

Katrina Relief and Referral Efforts

The trauma for the children of Katrina and Rita was enormous. According to a mental health screening of 8,000 affected children following the hurricane, 16 percent had relatives or friends injured, 12 percent had relatives or friends who died, 22 percent were separated from their pets and 34 percent were separated from their primary caregivers at some point. In the spring of 2008, two and a half years later, some families in Louisiana and Mississippi remain dislocated in FEMA trailers or other temporary housing and experience problems with employment and health and mental health care.

In Mississippi, CDF's Southern Regional Office sprang into action when the extent of the hurricanes' devastation on families became clear.

- ***Hurricane Katrina Resource and Referral Services*** currently has a case load of 250 families who relocated to the Jackson, Mississippi area as a result of the hurricanes. CDF-SRO staff members help them find resources to meet their needs for clothing, employment, healthcare, health insurance, housing, legal assistance, mental health, prescriptions, transportation, utility bill payments and other needs.
- ***CDF Freedom Schools® Katrina Project*** expands CDF's 35-year legacy of work for the most vulnerable children and families. Seizing the opportunity to offer hope, lessons and empowerment to children during a very frightening time in their lives, the *CDF Freedom Schools Katrina Project* partnered with public school districts, churches, community organizations and colleges in Mississippi and Arkansas during the 2005-2006 school year to provide after-school programming for up to 700 children who are Hurricane Katrina or Rita survivors. The project also offered employment through stipends for up to 77 college students, some of whom were Katrina survivors. One *CDF Freedom Schools* site in Jackson and another CDF-SRO-sponsored *CDF Freedom Schools* site in New Orleans continue to serve children.
- ***Feed the Children School Supply Donation*** received, sorted and distributed 30 pallets of school supplies to 300 classrooms in school districts that received displaced children. Additional supplies were distributed to individual needy families.
- ***Christmas Dinner and Toys*** celebrated Christmas 2005 with over 1,200 needy families and gave ample toys for over 600 children. As a result of the celebration, CDF received new applicants in need of resource and referral services and enrolled additional children in the after-school *CDF Freedom Schools* program. For Christmas 2006, children affected by Katrina and Rita received gift cards from Wal-Mart.
- ***Coats and School Uniforms*** became a pressing need for children who fled Katrina in the summertime and lost all their clothing in the flood. With the help of grants, CDF gave coats to 240 children and two sets of uniforms for 20 children.
- ***Outings for Affected Young People*** CDF-Mississippi provided transportation for students from Tougaloo College and Jackson State University to participate in an NBA Cares event during the February 2008 NBA All-Star game in New Orleans. They worked with NBA players and others to help people still struggling to restore their homes.

"I have made many trips home to New Orleans and most of them were due to family hardships. However, this was a special trip for me because I was going to give back to those who have and continue to be affected by the aftermaths of Katrina. As a New Orleans native, I want to say thank you to the Children's Defense Fund and NBA Cares for allowing me to attend such a wonderful and inspirational event."

--participant Andre Whittington



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