



NEWS RELEASE

HANDS ON DISASTER RESPONSE • P.O. BOX 546 • CARLISLE, MA 01741

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HURRICANE KATRINA SURVIVORS “PAY IT FORWARD,” HELP IOWA’S FLOOD-AFFECTED FAMILIES

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 8/25/08 – Hurricane Katrina survivors recently “paid it forward,” volunteering over a weekend in August to help flood-affected families in Cedar Rapids, Iowa with Hands On Disaster Response (HODR). HODR is a volunteer-driven 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, that also responded to Katrina from September 2005 to February 2006, mobilizing over 1500 volunteers to assist Gulf Coast communities.

During their time volunteering with HODR, the Katrina survivors helped to muck out basements, gut houses, and remove debris. Clarence Jones, of Long Beach, MS, whose family lost their home during Hurricane Katrina easily relates to the devastation experienced by those affected by the record-breaking flood of June 2008. Jones says he’s thankful for the help they received during their time of need. “I wanted to come volunteer in Iowa to help people who had gone through something similar,” says David Reed, another volunteer whose home was also damaged by Katrina.

The volunteers, a group from the MS Gulf Coast Community College, added to the efforts of more than 1,300 individuals who have volunteered with HODR’s Project Cedar Rapids thus far.

The damage inside the homes looks all too familiar, says Zach Meller, of Long Beach, MS. “We lost our family business of 80+ years during Hurricane Katrina,” he says. “It was a major loss, but we have persevered. We had so many volunteers from so many places come to help us after Hurricane Katrina,” adds Meller. “I figured it was the least I could do to return the favor.”

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More than 5,000 structures in Cedar Rapids and approximately 470 of the 500 homes in nearby Palo, Iowa were flooded. On June 23, 2008, HODR launched Project Cedar Rapids and began coordinating volunteers to assist the residents of these communities. Since then, the organization has completed cleanup of over 230 homes, and is beginning drywall work. HODR will be coordinating efforts in Cedar Rapids until October 25, 2008.

HODR's Katrina response project coordinated volunteers on projects ranging from gutting homes and tarping roofs, to replacing street signs and drywall. HODR strives to provide hands-on relief to survivors of natural disasters with maximum speed and minimum bureaucracy, during the initial months of recovery.

For additional information on HODR, Project Cedar Rapids, or to volunteer or make a tax-deductible donation, please visit www.HODR.org.

ABOUT: Hands On Disaster Response is a US-based, volunteer-driven, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to timely disaster response and relief. HODR strives to provide hands-on relief to survivors of natural disasters with maximum speed and minimum bureaucracy. HODR projects focus on applying volunteer resources and expertise to communities affected by natural disaster. Previous projects have included USA (2008 Missouri tornadoes), USA (2008 Arkansas tornadoes), Bangladesh (2007 Cyclone Sidr), Peru (2007 Pisco Earthquake), Philippines (2006 Typhoon Reming), Indonesia (2006 Jogjakarta Earthquake), USA (2005 Hurricane Katrina), and Thailand (2004 Southeast Asian Tsunami). Donations made to HODR are tax-deductible.

ABOUT: Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College responds to the educational needs of our community, which is defined as the district of George, Harrison, Jackson and Stone counties, by providing an outstanding learning environment supported by excellent instruction and services. We achieve this by creating an atmosphere that fosters lifelong learning, responsible citizenship and progressive leadership in a dynamic setting.

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