

# LIONS ASSISTANCE FOR HURRICANE VICTIMS

From the website of Lions Clubs International ([www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)):

## What Lions/LCIF Are Doing

---

LCIF has made a US\$200,000 Major Catastrophe Grant to help hurricane victims. LCIF is focusing its short-term relief in three areas:

1. providing shelters with unmet substantial needs such as food, clothing, personal hygiene items and bedding,
2. offering health services such as eyeglass distribution, and
3. meeting needs of Lions camps and facilities housing victims of the disaster.

LCIF also has awarded seven US\$10,000 Emergency Grants for Lions in the affected areas to issue vouchers for food, water and clothing to hurricane victims. Government and civil resources are stretched to the limit in rural areas especially, and Lions are filling in gaps.

"I cannot express my appreciation enough to the Lions who are supporting us in recovering from this disaster," District Governor Robert Andrepont of 8-O wrote in an e-mail to LCIF. "LCIF was very helpful and timely with processing my grant application. I have received e-mails with promises of support and prayer from around the world. I cannot tell you how much we treasure our fellow Lions' thoughts and prayers."

LCIF Chairperson Clement Kusiak has appointed a steering committee of four leading Lions from the four states most affected by the tragedy to serve as liaisons between LCIF, Lions in the disaster areas and Lions who want to help. These four Lions are:

- International Director Robert Eichhorn, 4301 St. Francis Street, Metairie, Louisiana, 70001, 337-237-7169 (temporary phone number), 504-525-7235 (business), 504-455-6951 (home), 504-525-7238, (fax), [execdirector@llef.gs.net](mailto:execdirector@llef.gs.net)
- International Director Howard Jenkins, 850 Mt. Vernon Road, Columbus, Mississippi, 39702, 662-328-2756 (home number and fax), [hjenkins@cablone.net](mailto:hjenkins@cablone.net).
- Past International Director Lowell Bonds, 1808 Hummingbird Lane, Hoover, Alabama, 35226, 205-322-6575 (business), 205-823-4941 (home), 205-328-3612 (fax), [ljbonds@aol.com](mailto:ljbonds@aol.com)
- Past International Director E. Robert Lastinger, 29743 Morwen Place, Wesley Chapel, Florida, 33543, 813-994-9604 (residence), 813-994-0844 (fax), [edbobl@earthlink.net](mailto:edbobl@earthlink.net).

LCIF also has set up a Web-based [Help Link](#) to connect Lions who want to volunteer time or donate goods with Lions in the affected areas who are staffing shelters and are in need of assistance.

Lions in the affected states are feeding people at shelters, providing necessities such as toothbrushes and bedding and collecting funds to buy food and water for those at shelters. Lions from around the United States and as far away as Germany and Thailand are collecting supplies and donating money to LCIF.

Lions are assisting at improvised non-Red Cross shelters that have sprung up. Lions also are helping out at larger venues such as the gym at Louisiana State University in Shreveport, which is holding some 2,000 displaced people. Some Lions have opened shelters in their capacity as a state or government employee. Vice District Governor Dinah Landry of 8-O is housing 500 displaced people in Cameron Parish, where she is head of the Council for Aging.

The Louisiana Lions Children's Camp in Leesville is housing and feeding 114 people who fled north from New Orleans before Katrina hit. Half of them are Lions themselves. Just because they are displaced does not mean they are forgetting about their identity as Lions "They've kept busy. They've cleaned the campgrounds," said Ray Cecil, camp director. "They're refugees who've lost their homes and livelihood but they've been busy the whole time they've been here."

Lions are filling the unmet needs they come across. The Opelousas Club and Carencro Club in Louisiana are helping people get drug prescriptions filled. The Grandlake-Sweetlake Club has helped churches put together packages of necessities for people at shelters.

Vice District Governor Nancey Farr of 8-N in Louisiana toured several shelters to assess the need. She discovered that the Judson Baptist Church in Watson had been converted into an instant maternity ward with 12 babies after agreeing to lend a hand to Woman's Hospital in Baton Rouge. Another church operating a shelter built makeshift wooden showers outside the church and still another church shelter with 700 people was being visited by a doctor who was treating patients with embedded roofing nails. At Faith Family Church in Watson, Farr discovered that 80 people were forced to sleep on pews that were unceremoniously pulled together. Farr arranged for food for the shelter residents and called a judge-friend to recruit young people to unload the trailers.

The ability of Lions in the devastated areas of Mississippi to offer aid to others has been partly limited because of damage to their own homes. "Most of us have to clear debris around our own homes, clean out freezers of spoiled food and take care of other household duties that could not be addressed during the power outages," Raymond Roberts of Brookhaven, Cabinet Secretary of District 30-I, wrote in an e-mail to LCIF. Gas shortages and loss of communication services also has made it difficult to launch a coordinated relief effort, he added. Still, the Brookhaven Lions purchased \$250 worth of paper plates, cups, napkins and toilet paper for two local shelters and gave children at four shelters oversized coloring books it had been selling as a fund-raiser. The Wesson Lions Club has been staffing a shelter at a community college set up for emergency electrical power workers.

Gregory Crapo of Gulfport, Cabinet Secretary for District 30-N, reported to LCIF that "basically [there is] nothing left to this area. Very few homes and businesses survived. The majority of our schools and churches have been destroyed. Many parents are already relocating to get their children into school before it is too late. There are no prospects for jobs because there are no businesses left." Yet Crapo said he and others remain undaunted. "Each day is a little better as power comes back to those buildings that are still standing," he told LCIF. "I know the Lions are coming. We are getting contacts via various means from Lions and clubs all over the U.S. wanting to help. The local Lions are helping individually through the Red Cross and personal volunteering at the hospitals and distribution points."

Lions in Alabama are focusing their efforts on the coastline area where 3,000 homes were destroyed. "Everyone keeps hearing about New Orleans and Mississippi and it's like nothing happened in Alabama. But it did," said Council Chairperson Rick Berry of Enterprise, AL. The Alabama Lions dispatched one of their eye vans to the coast to do screenings and eyeglass recycling for hurricane victims. A second eye van will serve the needs of displaced people who are in shelters in the middle of the state.

The Dothan, Ala., area has 4,000 refugees, most of them from Mississippi, said Berry. At one shelter, Lions are helping to feed 80 to 100 people each night. Lions in 34-I sent a truckload of water and supplies to Mississippi. Anticipating the donation of goods, Lions in Alabama have secured in advance a large storage space at a Wal-Mart building in Mobile. "Lions here are at work. We're doing everything we can," said Berry.