



# National Association for State Community Services Programs

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## The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network is a First Responder: Assisting Hurricane Katrina Evacuees

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### Overview

Described as “a humanitarian crisis on a scale unseen in the United States since the Great Depression,” Hurricane Katrina caused an estimated \$71 to \$130 billion in major damage to the coastal regions of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama and an estimated death toll of over 1,000. Moreover, it caused the displacement of over a million people.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Due to the destruction made by Hurricane Katrina, the federal government made disaster declarations that covered 90,000 square miles of the U.S., or an area almost the size of the United Kingdom, and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff described the aftermath as “probably the worst catastrophe, or set of catastrophes in the country's history.”<sup>2</sup>

With nation-wide and county-wide coverage, and a history of effective and efficient service provision, Community Action Agencies (CAAs) were able to respond with speed and flexibility to the needs of Hurricane Katrina evacuees. CAAs in all of the affected areas, and beyond, provided immediate assistance while making plans to provide the long-term assistance they knew evacuees would need.

### Community Action Agencies Respond

The Community Services Network was born at the enactment of the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964. This statute's aim was to eliminate the causes and consequences of poverty in the United States. To accomplish this goal, the Act established Community Action Agencies (CAAs), which are community-based anti-poverty agencies. In 1981, the program evolved to a block grant entitled the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). The federal Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Office of Community Services (OCS) allocates CSBG funds to the states who in turn administer the CSBG to a network of CAAs. These agencies, which are the core of the Community Services Network, work to alleviate poverty on a community level.

Today, the Community Services Network is comprised of nearly 1,100 local, private, non-profit and public agencies that work to alleviate poverty and empower low-income families in communities throughout the United States. Most of these agencies are CAAs created through the EOA of 1964. The balance, included under the Community Services Block Grant, follow similar guidelines for structure

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and service. CAAs currently serve over 16 million low-income people yearly in 99 percent of the nation's counties.

Uniquely positioned throughout communities in the United States, after Katrina, the CSBG Network quickly mobilized to provide immediate assistance to the evacuees. This immediate assistance included, but was not limited to, transportation, food, medical check-ups, housing, utility deposits, job placement, and clothing. State CSBG offices and CAAs across the country coordinated their relief efforts with other agencies providing disaster relief assistance such as FEMA, Red Cross, and other faith-based and community-based organizations.

The CSBG Network has also positioned itself to provide the long-term assistance evacuees will need as they relocate and re-establish themselves. CAAs in nearly all states have created a formal CSBG self-sufficiency, family development, and case management program for a limited number of participants. These Family Development or Self-Sufficiency programs offer a continuum of services to assist families in becoming more financially independent. They generally include a comprehensive, case management approach to selecting and offering supportive services that promote, empower and nurture the individuals and families seeking economic self-sufficiency. At a minimum, they include the following elements:

- A comprehensive assessment of the issues facing the family or family members and of the resources the family brings to address these issues;
- A written plan for becoming more financially independent and self-supporting;
- A comprehensive mix of services that are selected to help the participant implement the plan;
- Professional staff members who are flexible and can establish trusting, long-term relationships with program participants; and
- A formal methodology used to track and evaluate progress as well as to adjust the plan as needed.

To date, the nationwide Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network has assisted over 355,000 evacuees by providing them with services ranging from hot meals to education, employment, and permanent housing. A sampling of services being provided by the CSBG Network may be found in the narratives below.

### **The Louisiana CSBG Network's Response**

After Katrina, Louisiana (LA) Community Action Agencies immediately began efforts to help its residents regain normalcy and return home. CAAs joined in the relief efforts by providing services that included but was not limited to: clothing, personal items, housing assistance, utility and rental assistance, food distribution, medical and prescription drugs assistance, cash assistance (in the form of vouchers), bus tickets, furniture, home appliances, and countless hours of volunteer work. In addition, staff of the CAAs opened their homes to the evacuees for days, weeks, and months.

In an effort to help in the recovery efforts at the state level, the Louisiana Department of Labor's Community Services Block Grant Office provided discretionary funds to several CAAs to help meet the needs of the Katrina Rita evacuees. Staff at the state level

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also opened their homes to evacuees and volunteered time and services to help in the recovery efforts.

Since Hurricane Katrina also devastated the LA job market, the state was overwhelmed with unemployment insurance (UI) claims. Therefore, CAAs joined with their One-Stop partners and assisted the evacuees in filing UI claims with the Louisiana Department of Labor. State CSBG staff also assisted with helping evacuees complete UI claims.

Despite the devastation incurred by the Louisiana CSBG Network, they were able to assist over 81,000 evacuees. The LA state Community Services Block Grant office continues to support the efforts of the Community Action Agencies as they strive each day to provide as many of the needed services as possible, with the limited funds available, to help the evacuees and eligible individuals and families in their communities.

### **The Florida CSBG Network's Response**

The Florida Community Assistance Section of the Division of Housing and Community Development released \$100,000 in CSBG funds for farm worker assistance. In addition, the Florida State Community Assistance Section released the 2% of LIHEAP funds that must be held in a "Weather Related/Supply Shortage" category. These funds are specifically for emergency events. The funds allow for a higher benefit to applicants.

Many members of the Florida CSBG Network assisted evacuees. For instance, Palm Beach County Community Action used LIHEAP funds to pay for electric deposits for families who re-located to Florida and CSBG funds to do the same for water utility deposits. The local Red Cross Chapter took walk-in clients and provided vouchers for hotels, food, clothing, and medicine. Community Action staff is making sure that families in need are aware of all of the local resources. Efforts are being coordinated on a county-wide basis by the Center for Information and Crisis -211- the countywide information and referral line. Palm Beach County Community Action is identifying available housing for families who plan to stay in Palm Beach County.

### **The Rhode Island CSBG Network's Response**

Rhode Island received a total of approximately 200 evacuees. Rhode Island provided housing in the form of newly renovated duplexes along with a mobile one stop resource center which is staffed by state department staff along with Red Cross, FEMA and other social, mental and health services. The housing is located in the East Bay Community Action service area and with the support of Rhode Island Community Action Agencies from across the state the resource center is fully staffed. East Bay Community Action interviewed all evacuees to determine what services, beyond the immediate, they need and to assess whether they or a neighboring CAA can provide the assistance needed including medical, Head Start, mental health and employment services.

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## The Arkansas CSBG Network's Response

On August 30th, Rose Adams, Executive Director of the Arkansas CAA Association, received the following email from St. Mary CAA, based in Franklin, Louisiana (LA) on Highway 90 southwest of New Orleans, addressed to the Office of Human Concern, Inc. (OHC), a Community Action Agency (CAA) in Arkansas: *“St. Mary CAA is serving as an Emergency Evaluations Coordinating Agency. We are asking CAAs in the Network to assist us with Pampers, formula, cleaning supplies, bedding for the people who are displaced and will probably not be able to return home for months. Please get the word out to the network. We need all the help we can get.”*

The OHC leadership met with the OHC fundraiser, Kim Porter, to discuss ways to organize a relief effort for the Franklin, LA CAA. Kim Porter arranged for two trailers, one at Northwest Arkansas Mall and the other at the Frisco Mall in Rogers, to be made available. Within a day the trailers were in position. Staff and volunteers staffed the two collection points most of Labor Day weekend. Public Service Announcements then went out to the public and the OHC relief effort was listed in the Morning News. Also, Arvest Bank set up a donation account and listed OHC on their website as a place to donate for the relief effort.

Initially, OHC tried to collect only the items requested from Louisiana. But this quickly became problematic as OHC realized that the public at large saw the relief effort from a much broader perspective. Even before the Labor Day weekend, evacuees were traveling into Northwest Arkansas. Newspapers began listing needs of the newly opened camps and the public sought out the closest collection point they could find.

Clothes began to pile up, but demand from the newly established camps in Arkansas and the clothes OHC had collected met evacuee camp needs. Other items came in and if they couldn't be used for Louisiana, they were given to evacuee camps and/or other local relief efforts. For example, three beds that a local bed store donated were turned over to the St. Theodore Episcopal Church of Bella Vista to furnish three apartments for evacuee families.

OHC was now operating as a facilitator of goods and services for the relief effort. Additional housing was offered. Everyone wanted to help. OHC learned in a very short 10 days that OHC's ability to respond to crises was an invaluable tool for local government and for the public. By initially working with its partners, OHC was able to set up a relief effort within 24 hours. More importantly, OHC assisted other entities to engage in the relief effort. As cited before, eight agencies stepped up to help. Lowell Baptist Church led the charge. Not only did the church man the trailer in Rogers, they also paid for a 26 foot van to haul goods south, provided fuel money for two vans and one tractor trailer rig and drivers for one van.

On September 15th, two OHC vans arrived at Franklin, LA. One van was unloaded at Franklin and the second one directed to Smile CAA in Lafayette, LA (Hwy 10). When the van arrived at Smile CAA (Iberia, Lafayette, St. Martin Parish), they were greeted with excitement, as they had not been able to receive relief goods. The Tractor-trailer then went on to Haynesville, LA to Claiborne Parish Police Jury Office of Community Service now located in Homer, LA (Northern Louisiana).

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## The Minnesota CSBG Network's Response

People who have been displaced by hurricane Katrina in Minnesota (MN) received a *free*, personal voice mail box with a toll-free contact number from Twin Cities Community Voice Mail. Each person seeking a voice mail box received an individual, private extension from a toll-free 1-800-number telephone system. Those using the system can leave messages and record announcements, updating concerned callers on their location and status. They also can receive messages from loved ones. The survivors of hurricane Katrina used their numbers as an important step toward re-establishing bonds with family and friends.

Twin Cities Community Voice Mail (TCCVM) has 11 years of providing this reliable means of communication to acquire housing, jobs, and health care. In those 11 years, over 39,000 people in crisis across the state of Minnesota have received free, personal voice mail numbers from TCCVM.

This initiative by TCCVM in MN is partially funded by the MN CSBG office and is part of a national effort of community voice mail programs located in 37 U.S. cities. Nationally, 80,000 voice mail numbers will be available with technology and software provided by the Cisco Systems Foundation, the SBC Foundation, and Microsoft and national coordination with the American Red Cross.

## The Mississippi CSBG Network's Response

The Gulf Coast CAA, Inc. in Mississippi completed minor repairs to approximately 67 homes during the week of October 23-31, 2005 and November 27- December 7, 2005 . The area where the agency chose to focus the project is predominately low-income and composed of 250 homes that sustained flooding and wind damage. This area is Forest Heights subdivision, also known as "Turnkey". The elderly, disabled and those families having children below the age of 12 were the primary focus. In observance of Weatherization month, they also targeted one or two homes for full weatherization measures.

The project was a collaborative effort with the Mississippi Department of Human Services, the Baptist Men's Group from North Carolina, the Victory Temple Men's Group from Jackson, Mississippi, statewide CAA weatherization coordinators and contractors, and other volunteers. During phase one, there were five crews consisting of five or more workers at each site. Gulf Coast CAA's two weatherization contractors and inspector acted as lead coordinators. Phase two consisted of ten (10) contractor crews and nine (9) weatherization coordinators from across the state, which were assigned five homes each to complete in a ten day time period.

### **Mississippi Association of Community Action Agencies (MACAA):**

From the Community Action network alone, Mississippi (MS) received \$114,403.37, and 100% of it went directly to assist those affected by the hurricane. Also, immediately following the storm, a central warehouse was set up by MACAA to receive and distribute donated items. Approximately ten truck/bus loads of items were received at the central warehouse and distributed throughout the state.

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In addition, approximately six truckloads of donated items were coordinated and delivered directly to the areas most affected. MS CAAs also served as host sites for volunteers from both in-state and out-of-state that assisted with debris removal, client applications and in-take as well as distribution of food and clothing. MACAA was also instrumental in providing linkages between municipalities outside of the state and locally to foster “adopted cities” or sister cities” relationships particularly for hardest hit towns such as Laurel, Moss Point, Pascagoula, and Pass Christian.

As part of the long-term recovery and rebuilding process, MS CAAs will serve as lead organizations in providing not only emergency needs such as food, clothing and shelter but, also long-term services such as case management, employment assistance, permanent housing, child care and family development, transportation assistance, and asset-building assistance. Most importantly, MS CAAs are serving as a clearinghouse for survivors to receive important information and referral services.

### **The Texas CSBG Network’s Response**

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) took an active and early role in the State’s response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Along with the Workforce Commission and Department of Public Safety, TDHCA was the first state agency working at the Astrodome as buses from the Louisiana Superdome were rolling into Houston and delivering evacuees.

At these disaster centers, staff worked with local, state, federal and private housing providers in whatever capacity was needed. Staff with expertise with the federal Section 8 program helped fill out paperwork. Some staff provided technical assistance regarding TDHCA resources – including an online database of apartment vacancies. Some staff helped with client intake. Like others working at the disaster centers, TDHCA staff worked weekends and long hours.

As of October 6, the disaster centers had moved 41,500 registered evacuees from shelters to other living accommodations as follows: 5,000 in San Antonio; 500 in El Paso; 4,000 in Austin; 28,000 in Houston; and 4,000 in Dallas.

Immediately after evacuees arrived in Texas, TDHCA began working with Governor Rick Perry’s office to obtain waivers from the IRS that would allow rental developments financed through the Housing Tax Credit Program and Private Activity Bonds to house people displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. To help property owners through the maze of federal regulations, TDHCA also created a web page that provided necessary forms and notices regarding IRS and HUD waivers. TDHCA provided staffing at disaster response centers in six cities at a total of nine sites, beginning with Houston, to place disaster evacuees in housing. Besides Houston, TDHCA sent staff to Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, Tyler and El Paso.

The State of Texas also provided \$750,000 in Community Services Block Grant discretionary funds to fifteen CSBG Network organizations to provide disaster relief to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Below is a summary of some of their relief efforts:

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### **Gulf Coast Community Services Association (GCCSA)**

The service delivery area where hurricane assistance was provided by the GCCSA was City of Houston and Harris County. To date, a total of **59,800 persons** have been assisted. GCCSA was one of the first agencies in Houston to assign staff to the Greater Houston Area Disaster Recovery Center to assist with intake of Katrina evacuees. The Disaster Recovery Center continues to be operational and GCCSA continues to have a staff representative at the Disaster Recovery Center to inform evacuees of GCCSA services and to direct persons to the GCCSA emergency distribution center. Relief efforts by GCCSA include:

- Worked with Operation Get Employed to provide employment skills such as resume writing, interviewing skills, job retention, and job placement. Job referrals are also made to certain vendors who have agreed to accept hurricane evacuees that have passed certain placement tests. GCCSA has established seven agreements with vendors to accept evacuees as employees. GCCSA has conducted two (2) to date and plan to conduct others.
- Worked with Boy Scout Troop #419 to coordinate a drive to collect baby food, paper goods, diapers, clothing, and personal hygiene products.
- Received a donation of \$40,000 worth of food, clothes and toys from a group of Nebraskan citizens who drove a 24 foot trailer to Houston with the donated items.
- Coordinated a benefit Golf Tournament with Herman Park Golf Course to raise funds for Katrina evacuees.
- Coordinated a partnership with seven (7) other literacy providers to reach evacuees through outreach efforts aimed at informing evacuees of the literacy services available to them from these partners.
- Coordinated housing seminars on helping persons “in limbo” who have no jobs and are about to lose their homes. They are providing pre-foreclosure, prevention workshops and connecting people with housing resources.
- Worked with the Head Start program to place a representative at the Disaster Recovery Center who works with parents and children in the Head Start program.
- Initiated a signed contract with the Food Bank as part of the Good Neighbor Program to provide additional food, free of charge, to the GCCSA to make available to Katrina evacuees.
- Negotiated a youth program that will become operational this spring which will work with youth from area high schools to provide corporate field trips to area businesses to promote interest in post secondary education and employment. GCCSA will be targeting youth that have moved to Houston as evacuees.

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GCCSA has coordinated its efforts with the following area partners: Hilton Furniture-furniture for evacuees, Red Cross, Salvation Army, East End Life Center-host site for job fairs, HUD, Disaster Relief Center-operated through donations of food and clothing from the public, churches, and Buda Center-provided water for the evacuees.

**Dallas Urban League (DUL).**

The service delivery for hurricane assistance provided by DUL is Dallas County. CSBG funds are being used to provide emergency services such as rent and utilities, only in conjunction with or to support employment. The services provided to support employment include GED classes, computer classes, and referrals to other service providers. These services are stop gap services which support evacuees that already have some type of basic assistance either from FEMA or insurance. A total of **13,568 persons** have been assisted. DUL has hired three of the evacuees as full time employees. One of these is currently working as a caseworker assisting other evacuees.

Service providers with which DUL coordinates services include: Catholic Charities for funding to purchase furniture and appliances; Salvation Army, Red Cross, and area churches. DUL has also received funding from Essence Magazine, Freddie MAC, and National Urban League to assist persons from other areas outside of Dallas County,

**City of Fort Worth – Community Services Department**

The service delivery for hurricane relief assistance was limited to Tarrant County, with concentration in the City of Fort Worth and some services in the City of Arlington.

The CSBG funds provided to the City of Fort Worth were used to purchase Wal-Mart Cards, which allowed the clients to purchase emergency food, emergency toiletries, undergarments, outerwear, etc. Other CSBG funds were used to assist clients with first month's rent, rent and utility deposits, gasoline vouchers, and bus passes to enable clients to participate in case management sessions and medical/social services appointments. A total of **44,792 persons** have been assisted.

Primary collaborative partner's effort by the City of Fort Worth was its involvement with 20 or so organizations who are members of the VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters). This group of Tarrant County organizations met on a weekly basis to coordinate its disaster assistance efforts and to deal with special cases/needs requiring close collaboration. Members included the City of Fort Worth, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, and Tarrant County Department of Human Services.

**Galveston County Community Action Council, Inc.**

The service delivery area for hurricane assistance was concentrated in Galveston County and Brazoria County. The CSBG funds provided to the Galveston County Community Action Council, Inc. were used to purchase gift cards for the purchase of food, clothing, household items, diapers/formula, and hygiene items. CSBG funds were also used for gasoline vouchers and housing/rental assistance. A total of **1,286 persons** have been assisted.

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Collaboration efforts involving the Galveston County Community Action Council, Inc. included direct coordination with the American Red Cross, the “Jesse Tree” (a social service organization with a medical assistance team), the Shiloh AME Church, and the Moody United Methodist Church. Coordination with the American Red Cross consisted of client referral back and forth in order to identify the proper resources and organizations to meet emergency needs. Coordination with the “Jesse Tree” included emphasis for location of housing, rental/utility deposit arrangements, furniture donations, and acquisition of medical equipment such as wheel chairs.

**Economic Opportunities Advancement Corporation of Planning Region XI (EOAC Waco)**

The service delivery area where hurricane assistance was provided by EOAC Waco was Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone, and McLennan counties. Relief efforts were coordinated with the City of Hopkins, HUD, Red Cross, and local churches. A total of **1,400 persons** have been assisted.

A one-stop-shop was set up at the local convention center in the city of Waco and in other counties. Services were coordinated with the local FEMA office, Red Cross, and the City of Waco. The local FEMA-United Way was very helpful in direction and guidance in getting out information and assisting the city in establishing an emergency management plan.

Other relief efforts were coordinated with local churches. Church volunteers and EOAC Waco staff coordinated and cleaned thirteen apartment units to prepare them for evacuees to occupy. EOAC coordinated with local hotels and motels for temporary shelter. Local colleges solicited donations and furniture was donated by Sedberry Furniture and Kirkpatrick and Witt Furniture. Wal-Mart donated paper goods and cleaning supplies.

**Tri-County Community Action, Inc.**

The service delivery for hurricane assistance by the Tri-County Community Action, Inc. was concentrated in the counties of Tyler, Shelby, and Panola counties. CSBG funds were used for the provision of food, school supplies, auto gasoline, and shelter, which included hotel expense reimbursement. A total of **2,044 persons** have been assisted.

The primary collaborative partner for the disaster relief assistance was the First Baptist Church in Center, Texas in Shelby County. The Church is considered a family life center organized with an emergency relief plan.

**Northeast Texas Opportunities (NETO)**

The service delivery area where hurricane assistance was provided by NETO was Franklin, Hopkins, and Lamar counties. CSBG funds were used for the provision of food, clothing, and medical assistance. Relief efforts were coordinated with the City of Hopkins, HUD, Red Cross, and local churches. A total of **406 persons** have been assisted.

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### **Brazos Valley Community Action Agency, Inc. (BVCAA)**

The service delivery area for hurricane assistance provided by BVCAA include Brazos, Burleson, Waller, Grimes, Liberty, Chambers, Walker, and Leon counties. CSBG funds were used for rent, gift cards from local stores for gas, and gift cards for the purchase of gasoline, food, and household items. A total of **1,152 persons** have been assisted.

Primary collaborative partners for the disaster relief assistance by BVCAA were the United Way; USDA-Rural Development for housing; Project Unity for housing, clothing and food; Indigent Health Care for gift cards for medications; assisted government entities from various cities with intake process for assistance. BVCAA is also working with a local organization who has received a National Emergency Grant to provide evacuees with temporary jobs.

### **Greater East Texas Community Action Program (GETCAP)**

The service delivery area where hurricane assistance was provided by the GETCAP was Angelina, Nacogdoches, Polk, San Jacinto, Trinity, Smith and Gregg counties. CSBG funds were used to purchase gift cards for clothing, household items, food, and gasoline. Relief efforts were coordinated with the United Methodist Church, Love Inc., United Way, and Path. Staff conducted the intake for agencies providing services to evacuees. GETCAP also provided transportation to evacuees at three shelters to take them to agencies to apply for food stamps and obtain medical assistance.

### **City of San Antonio – Department of Community Initiatives, Community Action Division (CAD)**

The service delivery area for hurricane assistance provided by San Antonio is Bexar County. CSBG and other City staff were assigned to conduct intake at the Disaster Relief Centers. CSBG funds were used to purchase bedding, furniture, and personal hygiene kits for evacuees. The City of San Antonio also leveraged other funds. To date, a total of **38,836 persons** have been assisted. Individuals continue to be assisted by the City of San Antonio CAD. The primary collaboration partners for the disaster relief assistance were various City of San Antonio Departments, Bexar County, were Red Cross, FEMA, United Way; Bexar County, local churches, and a wide array of non-profit organizations. The City of San Antonio has contracted with non-profits to continue provide case management services to Hurricane Katrina evacuees. CAD is also coordinating with HUD to conduct outreach for the Disaster Voucher Program to assist persons from Louisiana who were homeless prior to Katrina.

### **Community Action Committee of Victoria**

The service delivery area for hurricane assistance provided by CAC Victoria was Calhoun, Jackson, Goliad, and Victoria counties. The CSBG funds were used for food, transportation, medications, shelters, and minor car repairs. A total of **1,024 persons** have been assisted.

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The main collaborative partners for the disaster relief assistance by BVCAA were City of Victoria, Red Cross, and Victoria Christian Assistance Ministries. These entities providing disaster relief required evacuees to obtain a referral from CAC Victoria prior to going to the Red Cross.

**Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETXRPC)**

The service delivery area for hurricane assistance, primarily for persons affected by Hurricane Rita, were Jefferson, Hardin, Orange, Newton, Jasper, Tyler and Chambers counties. CSBG funds were used to provide temporary and permanent shelter and transportation; to purchase food, appliances, furniture, and work tools; for emergency repairs to homes; for the purchase of medical supplies; for the payment of tree removal; and, to purchase propane tanks to heat FEMA trailers. In terms of damage, southeast Texas suffered greatly. In one small town, Sabine Pass, only thirteen (13) houses were left standing. **A SETXRPC official stated that “The CSBG funds made available to us was a God send.”** A total of **3,128** persons have been assisted.

The main collaborative partners for the disaster relief assistance by SETXRPC were FEMA Operations Center, Red Cross, United Methodist Committee on Recovery, Lutheran Social Service Disaster group, Christian Aid Ministry, Southern Baptist Men, Jehovah Witness Disaster Assistance Team, Southeast Texas Emergency Relief Fund, the State of Texas Governor’s Office and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

**The New York State CSBG Network’s Response**

Immediately following the disaster, the New York State Department of Community Services (DCS) contacted its CAAs and other eligible entities to determine the extent to which they could assist evacuees. In addition, New York State DCS provided a supplemental grant of \$25,000 to New York State Community Action Agency Association (NYSCAA), from funds set aside for disaster relief, to coordinate the New York State CSBG response to victims of Hurricane Katrina. Through NYSCAA, the membership organization for New York State CAAs, the New York State CSBG Network maintained constant contact with the Gulf States and provided updates on the services they were providing evacuees to New York State government and residents.

**New York State Community Action Agency Association**

NYSCAA worked with its member agencies to collect donations which were sent to the state community action agency associations in the affected region for redistribution to the CAAs there. NYSCAA continues to collect donations for the affected regions and coordinate the efforts of its member agencies to assist evacuees. NYSCAA and its members were able to raise over \$20,000 in cash contributions and almost \$200,000 in needed items. NYSCAA also coordinated

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a “Rhythm and Relief” Benefit Concert that brought together many local bands to raise funds and highlight the relief work of our members. The efforts of a number of member agencies are listed below. To learn more about New York State Hurricane Katrina relief efforts visit: [www.nyscaaonline.org](http://www.nyscaaonline.org) and click on Hurricane Katrina Relief Efforts on the home page. The individual efforts of a number of their member agencies are listed below.

**ACCORD Corporation located in Belmont, NY:**

Accord Corporation’s Community Action Angels program collected donations of cash, gift cards and personal care items at all of its locations. ACCORD collaborated with NYSCAA, the National Community Action Partnership, Allegany County, the United Way, the American Red Cross, Allegany County School Districts, the Friendship House Community Resource Center and Alfred State College.

**Cattaraugus Community Action located in Salamanca, NY:**

Cattaraugus Community Action collected both donations and commodities which were sent to NYSCAA for distribution to the affected areas. Additionally, as the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care lead for Cattaraugus County, they worked with their housing consortium to identify housing unit vacancies and reported those back to HUD as they became available for evacuees. They also worked with the Salvation Army, Red Cross, and two other local churches to identify priority needs and channeled donations to them and to NYSCAA.

**Community Action Organization of Erie County located in Buffalo, NY:**

Community Action of Erie County focused on the evacuees who are relocating to their area. They assigned three case workers to work with these families until they are resettled. These case workers ensured that the relocating families had access to the following services: transitional housing, school entrance, identification card, credit card/bank card, birth certificate and other document recreation services, income stabilization, and social connections. Additionally, they distributed emergency food baskets arranged a \$10,000 cash distribution to 20 families and provided clothing and furniture vouchers for those 17 families totaling \$1,741

**ComLinks located in Malone, NY:**

ComLinks partnered with the local Rotary, which allocated \$10,000.00 to the relief effort and developed a partnership with Rotary International to adopt a community. Additionally, ComLinks sought to send workers to the affected area to assist in the re-building effort and offered several housing units for use by evacuees.

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**Community Action for Greene County, Inc. located in Catskill, NY:**

On Friday, September 16, 2005, Community Action of Greene County held a “tag day” at the Rip Van Winkle Bridge in Catskill from 8 AM – 4 PM. All monies collected were forwarded to NYSCAA for distribution to State Associations in the affected areas. The Bank of Greene County donated space to sort change and bank employees counted and rolled the change. The United Way of Columbia and Greene Counties provided volunteers for the effort.

**CAPC of Jefferson County located in Watertown, NY:**

CAPC continues to be in regular contact with their local American Red Cross Chapter and the other disaster relief agencies in their county. Nine families have relocated to Jefferson County from the Gulf Coast region.

**Lewis County Opportunities located in Lowville, NY:**

Lewis County Opportunities worked with the Lewis County Government to provide assistance to Holmes County Mississippi. Lewis County accepted monetary donations (in excess of \$3,000.00) and 1 ½ truck loads of commodities which were transported to Holmes County, Mississippi by a volunteer driver. Additionally, Lewis County Opportunities employees sought to assist a partner CAP in Louisiana.

**Livingston County Planning Department located in Geneseo, NY:**

Livingston County participated in a cooperative effort with SUNY Geneseo students and local clergy to "adopt" a community impacted by Katrina. Also, a member of the Planning Department staff is one of two County employees who led an effort to collect funds for the Red Cross for Katrina.

**Newburgh Community Action Committee located in Newburgh, NY:**

Newburgh Community Action Committee provided referral service to assist individuals and agencies regarding support available for Katrina victims. They have helped an agency ship medical supplies and have also helped an individual with clothing and bedding. They have also offered their support to the County Department of Social Services office in providing for the relocation of 50 families.

**Niagara Community Action Program, Inc. located in Niagara Falls, NY:**

Niagara Community Action Program conducted the “Four Freedoms Community Awareness Campaign.” The “Four Freedoms” is a series of Norman Rockwell artwork that was first made famous by Franklin Roosevelt in a speech to Congress in 1941. Niagara Community Action offered a limited, collectable edition of prints in two sizes (each with a commemorative stamp) produced on fine art canvas and framed. The cost to purchase the prints are as follows: Master - \$115.00 + \$5.00 shipping; Executive - \$90.00 + \$5.00 shipping; and, a set of four \$320.00 + \$14.00

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shipping. Proceeds from the sales were donated to the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort. Additionally, Niagara Community Action provided a set of prints that were raffled at a Conference in Corning.

**Saratoga County EOC located in Saratoga Springs, NY:**

Saratoga EOC met with businesses and faith based groups in Saratoga to solicit baby items and bedding that could be utilized in the relief effort. They asked churches, businesses, and families to donate any of the following items: diapers, baby wipes, baby powder, and bedding for children and adults. Also, they secured agreements from several businesses and churches to serve as drop off sites for the aforementioned items. Announcements were also made at local churches, and a press release was in the papers.

**Schenectady Community Action located in Schenectady, NY:**

Schenectady Community Action added Hurricane Katrina donation information to its website; collected cash donations that were forwarded to the Louisiana Community Action Association; agreed with the United Way to coordinate the distribution of cash assistance to victims should the need arise; made Head Start slots available for victims should the need arise; and contacted various groups regarding the inventory of available housing.

**Schoharie County Community Action Program, Inc. located in Cobleskill, NY:**

Schoharie County Community Action worked directly with evacuees that were located in their service area. They worked through their Family Development Department to determine what needs the families had and helped to coordinate services for them.

**Pro-Action of Steuben & Yates, Inc. located in Bath, NY:**

Pro-Action of Steuben and Yates Counties partnered with local efforts to collect goods, clothes, baby items, and other needed items. Additionally, Pro-Action's area trucking company volunteered to make trips to deliver the needed items to evacuees as often as trucks could be filled. Pro-Action also connected with the Red Cross to spread the word on directing evacuees to their organization when relocated to any of the counties they serve.

**St. Lawrence County Community Development Program (CDP) located in Canton, NY:**

St. Lawrence County CDP worked in conjunction with a local church to collect clothing; household items; and other needed items for re-distribution to the affected areas. Additionally, they reviewed their inventory of goods at their Neighborhood Centers for items that could be donated. They also met with other community organizations to organize efforts and plan activities.

**Tioga Opportunities Program, Inc.:**

Tioga Opportunities worked with local agencies to collect both cash and goods. They had a temporary storage facility and confirmed arrangements for transport of

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the goods to the affected areas. They also identified seven housing vacancies and contacted the United States Department of Agriculture to be of assistance.

**Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.**

Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.'s Community Action Angels program collected donations as well as personal hygiene and cleaning items for the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort. Approximately \$100 in personal hygiene items were collected and \$7,750 in cash donations were received and sent to NYSCAA. Washington County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. coordinated efforts with all mentioned above, as well as, NYSCAA in participating in this relief effort.

**Wyoming County Community Action**

Community Action Angels (Angel Action), a volunteer membership program of Wyoming County Community Action, is a resource development tool that uses the talents and expertise of community volunteers to bring resources and help to families who need assistance. In response to Hurricane Katrina, Angel Action worked together and raised funds that were sent directly to the affected CAAs in the Gulf Region. While working to raise funds, the Angel Action Volunteer Coordinator learned from the Executive Director of the Louisiana Association of Community Action Partnerships, Inc. that despite their personal loss, staff in the agencies located in the areas most affected by the hurricane were making valiant efforts to take care of the many people that were coming to them for assistance. In an effort to let these staff members know that their thoughts and prayers were with them, the Community Action Angel Membership developed a special card of encouragement for the CAA Gulf Region staff. Two hundred cards were mailed to staff working in CAAs in the most affected areas. They were received with thanks from the staff.

Moreover, after receiving a request for more angel cards, Angel Action created cards especially for the children and relocating families in the Gulf Region. Partnering with Pioneer-Credit Recovery, Inc. they were able to send Hershey's Hugs and Kisses candy bags along with the cards. As a result, 1000 cards and 750 bags of candy were sent to the children and families in Louisiana and the Sacred Heart Parish in Biloxi, Mississippi where so many families were affected. The Community Action Angels are also assisting evacuees who are relocating to their area and have raised over 13,000 dollars to support the long-term assistance these families will need to achieve self-sufficiency.

**Conclusion**

The CSBG Network continues to assist evacuees to recover mentally and physically from the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina. The stories found above are just a sampling of the many types of assistance the national CSBG Network of Community Action Agencies has provided. And, with its mandate being to "reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas," the Network will not only strive to meet the immediate needs of evacuees, but also to aid evacuees in achieving self-sufficiency.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. "Hurricane Katrina." Jan 2006, Online.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane\\_Katrina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Katrina)>

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. "Hurricane Katrina." Jan 2006, Online.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane\\_Katrina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Katrina)>

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