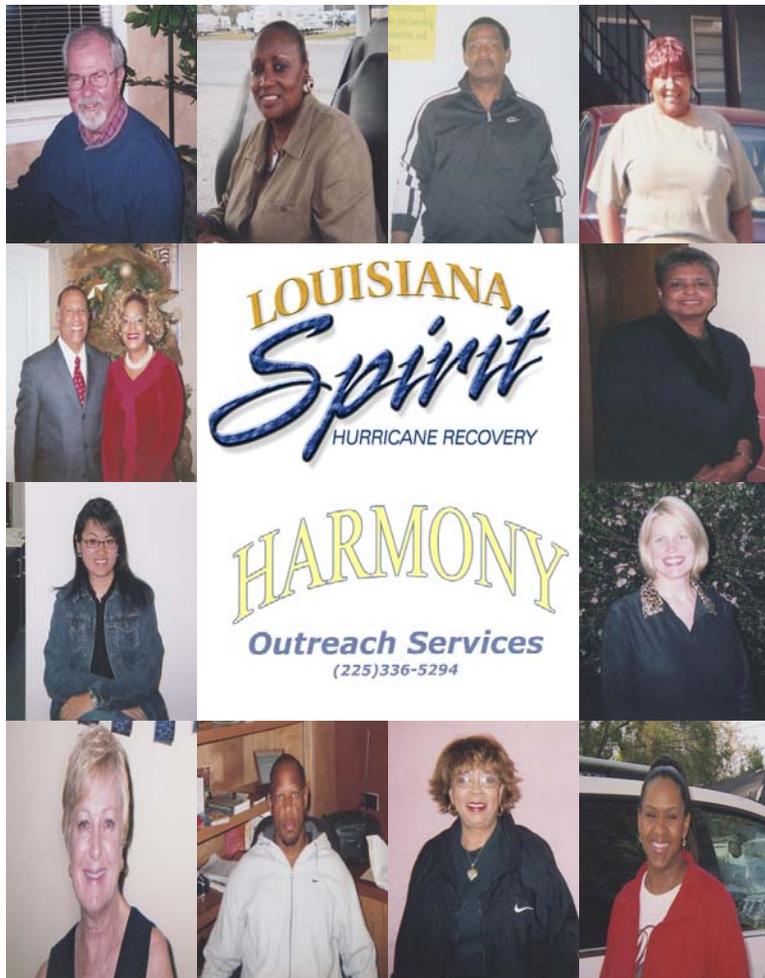


Louisiana's Unsung Heroes



LA Spirit /
Harmony Family Support
& Outreach Services

This Journal

Illustrates:

- > Stories of Volunteers making history helping Survivors
- > Citizens of Baton Rouge and surrounding Parishes reach out
- > Assistance given to Survivors in distress
- > Survivors helping Survivors
- > Compassionate Citizens helping Katrina Survivors overcome fear

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Introductory Statement

Mankind has witnessed natural disasters throughout the world for millions of years. Our time occurred in August, 2005.

As social service servants, it is encumbered upon us to HELP. As we help, we must be responsible for recording truths and learning from our mistakes.

Members of the Harmony staff epitomize these characteristics of helping as we accomplish our mission, daily. Harmony's mission is to encourage survivors to recognize their ability to become self-reliant and to dispel the myth that they cannot move on with their lives. We foster communities with people helping people, caring for all citizens and accepting their new neighbors. We want all to realize that hopelessness is never an option. Harmony is available to help everyone cope with this life changing crisis and discover a "new normal."

On behalf of Louisiana Spirit – Harmony Family Support and Outreach Services, we express our gratitude to some who consented to share their stories. Though heroism was never the intent, each unremunerated deed and act of kindness demonstrate man's humanity to man. In this spirit, those without fame or fortune are recognized in this journal for your enlightenment and enjoyment.





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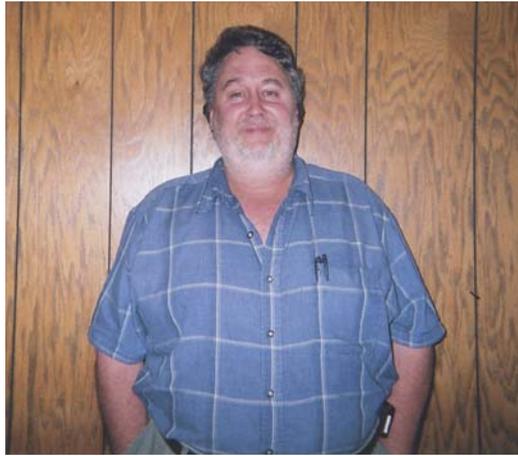
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Frank Akin

Frank Akin and several others went the day after Katrina struck to the Baton Rouge chapter of the American Red Cross office to see what they could do to help. There he discovered a group he had never heard of before, the Victim Relief Ministries, a national organization based in Dallas, founded by Gene Grounds, that trains ministers and others to serve as chaplains after disasters. Frank, who is a minister with the Luke 10:27 church in Denham Springs, was sent to a shelter by the Red Cross; at the same time, he also learned that the Victim Relief staff had no place to stay. Inviting them to stay with him—which they did for 4 or 5 days a week for six months--he became immersed in the Victim Relief Ministries work. He helped them find their way around town, he went with them to the River Center shelter, and joined them in encouraging workers at the Call Center. In effect, Frank became part of the Ministries, which in fact, he did join. In early 2006, he and the Victim Relief Ministries organized a training for people to become chaplains with the program. The purpose was to train people in spiritual counseling in disaster situations and to develop a pool of people who would be available to help in future disasters or critical situations such as fires and shootings. Baton Rouge now has over 60 people who have been trained as chaplains.

Not only has Frank sought to organize disaster preparedness in Baton Rouge, he also has been part of efforts to organize disaster programs in Livingston and Ascension parishes—he has taken part in programs to establish Long Term Recovery Committees and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters. He believes that if Baton Rouge is prepared for disasters and emergencies, people will receive aid sooner and more effectively. There is a real need for collaboration, counseling and communication, so that all services could be ready when needed. Moved by the way the members of the Dallas Victim Relief Ministries worked, he wants this area to take their desire to serve as good Samaritans and to prepare better for the future.



Thomas Bennett

Describing himself as the type of person who rarely volunteers, Thomas Bennett heard the repeated announcements from the Department of Health and Hospitals for medical volunteers. As a registered nurse, though now not working directly with patients, he felt he should go to the Baker Municipal Center's shelter to see if he was needed. They put him to work, not first as a nurse, but passing out food. Seeing other needs, he started a medical log to document the medical information of people at the shelter. Since they had many supplies coming in, he helped organize a supply area, making it easier to distribute to people.

Reflecting on his and other volunteer efforts, Bennett felt like he needed to give back since he did not lose anything while they lost so much.



Denise Brown

Denise Brown is the Program Manager and Community Liaison for the Capitol High Mentoring for Success Program, a partnership between the East Baton Rouge Public School System and Capitol High Alumni. The program started in August, 2007 with 75 male students and 75 female students, most of whom were “at risk” with academic, attendance and/or behavioral issues. Many of these students were also survivors of Katrina.

The mentoring sessions focus on attendance, developing leadership skills, increasing age appropriate peer interaction, and building confidence and self esteem. There have been many instances where the mentors have gone beyond the call of duty. For example a mentor picks up a student daily for school, who otherwise would continue to have a high rate of absenteeism. The program also assists students with job placement in the community, and with any other concerns that might be negatively impacting a student’s overall school performance.

Denise Brown reports that the program has proven to be very beneficial to the students. She feels that without the Baton Rouge Police Department and Harmony Family Support and Outreach Services and Louisiana Spirit this would not have been possible. The overall benefits of the program can be measured by students’ heightened self-esteem, a great improvement in day to day school attendance, and appropriate and more positive peer interaction.



Jill and Shawn Burks

Jill Burks was at the LSU P-Mac, which served as an emergency hospital, serving food from her church. She found a man who was determined to keep his family together. His daughter had a rare disease and needed to be treated immediately. The doctors wanted to take her inside to treat her, but her father thought they would be separated and did not want to leave her. According to Jill, this was big man who stood 6' 7". He had been stuck at his flooded house and at the airport for many days. His tolerance had run thin. He began to get loud with the nurses and because of his size they were scared. Something inside told her to walk toward him and offered him a meal. She thought that with his size and emotional venting, he had to be hungry. But when asked, he said, "No, I am not hungry."

Not giving up, Jill made a second attempt to connect – "Do you think you would like a cup of coffee?" With warm eye contact, he asked, "You have a cup of coffee?" His attitude changed.

Since then the man and his family have become friends. Jill says, "Our family and his family stay in touch and try to have dinner as often as possible."



Effie Carter and Patsy Wilkerson
The Dream Alive Team

Effie Carter and Patsy Wilkerson of Shiloh Baptist Church felt the need to reach out to the survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They both made monetary donations and personally fed and housed many survivors. Patsy, however, did not feel that enough had been done. Patsy had a plan which she shared with Effie Carter, and they together shared it with other women of Shiloh Baptist Church. Their efforts resulted in an event which provided a half-day of mind, body and soul pampering to over 125 women, all survivors, living in the Baton Rouge area. The objective of the "Pampering Day" was to encourage the women to continue to believe, to hope and to hold on to their dreams. They felt that if a woman loses hope then her family loses hope. The message of the event was "dream, you're alive."



Sue Chenevert

Sue Chenevert does not consider herself a ‘hero,’ but rather “a busy lady just doing the Lord’s work.” Immediately following Katrina, Sue Chenevert worked tirelessly assisting evacuees whenever and wherever possible. She housed a number of survivors in her home, while working simultaneously at her church to provide assistance to paramedics and other first responders. Sue’s church provided three meals a day, washed their clothes on a daily basis and providing refuge from a traumatic period in this nation’s history.

While helping out survivors at home and at church, Sue also volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and played a major role in building houses in which 24 families were placed. While Sue no longer works with Habitat for Humanity, she is still very instrumental in assisting survivors in their recovery. She is currently the volunteer chairperson for the East Baton Rouge Long Term Recovery Committee. Part of Sue’s efforts with the committee is working with case managers to assist evacuees to get furniture, deposit funds and the first month’s rent and even cars.



Margaret Chopin

Mrs. Margaret Chopin, a survivor of the hurricane, left New Orleans when the announcement to evacuate was made. Not letting the disaster stop her strong desire to be useful and helpful, she threw herself into a series of works to assist her fellow survivors. She now lives in Renaissance Village and participates in several activities involving the elderly, handicapped, and children. Because of her works, FEMA presented her with an award for supporting the Hurricane survivors.

Mrs. Chopin's dedication to Renaissance Village is appreciated by all whom she serves and all who are involved in assuring the well-being of Renaissance. She has made it known throughout the community that she is always available to help.



Sharon Chriss

When Sharon Chriss, her husband, Darryl and daughter Ivanna received the telephone call from family members that they were evacuating New Orleans and were en-route to their house, they began making plans and preparations for food and shelter.

Within three days of Katrina, the Chriss' had 22 people living in their home, including six children. At first, family members enjoyed each others company, particularly since the Chriss' home in the past had been the location of special family celebrations. But after the third week, tensions were developing. At this point, she and her husband had to start a motivation plan to encourage family members to look for housing alternatives. One of her special concerns was her sister who is disabled. She began to access medications and make other accommodations for her sister. Other family members were asked to take care of themselves. Yet, she and her husband welcomed them to stay if accommodations were not found. Some relatives were able to find housing, while others remained. Today, she has relatives living with her, along with her disabled sister.



Janna Craig

Janna Craig and her mother were residents of Plaquemine, Louisiana at the time of Hurricanes Katrina. One morning soon after Katrina, Craig saw a car parked in front her home. She came out of the house and asked the family why were they sleeping in their car; they replied that the house they were going to stay in was full. Taking them in, she told them that they could stay until they were able to figure out their next move. In addition to this family, Craig found 30 other survivors who did not have a place to stay. She encouraged her church to open up their doors to give them a place to sleep.

They had no where else to go and though she did not know these people, she instantly told them that they could stay in her home. Housing them for over three weeks, Craig and her mother fed them everyday and washed their clothes. They were treated as if they were permanent residents with a room of their own and everything else they needed.

Craig found it easy to invite strangers into her home because she has always helped others in need.



Rene and Mona DeLaune

It all began in Walker, Louisiana a day after Katrina. Rene and Mona DeLaune had paid for a trailer spot at a camp ground in Livingston Parish; yet they gave it up so a survivor could use the spot. They felt others needed it more, even though they had lost power at their house.

Then, Mona's sister and family from Chalmette needed help. The DeLaunes helped to provide necessities for their trip to Texas. The next day, Rene was asked by the Volunteers of America in Lafayette to help. He went to Lafayette and worked many hours a day for seven days.

Returning home, the DeLaunes sponsored a support group for over a year at their home each Wednesday. They also traveled to and from Chalmette retrieving items for family and friends. They retrieved a burial flag for a survivor's husband and a religious statue. They also took in a Red Cross worker who stayed with them for 3 weeks. He was a retired fire captain from Brooklyn, NY.

They also assisted a disabled resident in Renaissance Village. They helped her to exchange a regular trailer for a handicapped trailer. For another survivor, they purchased a Christmas tree and had her over for Christmas day.



Bob Dorroh

Bob Dorroh, a retired math professor at Louisiana State University, felt the need to volunteer after Hurricane Katrina. He volunteered as a Case Worker at Renaissance Village. Bob remembers working with an individual who was grieving the loss of his wife; the individual didn't have a lot and was seeking the assistance of benefits through social security. Bob contacted some agencies and accompanied the man to provide moral support. Bob also assisted a blind man who was very vulnerable and lost much through his impairment. He helped the man find a Rehabilitation Center in Ferriday. Other acts included assisting people in signing up for Road Home Program and helping to purchase airline tickets for those individuals whose families were elsewhere.

Bob Dorroh stated that he "dealt with people that worked hard their whole lives and it was heartbreaking to see that they lost it all." He also stated, "people say that family is the greatest support group, but not everyone was able to receive that support from their families after the storm." He believes through this experience, he learned more about the love of his fellow man.



Gene Gonzales

Since 2002, Gene Gonzales has served as an American Red Cross volunteer. As part of their Disaster Action Team, he gained experience aiding families after home fires. Katrina was nothing like his prior experiences, with a scope infinitely bigger. Helping out with the American Red Cross office, he met with survivors and provided them with resource information. Soon his job assignment changed: he had to help assign volunteers around the state to shelters. The Red Cross also asked Gonzales to supervise the phone receptionists who were taking calls on financial assistance. He was amazed that unpaid people would take these calls for hours and days at a time. After working 35 straight days, he took some time off, yet he soon found himself helping at a kitchen in Slidell.

He sums his volunteer work up by saying that he is part of people helping people in a very direct way at a time of real need.



Christy Harper

Christy first became involved at the church office of South Baton Rouge Church of Christ answering requests by phone for assistance. But soon she became involved in the shelter operations at the church gym, where she helped in the kitchen. Her work at the shelter expanded to a variety of other activities that helped survivors. She saw her task as helping people get back on their feet.

This still serves as a very memorable experience for her. She even compiled a book of pictures and stories of residents and volunteers.



Mary Hillard

Mary Hillard, a mother of five adult children, received a telephone call from the former wife of one of her sons. The survivor asked if she and her seven children (who were not Hillard's grandchildren) could stay with her. Even though it had been over 10 years since they had last talked, Hillard welcomed them with open arms.

They stayed with Hillard from August 2005 until December 2005. Since she has a twelve room house, it was not too difficult to provide living space. Also, her children assisted in providing food and clothing for the mother and her seven children ranging from ages six to seventeen.



Linda Hunter

Linda Hunter, a Katrina survivor lives in a FEMA trailer at Winchester Mobile Trailer Site. She has worked tirelessly to care for her family. She is caretaker of her adult son and daughter, her brother and five grandchildren, all of whom live with her.

Recently, Hunter has been taking care of her sister, who has diabetes. The sister came from New Orleans to Baton Rouge to have surgery and needed round the clock care, which her sister happily provided.

In each situation, she does all that is possible for her family. She never gives up hope.



McHenry Jackson

Because of McHenry Jackson's efforts, he received an honorary medal from the Coast Guard for people who did an outstanding job during Hurricane Katrina. Jackson received a call from the Secretary of Transportation of Louisiana because Greater King David Baptist Church owns a multi-passenger van. The secretary wanted help transporting survivors out of New Orleans. Jackson agreed and drove the van back and forth to New Orleans delivering people to shelters.

While driving, he found that he also needed to comfort survivors. Jackson emphasizes that even though he spearheaded the effort he had many volunteers from Greater King David Baptist Church and other churches. He and other volunteers went into FEMA trailers before survivors were placed to see what was needed.

Another effort was to help supply kids at Scotlandville Middle School with basic needs. Local businesses came and provided funds together to fit every child with shoes. The church in Maryland also gave half of the money to buy the shoes. Services to survivors continue into 2006 and 2007, including keeping up with the disabled people at Renaissance Village in Baker, LA, transporting people to job training programs, and helping with medicines.



Patricia Jackson

Patricia Jackson learned that hundreds of people were housed at the Scott Civic Center in Pointe Coupee parish. She went there to help.

When she arrived, she asked, "what can I do?" She soon found a 14 year old boy crying. He was separated from his mother. She asked an officer where the other buses went and was told that they went to Marksville.

Having a friend in Marksville, she called her and asked if she would drive to the shelter and try to find the mother. Within an hour they were able to allow the 14 year old to talk to his mother. Ms. Jackson helped many more families come together.

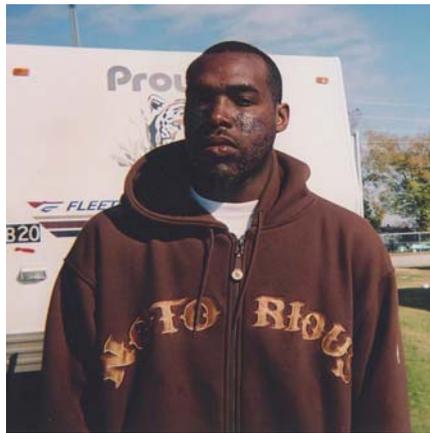


Bernice Johnson

Bernice Johnson, a retired nurse, spoke to her pastor about opening up a shelter for survivors leaving the New Orleans area because of Hurricane Katrina.

They made plans and opened the church. She and her sister, Eugenia Morgan, prepared breakfast, dinner and supper for the people in the shelter. Later, a social worker in the church found out that St. Vincent de Paul would prepare dinner for the survivors while they continued to cook breakfast for the people in the shelter. The breakfast food costs were covered by Johnson and her sister.

Along with the meals, many other services were required to help people. For example, she took one of the survivors, who was having kidney problems, to Earl K. Long Hospital. The doctor prescribed medicine but the survivor had no money to pay for it. She took him to the pharmacy where he received the medicine free of charge. She allowed survivors to come to her home for baths. She helped to give clothes to those who needed them. When the shelter later became a distribution center, she, with the help of her friend, Dollie Goins, opened a new shelter. This shelter primarily served survivors who had special medical needs.



Calvin Jones

Calvin Jones was a New Orleans resident in 2005 and rented a motel room in New Orleans as shelter from Hurricane Katrina. Learning that his friend's mother, father, and brother were trapped in a house, he swam nine blocks to the house, kicked in a wall to communicate with them. He then found a rescue team to come and free them from the house.

Another friend learned about a paralyzed man also trapped in a house. Again battling water, they reached the house, kicked in the door and turned the door into a stretcher. They then brought the paralyzed man to safety.

Eventually, Jones connected with his own family. They were transported to Houston and later to Baton Rouge.



Susie Lamb and Bonnie Kilburn

Bonnie J. Kilburn, Jr. and Suellen (Susie) Lamb are writers and best friends from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. A year after Susie moved to Baton Rouge, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. Susie and Bonnie both desired to assist survivors in every way possible.

Susie and her husband, Jim, with the generosity of friends from Michigan, went about to give out immediate cash and gift certificates as needed. They purchased clothes, beds, dressers and other furniture and household items. They were also able to give an apartment to survivors who had been displaced.

Meanwhile, Bonnie sent many boxes of clothes that was distributed to evacuees. She also gave her book, Just Imagine, containing poems that teach values. This book has been used daily in working with students traumatized by their evacuation and challenges of daily living since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. One of the most meaningful poems, titled "There's More to Me Than That," helps students reflect on their value as individuals. Bonnie has donated hundreds of her books and accompanying posters to the Gulf Coast region.



John G. Lewis

John Lewis volunteered at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank after Hurricane Katrina. Lewis has been a volunteer for 15 years, and while he is 71 years of age, he is still volunteering his time to the people of Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Lewis also partners with his church to provide food and clothing and help with temporary housing.

Believing in the need for community volunteers, Lewis teaches new volunteers. He says he wants to teach to the younger generation what it really means to volunteer.



Mima Mathews

Mima Mathews, with the help of her church, St. John the Baptist in Zachary opened a distribution center for food and other items to aid hurricane victims housed in shelters and homes in Zachary. Along with other members of her church, she sorted and distributed these items.

They also prepared lunch for the residents at one of the shelters in Zachary. She organized, helped to prepare, and delivered the meals.

Her family also cared for family and friends from the New Orleans area.



Carolyn McKee

Carolyn McKee opened her home to over twenty-five adults and children, including sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, cousins and friends. In a five bedroom, three bathroom house, she pulled out every blanket, sheet, towel, pillow, sleeping bag, and old cribs. Immediately, she turned her utility room into a large pantry for storing groceries and assigned house chores to everyone.

Family meetings took place weekly and even though each adult agreed to contribute financially, Carolyn constantly reminded that money was not an issue and no one would be turned away! She said that she loves her family but it wasn't until this time when they were all together that she realized her true purpose.



Wanda Miles

Wanda Miles, a survivor of Hurricane Katrina, lives in a Baton Rouge apartment complex occupied by other survivors. On any given day, Wanda is walking around the complex delivering her own food items to her neighbors, and finding out the clothes sizes of children that live nearby. Wanda's favorite activity is shopping only to give it to a neighbor she feels it might benefit. The children in the complex have adopted her and lovingly refer to her as "Nana Wanda." They often get off the bus running to show "Nana Wanda" their grades, knowing that she just might have a reward for them. They even run to her when they haven't done so well knowing that she will have words of encouragement to inspire them to try a little harder the next time.

During a recent event which provided survivors with food, entertainment, clothing, and empowerment speakers, Wanda was spotted on the phone writing notes. The notes consisted of sizes of children whom she delivered clothing to immediately following the event.



Mary Nguyen

Mary Nguyen and her family had not evacuated from New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina, but two days after the hurricane, they found themselves at St. Anthony Catholic Church in Baton Rouge. Mary is a college student who speaks fluently in both Vietnamese and English. Eventually the shelter was home to over 700 Vietnamese and Americans. Her father began helping out in setting up and running the shelter. Mary realized that she had skills, particularly her language skills, that could help people. Given the position of Shelter Coordinator, she undertook many activities: she developed a database that kept a record of survivors coming into the shelter from New Orleans, she was the main contact person for any agencies wanting to help the survivors, she organized mail services for the survivors; and she spoke for survivors who had trouble communicating in English.

Mary is currently living in the Baton Rouge area and is planning to move back to New Orleans.



Shirley Oliver

Shirley Oliver lives in Revilletown Park in Plaquemine, Louisiana. Their pastor and church, Mt. Zion Baptist Church #1, started to receive calls from relatives and others in the community and those who chose to evacuate to Plaquemine.

Rounding up a group of volunteers (members of the church and the community), Oliver and the others went to the church to organize blankets and beddings. With families arriving, those that had relatives in the community moved in with them while the others found room in the church. Four families remained at the church for several days and the members took turns being on the premises to treat them with kindness and give them support.

Mt. Ephriam church in Atlanta, Georgia sent two 18-wheelers full of clothing and non-perishable food items along with soap, toothpaste, powder, pampers, deodorants, and more.



Margaret Montgomery-Richard and Anthony Wayne Richard

Dr. Margaret Montgomery-Richard and her husband, Anthony Wayne Richard, were among the few who sustained very little damage to their home in Gentilly. Still, they could not return to their home immediately.

Margaret, the Chancellor of the Louisiana Technical College, found housing in LaPlace which she used as the base to visit the College's campuses. In January 2006, the residents of Gentilly were allowed into their neighborhoods.

Shortly thereafter, Margaret and Wayne opened their hearts and their door to other professionals who needed to go back home. While Margaret remained on the road checking on her campuses, Wayne was in New Orleans running the "Do Drop In" better known as their home. Many friends and relatives still in Baton Rouge began to check in regularly while making plans to rebuild their home.

The "Do Drop In" was a restaurant by day, and open to overnight travelers looking for clean surroundings, a refreshing shower, and a good meal. There was always food available.

Margaret often laughs during her walk down Katrina's "memory lane" as she thinks of the time she returned from a very long road trip only to find about 25 strangers sitting in her house eating red beans and rice.

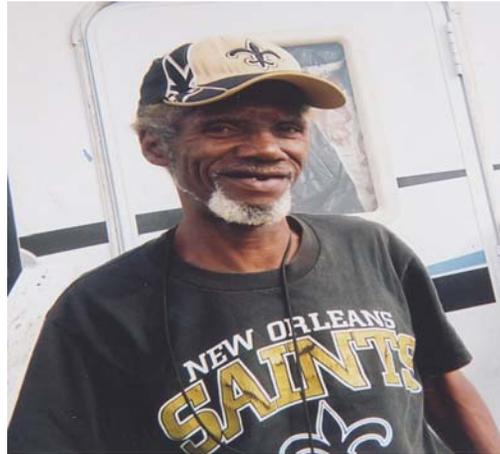
The "Do Drop In" remains open. Margaret and Wayne will be there to greet you. They feel they have been blessed and they have certainly done their job in blessing others.



James, Barbara, and Anthony Rodney

Before Hurricane Katrina came ashore, the phone rang at the Rodney's home. They learned that cousins were in route to Baton Rouge and were asking for shelter. The Rodneys called relatives, particularly Gussie and Sylvia Trahan, to plan for their arrival, knowing that some 20 relatives would arrive. They planned to make assignments of who were to stay where, knowing that included in the relatives was 90 year old and an 87 year handicapped relative.

The Rodney family initially planned for their relatives visit to last three days to one week. As it turned out, the "visit" was extended to more than six months. James and Barbara planned together how they would handle feeding, sleeping arrangements, cleaning and all other details to accommodate all the relatives. They also helped students with enrollment in Southern University and in a local high school and helped secure employment for two of the relatives. Through out this period, Gussie and Sylvia Trahan cared for relatives and helped the Rodney family. Fortunately, many good things came out of the experiences of housing their relatives.



Wilbert Ross

Wilbert Ross moved into Renaissance Village after Hurricane Katrina. Though life changing, that did not stop him from being concerned about the welfare of others. Ross became President of Katrina Re-birth-Promise Land Inc., an organization that represented about 1,700 residents of Renaissance Village. To the residents, he is known as “The Mayor.”

Ross has been the spokesperson, the community liaison, guidance counselor, negotiator, truant officer, police officer and a friend. He has gone above and beyond to help the elderly receive meals and keep them informed on current information. He also helped the residents to receive job training, housing and transportation. Ross makes sure that all the residents of Renaissance receive all the available resources.



Monica T. Roussel

Monica knew that her church, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, was busy collecting needed relief supplies. She wanted to help and started working with the church. However, she soon received a call from Volunteer! Ascension, who asked her to come and help with a large distribution center that the parish government was setting up at a closed Winn-Dixie store. When she got to the store, everything was in chaos with relief supplies in disorder. As floor manager, she organized the volunteer at least 300—to sort, store and then distribute large quantities of food and material items. Supplies came from all over the country and from Canada in tractor trailer trucks. In the month of October, the distribution center aided 8000 people.

Reflecting on the experience, Monica says that she saw what was needed and believed she could really help. She and others worked 10-12 hours a day, six days a week. With the passing of time, this experience means more and more to her.

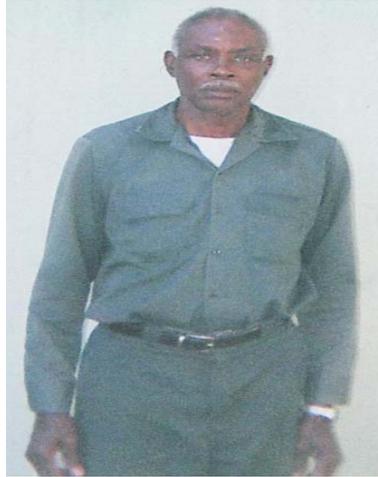


Jo Ann Sanders,
Martin Luther King Center of Zachary Community

On the morning of August 30, 2005 several members of the Martin Luther King Center of Zachary Committee contacted the Zachary Men's Club to work with them to set up a shelter at their facility. They purchased blankets, towels, clothes and everything else they could think of that the survivors might have needed. A family of eight were the first residents to arrive.

The Zachary community started pouring out support, comfort, and care. By the end of the first week, they had 21 survivors from the hurricane and within a month over 100 were living in the shelter. The doctors and nurses came to help. They registered the children for school. Members cooked food, washed clothes and took the survivors to their personal homes to take baths. Services also included looking for jobs, finding permanent homes, and locating other family members who were missing.

The experience taught the committee to love one another, to be strong and have a kind heart.



Charles Smith

Charles Smith works everyday in his one-quarter of an acre garden. Soon after Katrina, while working in his garden, a survivor from a nearby shelter walked by with her two year old toy poodle. They exchanged hello. Everyday thereafter they would exchange a friendly hello as she walked past with her dog.

In distress one day, the survivor came and explained to Smith that her dog would have to be put outside of the shelter or her and her family would have to leave the shelter. Smith offered her dog, Pippin, a place to stay and said that she could visit whenever she wanted, and gave her a key to his home to visit and take care of her dog at her convenience. Smith also allowed her to do the family's laundry as there was not a laundry facility at the shelter.



Eula Smith

Eula Smith recounted that the morning after Hurricane Katrina that she told her husband, pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, that they had to help. They decided to prepare food for those stranded.

Smith had her daughter (Edris) to email local radio stations WJBO and WXOK to inform the listening audience that there would be hot meals served at the church around 1:00 p.m. They served about 300 people the first day.

During this meal, the survivors disclosed they did not have a place to live. Smith, volunteers and the custodian prepared accommodations to those evacuees in need of shelter.

Smith worked about 15 hours per day to ensure that everything was operational. As a result of all the media attention there was an outpouring of generosity from all directions - several 18 wheelers delivered perishable foods, restaurants donated food, department stores donated clothes, churches loaned their vans and buses to shuttle the evacuees to the YMCA (East Boulevard) and Turner Plaza Apartment complex to take advantage of their shower facilities. Donaldson Chapel Baptist Church also helped provide housing, vans and other necessities. The church housed over 200 survivors for 91 days.



Walter W. Smith

Walter Smith, a 79 year old retired New Orleans public schools educator “weathered the storm.”

This young man, as many experienced, survived on pre-cooked meat heated by the sun, drinking whatever he could find and flushing the toilet with flood water until he was rescued. After being rescued, he encountered many travel experiences because of the inability to locate relatives and was thought to be missing. Once relatives were located, Mr. Smith’s last stop was Regency Place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This assisted living facility is now his home. An outstanding deed that Mr. Smith demonstrates is to teach the exercise class at Regency Place. When the teacher left, he volunteered to carry on. He has found new friends, become a part of a new community and found a purpose in life—the exercise class.



Iona Snaril

On the morning of Hurricane Katrina, Iona Snaril's brother, wife and their children arrived at her house in Plaquemine. Shortly afterwards, more relatives and friends started to come. Soon, not only relatives were arriving but also friends and even strangers started to show up. Becoming overwhelmed, she called her church and relatives in Baton Rouge for help.

She cooked food and called the neighbors in for their help. While she thought this was just for a day or two, she soon realized after watching the news that this would be longer. Deciding she could help, she was able to keep 12 people for three months at her house, providing them food, clothing and shelter.



Ann Sperry

Ann Sperry a school teacher in Ithaca, New York, heard about Hurricane Katrina and the lives that were taken, as well as the billions of dollars in damage to New Orleans and surrounding areas. Ann wanted to help, but did not know what route to take until she heard that a nun from the Diocese of Albany, New York was gathering volunteers.

An emergency/crisis hotline was designed to help the victims that were affected and Ann wanted to be involved. Wanting to help victims cope after Katrina, she worked on the crisis hotline. She remembers shopping at Wal-Mart for a family of 17 students. She bought school supplies and other necessities needed for those children, and it was all worth while to know that she made a difference and instilled some motivation in the children and their parents.

Ann Sperry felt that this was her calling and made it a point to do all that she could to serve the people who needed it the most. She sacrificed her job as a teacher in New York to come to Louisiana. After volunteering so many hours, she decided to remain here in Louisiana where now, she works for Catholic Charities in Baton Rouge.



Deborah Thomas

Deborah Thomas is described by people from New Orleans as a hero because of her help after Hurricane Katrina. A resident of New Orleans, Thomas received phone calls from relatives and friends asking for a place to stay. Over the next two weeks, 21 people came to her one bedroom apartment in Baton Rouge. Along with housing many, she also worked with her friends and relatives to transition them to other parishes and even states as better living arrangements became available. Her efforts did not stop with work but she also volunteered for two months at the Baton Rouge River Center, where she coordinated the transportation needs. Meanwhile she continued to help people locate places to live, including working with a church in Michigan that assisted nearly fifty people in relocating there.



John Thompson

John Thompson wanted to help a fellow concerned citizen who informed him she had 10 survivors of Hurricane Katrina living with her in her apartment. John agreed to help, including housing some for over a year.

John says he really wanted to help those who did not have anyone. He even allowed the guests to stay in the house alone from time to time, while he stayed at his brother's house to give them some private time. He took the kids to school each day and picked them up. He continues to check on them. He is even listed at the schools as the contact person should there be an emergency with the children.



Judy Thousand

Immediately when Judy Thousand got the news of the damages from Hurricane Katrina, she started calling around to find where she could help. She was summoned to the elderly center at the West Baton Rouge Community Center. Thousand started a telephone mission and called for any and all contributions. She put in 472 volunteered hours in 28 days.

She recruited some of the survivors to help her do different chores, including keeping the restrooms clean. Thousand remembers how rewarding it was to see that so many of the survivors regaining their strength to help others who weren't able to help. In addition, she says it was incredible to see and know that the entire community give so much help. Her husband had to come to visit her at the center because she spent several nights there!



Whitney Vann

Like nearly everyone across South Louisiana when the call came, Whitney Vann answered in every way she could. An anchor at WBRZ, she would be on the anchor desk in 8 hour shifts.

Once she got off the television set, there were dozens of phone messages and hundreds of e-mails from people needing help, some trapped in New Orleans hotels, or a doctor trapped at Charity Hospital with dying patients. Overwhelmed but not succumbing to her own need for respite, Whitney would usually stay another 4 to 5 hours at her desk connecting people with resources, helping family members find each other, and helping others find a place to stay. Things were so chaotic at that time that she felt "if not me, then who?" Making connections, therefore, was one of her biggest contributions.

Whitney also helped her uncle from Glasgow, Kentucky fly into Baton Rouge to work with DHH. He was in New Orleans at the Convention Center helping.

Dr. Nicholas Abraham, who set up the Angels for God Project, asked Whitney to be Chairman of the Board, she was thrilled to be able to help families and children in crisis. "It's a small group doing things with big love", says Whitney. Through the project, she has helped people get cars as well as jobs, get their utilities paid, their rent caught up. "I think God puts us all in places to make a difference. Mine just happened to be on TV which fed me a lot of resources to share. I wouldn't call that heroic but simple humanity."

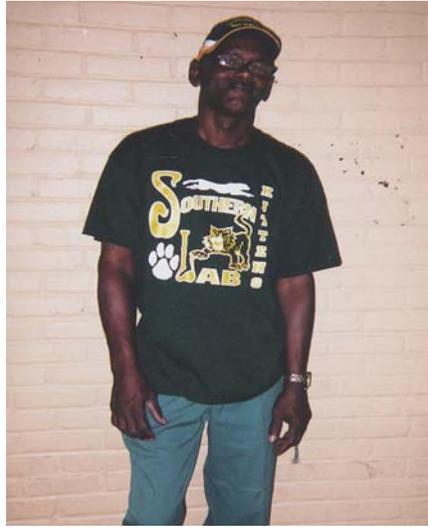


Tara Wicker

Tara Wicker is a member of Bethany World Prayer Center. Bethany housed 1500 survivors of Katrina and Rita and was recognized as a model emergency shelter by the President of the United States. President Bush as well as many other famous individuals and large organizations visited and toured the shelter to see how they were operating so efficiently.

In the aftermath of the disasters, Bethany was asked to assist with future disaster planning for shelters in the United States. Bethany agreed to put together a model emergency system. Wicker was very instrumental in the planning and coordination of those efforts and organizational aspects of the Bethany shelter during the disasters. She was also instrumental in putting together documentation that would be used in future disasters.

Another assignment was to put together a group of individuals that would oversee shower facilities and address the other hygienic needs of the survivors. Many of the survivors who came in were covered in muck from wading in the waters to get to safety. Wicker and her crew were able to bring a small sense of normalcy. Survivors often expressed appreciation for the care they received.



Jessie Williams

Jessie Williams and his wife, Melvina, answered the call of when Melvina's family, 12 members, needed a place to stay after Hurricane Katrina. Their family had to make great sacrifices in a three bedroom home, but they are thankful that the arrangement worked out. They were very excited about reaching out to help, but they never dreamed that it would last three months for seven of the twelve members and four months for the rest.

From the Williams perspective, this was a trying experience for their visitors because they always lived well and they would have never dreamed that they would end up at the Williams house for such a long period. The Williams are glad they were able to help their family and would do it all again.



Martha Stuart-Williams

In 2005, when Hurricane Katrina hit, Martha Stuart-Williams knew that David Watkins' family was supposed to be with her family.

Martha had come to know David because he needed a heart transplant. Believing she could help him, she worked to secure a transplant. Then, during his recovery she continued to help him, and in the process, she came to know his family. Although David died a few years later, she kept in touch with his family. She knew that David would want her to aid his family in the aftermath of Katrina.

After trying unsuccessfully for two days, she was finally able to get in touch with his family, and by the next afternoon, they were in Martha's home. David's mom, younger brother, younger sister, and niece moved in. Despite their differences, they became one big family. David would have wanted that.

At the end of their stay, David's youngest brother, Dominique asked if he could stay behind and live with them. Dominique, a quiet, shy, introverted, seventeen year old, black teen, surprised Martha when he said that her home was warm and comfortable to him. Without hesitation, Martha said yes, and Dominique settled into the fourth bedroom, enrolled in high school nearby, and joined the high school basketball team. When the school year ended, Dominique rejoined his family in New Orleans.



Reginald Williams

Reginald Williams opened the West Baton Rouge Parish Community Center immediately on the day Hurricane Katrina came, and for eight weeks the Center, the community, and volunteers assisted survivors. People came in buses, trucks, and cars, often coming from other locations because they had maxed out their living quarters in other surrounding areas. Williams was also, overseeing the centers in Erwinville and Brusly along with Port Allen where he was spending many nights at the center until he found others who were willing to spend the night in shifts. He was very comforted when the community of West Baton Rouge stepped up and joined forces to just do whatever it took to meet the needs of the people.

They kept 425 people on the premises for the first several weeks. Not only did the West Baton Rouge community support the Center, he also received help from a church in Colorado. The church sent two eighteen-wheelers of non-perishable goods and clothing for the survivors. The community came together and some of the students at Port Allen High School gave of their time and compassion to mentor the students and children.



James Woods

After the city of New Orleans was ravished by Hurricane Katrina, thousands of families flooded many of the state's mortuaries with burial requests of their family members who died in the storm. James Woods, Funeral Director at Wilson-Wooddale Funeral Home in Baton Rouge stepped forward to help.

During a four month period from September to December 2005, he aided 50 families with moral support during the grieving process, reduced funeral costs, and in some cases rendered free services to those families who did not have financial resources. When asked if he had regrets about losing those monies for free services, he stated, "he would do it all over again for free."



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Melissa Woolford

Melissa Woolford, having experience cooking and organizing a kitchen for large numbers of people, was called to help at the South Baton Rouge Church of Christ shelter. She took on the job of locating food for 50 people who were gathered at the church gym. She was amazed by people's response when a local radio station announced the shelter's need for food. Equally heartening and making possible the task of feeding 50 people, was the flood of volunteers from the church. Soon the new residents were also stepping forward to help cook and clean. Eventually, the new residents did most or all of the cooking—a transition aided by Melissa and others.

She did not let rumors of violence stop her from driving to help people. She also was impressed with people: people from churches and elsewhere who provided aid, emotional support, and spiritual encouragement; and the new residents who lost so much yet were doing all they could.



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