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Disaster Relief

Hurricanes Prompt Action By Firms, Organizations

By Janet Levaux

(San Diego) Rain or shine, those who hail from New Orleans maintain their sense of humor.

"New Orleans is gonna' be fine and will come back better than ever," says Peter Ricchiuti. "Yes, \$100 billion will fix it."

The Financial Planning Association conference keynote speaker, who usually teaches finance at Tulane University and served as Louisiana's assistant state treasurer and chief investment officer, has been living three hours west of the Crescent City.



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Like others, he's counting on the FPA to hold its 2006 conference in New Orleans, as it plans to do. "Despite Hurricane Katrina, the FPA still plan to be there to support the city economically and spiritually," explains FPA President James Barnash. "And the FPA will provide pro bono financial-planning aid to those in need and support professionals who have suffered losses."

Shreveport, La., is the base of this pro bono work, according to the FPA, which set up a \$100,000 grant to fund a financial-planning support center. The FPA formed an alliance with the American Red Cross in September 2004 to aid disaster victims. (See www.foundation-finplan.org for more information or to donate funds.)

For Stephen Oster of Integrated Financial Group in Atlanta, a Securities America affiliate, the nearby devastation was a call to act. "I felt compelled, as a Fox News junkie, watching...

I wanted to get personally involved," Oster says

Working with two clients in the small community of Mansfield, La., (south of Shreveport), Oster helped organize a supply chain for relief efforts affecting about 1,500 evacuees — including 40-plus children — in cooperation with a Mansfield church and community center. He enlisted family

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members and long-time Integrated Financial colleague Don Patrick, a volunteer pilot with the Angel Flight network.

During the Labor Day weekend, about 4,000 pounds of supplies and several thousand dollars were collected by Oster and others. Patrick flew the goods and volunteers into the Mansfield area and then ran supplies over to those in need in Alabama, logging more than 20 flying hours.

“Without the Angel Flight volunteers, a lot of this might not have happened,” explains Oster. Both he and Patrick are involved in the hurricane relief effort on an ongoing basis, Oster adds, as evacuees continue to need housing, jobs and financial support.

Beyond the Gulf Coast area, advisors, planners and others have been reaching out as well. Commonwealth Financial Network employees and supporters, for instance, collected more than 400 boxes of clothes, toys and other goods in September and rented a 48-foot tractor trailer to deliver the donations from its headquarters in Waltham, Mass., to the Salvation Army in Houston. The 1,000-plus advisor network also sponsored a second trailer to ship goods collected in Shrewsbury, Mass., by the family of Commonwealth principal Wayne Bloom.

A total of 40,000 pounds of donated items arrived in Houston, according to Commonwealth spokeswoman Emily Guadagnoli. There, the driver was greeted by staff of AIM Investments, who unloaded and distributed the goods. In addition, several Commonwealth advisors have visited Gulf Coast communities to support them.

And on October 5, Citigroup and the National Urban League set up the Urban League Katrina Fund to help the 1 million-plus evacuees with job training, placement and housing. Citigroup, Freddie Mac and the Nehemiah Corporation of America have donated \$1 million each to the fund.

For the Cause

Some commitments and donations to the victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita include:

AIG	\$1 mn
Ameriprise/Am. Express	\$1.5 mn
Citigroup/Smith Barney	\$10 mn
Commonwealth	\$100,000
A.G. Edwards	\$250,000
ING U.S.	\$1 mn
Jackson Nat'l Life	\$300,000
LPL	\$134,000
MetLife	\$1 mn
Merrill Lynch	\$1.5 mn
Morgan Stanley	\$1 mn
Raymond James	\$200,000
Wachovia	\$3.6 mn
TOTAL	\$21.58 mn



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