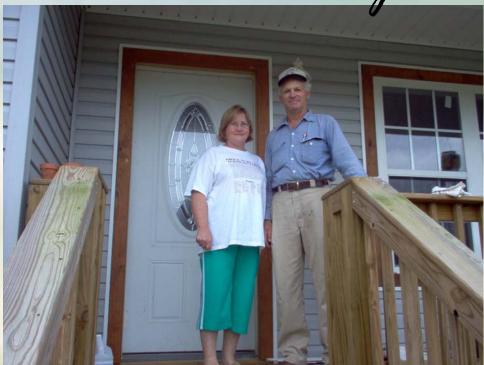
Mrs. Baudoin explained to me how difficult it is to live in a two bedroom FEMA trailer with a 17 year old son and a 10 year old daughter. She explained to me how each family member has to step out of the trailer to give privacy for taking a bath and changing clothing. "It is very difficult and we have no privacy but we are determined to make the best of the situation. It is a roof over our head no matter how small".

After meeting with Louisiana Spirit, the Baudoins' are armed with the knowledge of the resources available in their community to help them repair and return to the home they had always known. Mr. Baudoin and some members of his church family got together and gutted out his home, and he began rebuilding on his own. They elevated their home with financial resources from the Road Home and other community organizations which will allow them to return.

"It was a God send that Louisiana Spirit stopped that day. We prayed and asked God to give us an answer because we didn't know if we should continue to try to sell and buy another home or fix our own. I know God answered our prayers that and we are so grateful because this is our home, this is where we belong" she said.

Jovian Hopkins, Outreach Worker

Marceaux Family



Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence and Ruby Marceaux have lived all their married life in Forked Island. They met in high school, married and raised 4 children. They have 13 grandchildren. A close knit family, three of the children lived in homes near them on family land in Vermilion Parish.

In September 2005 Hurricane Rita made landfall and changed their lives forever. The Marceaux's evacuated prior to the storm and waited days for the water to recede before they could return. Their home was flooded and severely damaged. Everything in it was ruined from the 16 inches of water and wind damage to their roof and outside structure.

The Marceaux's chose not to dwell on the 'muck' but to focus on the 'must'. They knew they must begin rebuilding immediately, and their children and grandchildren needed shelter. The day of their return they cleared the mud

out of their living room, filled an air mattress and slept on the floor. That's where they lived with no electricity, running water or air conditioning as they worked room by room, house by house, to restore their lives.

Fortunately, Lawrence is a "jack-of –all-trades" and Ruby, always seen with a paint brush or a hammer, is an able assistant. The couple along with their boys, when they were not working their full time jobs, split their time between the three houses. They gutted them down to the studs, pulled insulation and treated for mold. They were open to any help they could get but utilized what resources they had. Thankfully, volunteer teams assisted at different times but the rebuilding was their responsibility.

The three homes had to be raised to meet new flood code regulations and no contractor was available for months. Lawrence knew they could not wait. So he created his own way of building his cement blocks to lift his home. He carefully planned the elevation on paper and executed the lifting with precision. Mindful of resources all around him, he made his own cement blocks and used storm damaged trees as supports during the lifting – an extraordinary task!

When FEMA travel trailers began to arrive in the parish, neighbors encouraged the Marceauxs to register. Ever self-reliant, the families did not apply for FEMA trailers until February 2006 after the storm. Eventually, the 3 families were approved for trailers, which provide living quarters while they continued to rebuild.

The Marceauxs' are still working to get back into their homes and out of the small, cramped FEMA trailers. So far two of the families have been able to move back into their homes. They still have a long road ahead in their recovery but the family remains optimistic. At the end of the day if Lawrence picks up his guitar, Ruby, who is always by his side, will accompany him in a song.

The Marceauxs' have enriched the lives of other survivors who attend LA Spirit Coffee Break Groups in Cow Island, as Ruby has sang for them during Christmas season.



Lawrence Marceaux with the one of the 40 concrete piling he made.

### Berdie Pratt

Berdie Pratt is 69 years old and was displaced after Hurricane Rita.

Berdie lost her home. Because of the extensive damage, she could not rebuild. Berdie was issued a FEMA trailer and set about making it home. She felt that in order to gain any type of control over her life again she should start rebuilding at least the memories that she could collect in her trailer.

Eventually, she moved out of the FEMA trailer and into an assisted living apartment. She displays pictures of family, friends and loved ones that she salvaged after the storm. She loves her grandchildren, her beloved dog and the pictures of her children – one daughter and two sons. She lost her youngest son only months after Hurricane Rita in a car accident.

Berdie told the story of how she loved music and how she loved to play her radio while cleaning her home. "Since my son died," she said, "I didn't play my radio anymore until one day, as I was cleaning, I felt a presence". She said she turned to look over her shoulder and it was her son standing in her room. She says that her son told her to turn her radio back on and never, ever forget her love of music. After this, Berdie said she was "at peace" with his death.

Berdie has a degenerative bone disorder and said "medication is so expensive that sometimes I go without certain medicines because I can not afford it". She was linked with assistance through the Cajun Area Agency on Aging and the ASSIST Agency to help with food, utility bills and medication.

Jovian Hopkins - Outreach Worker - Vermilion Parish

# Holy Spirit



The last set of stories focus on the efforts of local churches and national religious organizations. Faith based organizations provided the most basic, critical and essential of supports before, during and after the storms.

## Lafayette Restoration Center

The Lafayette Restoration Center (LRC) is a faith-based, nonprofit organization begun in April of 2006. LRC is a collaboration between the African-American Catholic Congregation and Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission International. The center has contributed to the hurricane recovery efforts by providing housing, goods and services, and holistic stabilization to those in need.

To date, the Lafayette Restoration Center has provided over 50,000 units of service. LPC has addressed and provided mental health awareness, cultural competency training, counseling, housing development and referrals, and financial literacy training.

Lafayette and its citizens have good reason to be proud of LRC. Reaching the lost, aiding the wounded and restoring hope is the mission this Center continues to fulfill.

Christie Armstrong - Outreach - Lafayette Parish



Bishop Diana Taara Williams - Open Arms

## Riverside Church of Christ Mr. Danny Hebert



Riverside Church of Christ in Lafayette was one of many churches that opened its doors to provided shelter for survivors of Hurricane Katrina and Rita. When thinking back Mr. Danny Hebert, Outreach Minister, said "This sure didn't come with a set of instructions, but we did whatever needed doing at the time."

Contributions from church members, local businesses, other churches and service organization funded the shelter operation. The national Church of Christ Disaster Relief center in Nashville, Tennessee sent goods down to Lafayette by the truckloads. Food, water, clothing and cleaning supplies were soon followed by household appliances and furniture.

The church ran both the shelter operations and a distribution center. They partnered with FoodNet as a pantry site for many months.

Groups from Riverside still travel to devastated areas to help in re-building efforts. Mr. Hebert calls these 'blind' trips. They load up trucks with whatever they have and go.

To quote Danny, "Will we have problems next time? Yes. Will it be as trying? No. We've made connections with others and we've made plans. We've practiced this plan. We've gained real, concrete knowledge about how to handle something like this. We'll be ok."

Emily Clayton - Louisiana Spirit - Outreach

### Angel Food Ministries

Angel Food Ministries is a national, non-profit, Christian organization dedicated to providing discount groceries to communities throughout the United States. Angel Food makes their services available through local churches and community organizations. Life Church of Lafayette joined this effort in recent years and, in the aftermath of the storms, they played a significant role in the lives of many survivors.

Angel Food Ministries allows participants to pay \$29 for groceries that are valued between \$48 to \$78. In Lafayette, survivors of Katrina accessed these services to help them make ends meet.

Erath, Delcambre and the surrounding areas lost their two grocery stores during Hurricane Rita. Residents were forced to drive either to Abbeville, New Iberia or Lafayette to purchase groceries. Early on, this was a significant hardship considering the price of gas and the amount of time required for the drive.

In May 2006, Pastor Bob Zannini, of Life Church, brought Angel Food Ministries to Erath. Volunteers of America's Louisiana Spirit workers made Pastor Bob aware of the plight of many families in Vermilion Parish.

It was a slow start for the first couple of months because volunteers had to physically count all the food items and make sure the orders were correct. After several months, Pastor Bob came up with the idea of having it boxed up in Lafayette and transported to Erath for distribution. Arrangements were made to take orders in person or online and then distribute them to the respective areas.

"Life Church is pleased to offer the service of Angel Food Ministries and looks forward to being able to continue to serve the people of Vermilion Parish."

Minnie Simien-Louisiana Spirit-Outreach

## Interfaith Fellowship

On Sunday, August 24, 2007, Reverend Zack Mitchell was watching the media coverage of the Katrina evacuations from New Orleans. He remembers going to his wife and said, "Honey, I think we should open the church." In about an hour, leaders and volunteers within the congregation had been contacted and the doors were open.

While some volunteers were at the church with Reverend Mitchell making preparations, others set out in their cars looking for people who were in need of a place to stay. They found a few families stranded at gas stations. Almost immediately, a sheriff's deputy saw what was happening and asked for an explanation. When he learned that a shelter was opening at Interfaith Fellowship, he radioed in to headquarters. The Office of Emergency Preparedness quickly became involved and people throughout the area with nowhere to go were being escorted to safety by law enforcement.

The shelter was run by church members and volunteers, sustained itself through donations, and operated successfully until survivors were moved to the Red Cross shelter at City Park. By the time the shelter closed its doors, large shipments of supplies were coming in and a distribution center had been set up in the existing warehouse space at the church.

Interfaith Fellowship was a temporary home for more than 500 families and the distribution center operated until November of 2006. There were about 1500 volunteers.

Michelle Murr - Team Leader - Iberia & St. Martin Parishes

#### True Vine Ministries

#### Bishop Jarvis Harmon



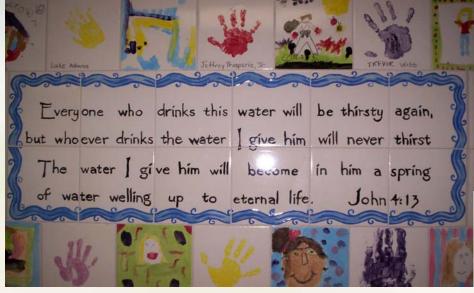
Several years before the hurricanes, the congregation of True Vine Ministries built a warehouse and storage facility on church property called 'The Arms of Compassion Community Outreach Center'. The center was designed to serve the local community in times of need. When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit Louisiana, the mission expanded to serve survivors migrated into the Lafayette area.

The Arms of Compassion Center became a distribution center and a something of command post for supplies coming in from all around the country. Truck loads at a time would replenish the warehouse with food, clothing and personal hygiene items. Families in crisis were invited to take what they needed. Bishop Jarvis Harmon's congregation assisted "thousands of people affected by the storms."

The True Vine congregation volunteered at the Cajun Dome and put the church's van and bus to use assisting survivors with much needed transportation. For many months after the storms, congregation members prepared and served hot meals at the church then delivered them to those housed temporarily at area hotels and motels. Church members opened their homes to survivors. True Vine also housed evacuees at a church camp near Lake Charles until it was inundated with four feet of water from Hurricane Rita.

Christie Armstrong - Louisiana Spirit - Outreach

## Trinity Bible Church



"At first the problems looked too huge for us to be able to handle, but we just took it piece by piece. Whatever problem came along, it seemed as though a solution followed right behind." - Shannon Green, Outreach Minister

Just days after Hurricane Katrina hit the coast of Louisiana, this congregation gathered together. They wondered, "What should we do? What can we do?" The congregation knew one thing, that they would help in whatever way they could.

Volunteers from the church began working at the Cajundome, assisting where they were needed.

The church began accepting donations of food, clothing and bedding supplies. The pastor of the church, Pastor Dennis Malcolm, decided that whatever could not be acquired through donations, the church would reimburse(?). Extra storage rooms were used to sort and store goods and food.

The men of the church donated their time and supplies to build a shower area adjacent to the building. Soon, the children's building was converted to a family shelter and they began bringing families over from the Cajundome.

Through a former church member who had moved to California, the church partnered with Foundation for Hope, associated with Coast Hills Community Church located in Southern California. This organization sent mission groups of between 8 and 10 people down to Lafayette. They would arrive in large trucks filled with supplies. The volunteer teams were housed in Church members' homes and spent time working at the church shelter as well as the Cajundome.

Foundation for Hope continued in their good works by helping to match survivor families with churches in non-hurricane affected areas of the country. These Churches "adopted" families helping them to relocated and settled into new communities. Trinity Bible sheltered folks for nearly six months. Two children were born during that time (a set of twins) and one couple were married there, as well.

Emily Clayton - Louisiana Spirit - Outreach

#### Pastor Steven Hixon



Pastor Steven Hixon's Church was based in New Orleans, Louisiana before Hurricane Katrina forced he and his family to evacuate to his wife's hometown of Opelousas. Initially, Pastor Hixon began holding church services in a neighboring church. While he was there, he gave gas cards, gift certificates for holiday meals, movie passes and other hurricane relief for survivors in need. Soon the pastor moved his services to the Opelousas North Park Civic Center.

Recently, Pastor Hixon, along with his wife/co-Pastor, Deborah, opened the doors to their very own church in Opelousas.

Outreach - St. Landry Parish

#### Christian Service Center

The Christian Service Center is a non-profit organization which provides emergency assistance to families in Vermilion Parish who are in a crisis situation. Donations for the center are provided by various individuals, businesses, churches and organizations.

Through these donations, The Christian Service Center was able to help the people of Vermilion Parish when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit in 2005. The CSC served as a haven for many evacuees. Not only did they take care of the needs of the displaced, but they continued to help individuals who were not directly impacted by the storm.

When the center opened its doors, survivors were welcomed to shop at the free clothing room. Their food pantry provides food to the needy three times a week. Also, the center holds a food drive to help families during the holidays. The Christian Service Center assisted the needy by paying for prescriptions, rent and utility bills if needed and continues to play an important role to the people of Vermilion Parish through their open arms giving.

In 2005, the center served 2,221 families impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Two years later, the center is still offering services to survivors. Without the help of organizations like the Christian Service Center, many of the peoples' needs would not have been met.

"Having started working here before the storm (Hurricane Rita) gave me the chance to see the needs of the people on a daily basis. But since the storm, you saw those same people giving back to the needs of others - just as I was taught. It is better to give than to receive," Teresa Galtier recalls.

Darla Castille, CSC director, notes, "I came to the Christian Service Center after hearing in a Gospel reading: Faith without works is dead. After coming here as a volunteer and seeing the people behind the works, I knew the faith in this Center and in the community was as strong as God intended it to be."

Minnie Simien-Louisiana Spirit- Outreach

### Our Lady of Fatima Katrina Relief Committee



Soon after the landfall of Katrina, the Rev. Msgr. Glen John Provost and Principal Mr. Herb Boasso, formed the Fatima Hurricane Relief Committee. Compelled by a desire to help the survivors, parishioners joined together in action.

Monetary donations, food, furniture and clothing were received from as far away as Hawaii, Canada and the French West Indies. A school in St. Bart sent a monetary gift to their French "cousins" in Louisiana which was used to purchase, household items for survivors who lost everything.

Each Thursday the church feed Red Cross volunteers at the Cajundome. The Parish Center housed Military Police from New York State. Donation from Fatima supported a multitude of efforts throughout Acadiana. Fatima's work continued on in through the aftermath of Hurricane Rita. Food, clothing, furniture and appliances were delivered to families in Vermilion parish along with monetary donations.

Anne Perkins& Aura Pinto

## Queen of Angels Church

Queen of Angels Church Hall was home for hundreds of Katrina and Rita survivors.

Staff members, Melanie Joubert and Troy Venable wasted no time preparing for survivors. They practically lived, ate, and slept at the shelter for months.

While the church hall wasn't designed to serve such a large amount of people for an indefinite amount of time, the staff accommodated the large families by placing them in class rooms, which where referred to as suites by the survivors. These living arrangements provided some sort of normalcy in an abnormal situation.

Natashia Williams - Team Leader - St. Landry Parish



## Progressive Baptist Church



Progressive Baptist Church opened their doors and their hearts to as many as 200 evacuees.

The church served as a temporary shelter and medical facility, and due to the massive need of the survivors, they transformed their educational center into a housing facility. For the next four and half months, survivors received shelter, three meals a day, recreation, entertainment, counseling, medical assistance, legal services, and child care services. Since many of these survivors were without income at this time, the church also offered them work at the church for a salary.

The congregation spent about \$10,000 on appliances and mattresses.

Outreach - Lafayette Parish

## First United Methodist Church-New Iberia

First United Methodist Church - New Iberia has become a community leader in hurricane relief. Rev. Scott Bullock immediately saw a huge need in the community after Hurricane Katrina when many people from New Orleans relocated to New Iberia. The church established a Community Outreach Coordinator position, filled by Jim Wyche who is pursuing ministry within the United Methodist Church. Two days after Jim was appointed, Hurricane Rita came.

First United Methodist Church has a very long history of reaching out to the people of Iberia Parish and the citizens of South Louisiana. In Delcambre, of the 900 homes located there, fewer than 40 escaped Rita's storm surge waters. The majority of the homes in Lydia, Rynella and Bayou Jack failed to Rita's destruction. The members of FUMC-New Iberia came forward to lend a hand to people needing it.

"There is no end in sight for this formidable team. Together we will help to rebuild Iberia and Acadiana, and with the prayers and donations of many faithful people, a shiny new South Louisiana will rise from the mud left behind by Hurricane Rita. People relocating here from New Orleans will be proud to call New Iberia home. The spirit of South Louisiana people just doesn't roll over and play dead in the face of a devastating storm. With God's help we just pick ourselves up and start over," Wyche adds.