

A Bright Side to a Hurricane?



In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, government's failures filled the media. But we heard much less about a bright side to that horrible devastation—the church's response.

Deborah Young, our State Director of CWA of Louisiana, is a shining example. Her church, the 50-member House of Faith in Lafayette, has reached out to some of the 7,000 evacuees who flooded their city. Deborah has led the church since her husband Paul H. Young Jr. passed away in August 2004.

But first let me tell you about how the hurricane affected her family in this city of 110,000 located 118 miles west of New Orleans.

Thankfully, Deborah's three children were all accounted for. One son attends college in Lafayette; her daughter, a student in New Orleans, evacuated two days before the hurricane and has relocated to the university in Lafayette. A second son is in California in the Navy, but his wife and her young son were stranded in Mississippi, where her family home was devastated. When travel was possible, Deborah went to Mississippi and brought them home with her.

Deborah regularly visited evacuees in Lafayette's Cajundome. She prayed with them, brought encouragement, Bibles and study materials.

The church provided food items, toiletries, school supplies, gas and clothing for a family of 13, eventually helping them to leave for northern Louisiana. They helped another family get to North Carolina through connections with a church there. Deborah plans to visit the family in December.

Hurricane Rita also affected Lafayette. Evacuees were temporarily taken farther north, and Deborah and her family heeded the voluntary evacuation order for her city. They drove seven hours to stay with her brother in Alabama.

"It's hard to leave your home," she said. "You just pray and lock the door."

Thankfully, Lafayette wasn't seriously damaged, although devastation surrounded the city on three sides and House of Faith sustained roof damage. Some 3,500 were again housed at the Cajundome, and the city continued to receive those in need with open arms.

"Our city is a prime example of what citizens are capable of accomplishing without governmental intervention or financial support," says Deborah, who has been appointed vice president of the regional United Clergy Coalition, which consists of pastors who operate shelters or act as a resource for the hurricane victims. "Our churches were truly the first responders for evacuees."



Deborah Young
State Director for
CWA of Louisiana

As you can imagine, these efforts have stretched the House of Faith. I've been happy to see CWA's other state organizations lend a hand. CWA of Pennsylvania sent Bibles; others have sent cash donations. If you'd like to contribute, write to House of Faith at P.O. Box 5152, or 710 Jefferson Boulevard, Lafayette, Louisiana 70502; or call 337-237-8966. And be sure to remember this congregation in your prayers.

Beverly LaHaye
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Founder and Chairman