

Idaho Catholics do their part to assist Katrina, Rita survivors

By Colette Cowman
ICR editor

The Diocese of Boise has received more than \$237,000 in donations for Hurricane Katrina and Rita relief so far.

The Diocesan Finance Department is collecting the donations and sending them on to Catholic Charities USA. Already Catholic Charities USA has been able to provide \$2.2 million in initial funding to help with hurricane relief efforts. The money has gone to 30 Catholic Charities agencies, including those in Gulf Coast dioceses and those in other U.S. dioceses that are assisting evacuees with basic needs.

The agency said that 96 percent of contributions made to Catholic Charities' 2005 Hurricane Relief Fund will be used for emergency response and recovery efforts.

"The people of the Diocese of Boise are, without reserve, opening their hearts and wallets to help the people in the Gulf Coast whose lives have been totally disrupted by two destructive hurricanes which struck only about a month apart, Aug. 29 and Sept. 24," said Bishop Michael Driscoll. "Thank you so much. The recovery process will take years. The people in the Gulf Coast face enormous personal and financial challenges. I ask all Idahoans to continue to remember these people in prayer and continue to generously provide financial support."

Catholic Charities of Idaho has received over \$120,000 to use to assist hurricane evacuees who are coming into the state, according to Marcie Wilske, who represents Catholic Charities of Idaho (CCI) on the Governor's Task Force on

Evacuee Resettlement.

"Although not in large numbers all at once, day by day we are seeing more people coming to the state who need assistance," said Wilske. "Catholic Charities is providing financial assistance and helping them to find jobs, housing, transportation and other basic needs. As the weeks go by, I think we will see more people coming in as they able to better assess their situation and move forward."

Wilske said she recently sent out about 200 notes to people who have offered services thanking them for their offers and letting them know that they will likely receive a call in the future when whatever they are offering will be needed.

People who have household items, clothing, bedding and other supplies they want to donate are asked to take their items to St. Vincent de Paul conferences around the state or to Deseret Industries. Those are two agencies in Idaho earmarked by the Governor's Task Force to receive such items to assist hurricane evacuees.

Many Catholic offices, churches and schools in the Gulf Coast were either destroyed by the hurricanes or damaged. Some Idaho parishes are looking for parishes in Louisiana and Mississippi to adopt or have already adopted one so they can provide prayer and financial support.

Dan Makley, diocesan superintendent of Catholic schools, said all the Idaho Catholic schools are planning to adopt a Catholic school in the gulf area to assist. Four schools have already located their schools. All of the schools have done fundraising projects to help with hurricane relief.