

Catholic Charities Houma-Thibodaux of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux
Report on Hurricanes Gustav (9/1/08) and Ike (9/12/08) Response

In the days since Hurricane Gustav struck the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux on September 1, followed by Hurricane Ike on September 12, diocesan staff, clergy and Matthew 25 Disaster Preparedness and Response volunteers have served 37,916 hot meals, distributed 6,700 clean-up kits to flooded families, dispersed 75,512 cans or bottles of water, visited every shelter delivering over 1,000 personal hygiene kits and making pastoral visits, and logged approximately 14,500 volunteer hours at Catholic churches throughout the diocese.

Hurricane Gustav

Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux staff, clergy and Matthew 25 volunteers coordinated and distributed hot meals to the people of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux as the region recovered from Hurricane Gustav. With food provided by the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, the Southern Baptist Association, and the Diocese of Biloxi, we served 24,000 hot meals over nine days (9/3 – 11) at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Pointe-aux-Chenes, Annunziata Church in Houma, St. Joseph Co-Cathedral in Thibodaux, St. Lawrence Church in Kraemer, St. James Mission in Choctaw, St. Joseph Church in Chauvin, Holy Savior Church in Lockport and Sacred Heart Church in Morgan City. Mt. 25 volunteers, clergy and staff contributed over 4,300 hours of their time. St. Genevieve and St. Charles Borromeo Churches sent Mt. 25 volunteers to assist in the food distribution.

The volunteers were members of the Matthew 25 Disaster Response Volunteer Network. Hot meals served by Mt. 25 volunteers were the first services provided to the residents of the Kraemer, Choctaw, and Pointe-aux-Chenes communities after the storm. Mt. 25 volunteers from Holy Savior Church in Lockport and Sacred Heart Church in Morgan City served meals to the National Guard, State Police, local law enforcement and other first responders beginning the day after Gustav.

Additionally, a limited amount of water and MREs have been distributed at churches in the diocese (other civil sites have distributed the bulk of these supplies).

Bishop Jacobs, clergy and diocesan staff visited every shelter to provide pastoral care and disaster relief. Supplies for the shelters were delivered as shelter needs were assessed and, for one shelter, \$1,000 of supplies were purchased by staff under Bishop Jacob's direction and through a donation. Hygiene kits sent to CCHT (by CCUSA from Church World Services) were distributed to every shelter. The CCHT shelter kits, always requested by shelter managers, were once again distributed during these storms. The kits contain diapers, hygiene supplies, a first aid kit, flashlights, coloring books and crayons, cups, plates, utensils, etc. Orders have been placed through Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) for delivery of additional relief supplies.

\$10,000 of gas cards were purchased with a CCUSA grant and were distributed in emergency cases to help people with relocation costs. After Gustav a shelter manager called to say that the last 10 people in the shelter could return home if only they had gas money. Ten gas cards of \$50 each were delivered within the hour. Over 50 of the cards have been given to the priest and sisters working in our Hispanic ministry and these were used to help the immigrant Hispanic community.

On Sept. 4, St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Hattiesburg, MS, (USM's Student Center) sent down a rental trailer filled with hand sanitizers, diapers, hygiene products, food and assorted supplies.

Hurricane Ike

After Hurricane Ike hit the diocese on September 12, Catholic Charities Houma-Thibodaux staff, diocesan staff and clergy and Mt. 25 parish volunteers distributed 3,000 clean up kits purchased by Catholic Charities Houma-Thibodaux, 3,600 Red Cross clean up kits, 100 donated clean up kits from another diocese, 72,512 cans or bottles of water, 11,366 hot meals provided by the Salvation Army, and two 18 wheelers of food donated by Entergy. Using the donated food, Mt. 25 volunteers have served 2,000 hot meals to date for the people of Dulac. Over 9,500 volunteer hours have been donated through the Mt. 25 program.

The following accounts detail these efforts:

Through a donation by Buquet Distributing, 18,000 cans of water were delivered to St. Joseph Church in Chauvin on September 11 for people to take as they evacuated at the approach of Hurricane Ike, which hit on September 12.

Following Hurricane Ike's flooding on Friday, September 12, CCHT delivered 500 clean up kits to St. Ann Church in Bourg (Saturday) and 14,400 cans of water (again through Buquet Distributing) to serve Montegut, Grand Bois, Pointe-aux-Chenes and Isle de Jean Charles; 100 CCHT kits to the Knights of Columbus Hall in Pointe-aux-Chenes (Sept 15 – wading through the flood water) and 9,600 cans of water and CCHT coordinated the delivery of an additional 400 Red Cross clean up kits; 500 CCHT clean up kits to St. Joseph Church in Chauvin (Sept 16), 30 clean up kits were delivered to Fr. Nelson working in Hispanic ministry to assist the immigrant Hispanic community and an additional 500 Red Cross clean up kits on September 19; 100 CCHT clean up kits to the Knights of Columbus Hall in Dulac on Shrimpers Row (Sept 16) and 24,000 cans of water plus an additional 400 Red Cross kits on September 18. On September 16, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Slidell delivered 288 cases of water to Catholic Community Center in Galliano for distribution. On Sept 17, volunteers at Catholic Community Center assembled and began distributing 100 clean up kits donated and delivered by Offshore Liftboats, LLC. Another 400 CCHT clean up kits were delivered to St. Joseph Church in Chauvin on Sept 17 and 200 CCHT clean up kits to the KC Hall in Dulac on September 17. St. Ann Church received additional clean up supplies on September 17 from CCUSA sources in Baton Rouge and St. Lucy Church in Houma received 27 clean up kits from CCHT. On September 18 CCHT delivered 200 CCHT clean up kits to Holy Rosary Church in Houma and on September 20 CCHT coordinated the delivery of an additional 200 Red Cross clean up kits. Again, Mt. 25 volunteers distributed all supplies. Sacred Heart Church in Montegut received 100 CCHT clean up kits on September 18 and an additional 300 Red Cross clean up kits on September 20 that were distributed by Mt. 25 volunteers. Another 200 CCHT clean up kits were delivered to the Knights of Columbus Hall in Pointe-aux-Chenes on September 18. CCHT delivered 600 clean up kits to Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in Golden Meadow on September 19 for distribution by Mt. 25 volunteers for the South Lafourche area. On September 20, CCHT coordinated the delivery of 500 Red Cross clean up kits to St. Eloi Church on Bayou Dularge and these were distributed by Mt. 25 volunteers, 200 more Red Cross kits to Holy Rosary Church in Houma, 300 Red Cross kits to Sacred Heart Church in Montegut and 500 more Red Cross clean up kits to St. Joseph Church in Chauvin. On Sunday September 21, an

additional 300 Red Cross clean up kits were delivered to the Mt. 25 volunteers at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Pointe-aux-Chenes.

The kits are distributed at each site by Mt. 25 volunteers. The CCHT clean up kit consists of a medium duty mop, broom, 3.5 gallon heavy plastic bucket, 2 large sponges, three sets of latex gloves, one gallon of bleach and one gallon of pine oil disinfectant. In some areas we have also included shovels and push squeegees. CCHT clean up kits were the first delivered to each community; people always return home as soon as possible to clean up before the odors and mold set in. It generally takes about a week for the national NGOs to arrive with their cleaning kits so CCHT fills the gap so that people can start working to clean their homes immediately.

On September 10, St. Luke Parish held a community outreach meeting to inform the community of resources available for assistance and worked in the following days to make an assessment of the needs of families and sought resources to assist and distributed need supplies at the Community Center.

Additionally through our partnership with the Salvation Army, approximately 5,000 hot meals have been served by Mt. 25 volunteers from Sunday, September 14 through September 18 at St. Ann Church in Bourg (and 100 meals are delivered by Mt. 25 volunteers to homebound families), 4,000 meals since Monday September 15 at St. Joseph Church in Chauvin, 566 meals were served Tuesday at the KC Hall in Dulac and 1,800 on Wednesday and Thursday. Apparently we arrived in Dulac before the residents. CCHT was the first agency on the scene with our clean-up kits and the Salvation Army followed the next day with hot meals.

St. Bernadette Church Mt. 25 volunteers assisted in Chauvin and Bourg during the week and Maria Immacolata and Holy Rosary Parish Mt. 25 volunteers helped as well. Additional parishes are offering the services of their Mt. 25 volunteers.

St. Bridget Church Mt. 25 volunteers adopted the Schriever shelter and Maria Immacolata Mt. 25 volunteers are helping at Houma Junior High. Our Lady of the Rosary Church Mt. 25 volunteers in Larose have adopted the Larose Civic Center shelter and have provided pillows, blankets, clothing and have also provided laundry services. Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in Golden Meadow and Sacred Heart Church in Morgan City have hosted food stamp and National Guard distributions. Holy Savior in Lockport's Mt. 25 volunteers collected items to make 65 cleaning kits, which the volunteers delivered to Montegut on September 20th. St. Charles Borromeo has organized its Mt. 25 volunteers to assist families in the community with debris and yard clean up and continues to seek volunteers in the hope of partnering with other parishes in need. On September 20, St. Lucy Parish delivered clean up kits and helped to clean the homes of 27 families.

Catholic Community Center in Galliano opened daily to assist with clothing needs and to distribute relief supplies stored in the warehouse renovated with a CCUSA Hurricane Katrina/Rita grant.

Beginning on September 17, CCHT began assisting in the coordination of the feeding and relief supplies distributions of the Red Cross and Salvation Army, working closely with both agencies to direct efforts to the communities most in need.

On September 18, escorted by CCHT staff, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Slidell and students delivered a truckload of supplies collected by the Parish, Pope John Paul II High School, Salmen High School and Our Lady of Lourdes School to the KC Hall in Dulac.

Pastoral Center staff assisted with Emergency Food Stamp distributions in Houma and Morgan City through the Mt. 25 program.

CCHT staff met with church clergy and civil parish staff and officials from Thibodaux, South Lafourche and Grand Isle to assess the on-going needs of those communities. CCHT staff also worked with Houma officials to respond to the needs of the people who flooded in the City of Houma.

On 20 hours notice, CCHT and the Dulac Knights of Columbus, with the assistance of 25 nursing students from L. E. Fletcher Technical Community College and volunteers from Maria Immacolata Parish, managed the transfer of two 18-wheeler refrigerator trailers full of food from departing Entergy line crews to the relief efforts at the KC Hall in Dulac and local food banks. The food was transferred to a refrigerated truck donated by a local fish processing company and is being used to feed flood victims from Shrimpers Row in Dulac through the KC Hall in Dulac (beginning September 19 and continuing through September 23 and beyond, volunteers prepared 400 meals daily). The KC Hall in Dulac also received a shipment of relief supplies, including much needed baby care items, from CCUSA on September 18.

Using disaster funds, the diocesan Hispanic ministry, following a CCHT request, bought hot meals for 100 mostly Hispanic laborers who came from out of state to work for a contractor who has not delivered on the work promised and left the workers in tents to fend for themselves. CCHT arranged for reporters to visit the workers and located better housing for them, though the company refused to move the workers.

On September 20, over twenty volunteers from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Slidell cooked 2,200 dinners at St. Joseph Church in Chauvin for the community and donated and distributed cleaning supplies and paper products. Also, 500 Red Cross clean up kits were distributed to families by Mt 25 volunteers.

On September 24, Mt. 25 volunteers from Holy Savior Church in Lockport cooked and served meals to families in Montegut. On September 26th, twelve volunteers from Nativity BVM Catholic Church in Biloxi MS traveled to St. Charles Borromeo in Point-Aux-Chenes bringing with them three trailers filled with books, toiletries, medical supplies, baby supplies, baby milk, food, paper products and children's books and toys. The group prepared and served hot meals to families throughout the day.

On September 27, a group of residents from Metairie who were affected by Hurricane Katrina, prepared 150 hot meals for families at St. Charles Borromeo in Point-Aux-Chenes and delivered meals to the Dumas Auditorium Shelter.

On September 28 a team of Mt. 25 volunteers from CCHT and Central Catholic High School participated in a volunteer work day cleaning the homes of two disaster victims doing such jobs as mopping floors, cleaning walls, dismantling a damaged shed and cleaning dishes and blinds. Future workdays are planned.

On September 26, a CCHT staff member drove 1,008 bottles of bleach donated by Vince Cannata to the bayou communities. The donation was split evenly between St. Charles PAC, Sacred Heart Montegut, the KC home in Dulac, and the Dularge fire station.

On September 27, volunteers from Central Catholic High School in Morgan City participated in a Matthew 25 Workday. They washed walls, mopped floors, and did dishes in a Theriot home that had flooded, and washed Venetian blinds and took apart a damaged shed at the home of elderly Annunziata parishioners.

Throughout October and November the Matthew 25 program focused on recruiting and assigning parish volunteers to families in need of help with debris clean up. Parishes were visited weekly to check on the needs of their communities. In November Cabrini High School brought 40 volunteers to gut a trailer in Lockport through the Mt. 25 program. The Mt. 25 staff worked one weekend in Montegut cleaning debris for an elderly couple and painting a home in Dulac for a pastoral center employee. CCHT staff also assisted the pastor fixing the parish graveyard on Grande Isle. On another weekend the staff worked in Chauvin to clean a yard for a disabled woman.

We continue to participate in Bayou Area Readiness and Recovery (BARR), the community coordinating and planning group. We are sponsoring four additional LA LIFT hurricane-ready houses through TRAC to bring the total to nine LA LIFT houses that we have sponsored. Throughout 2009 and 2010 we will continue to make individual grants for elevators (i.e. outside lifts), flood insurance premiums and home elevations and will account for these in a separate report. Between October 2008 - August 2009 we have installed 26 elevators, made 9 flood insurance premium grants and helped 4 additional families with other special case needs.

We publish a separate financial disaster income and spending report available on our web site.