

Title:

Katrina Cash Crisis Continues

Word Count:

672

Summary:

America's charitable response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina has been astounding. However, the mind-numbing scope of the disaster is such that these noble efforts must continue.

Keywords:

Hurricane Katrina, hurricane relief fund, disaster relief, Red Cross, Catholic Charities USA, United Jewish Communities, United Methodist Committee on Relief, Cyberiter

Article Body:

The need to continue giving aid to the victims of Hurricane Katrina must remain a priority ...

It's now months after the American Gulf Coast was devastated. Billions have been spent in relief, but billions more are needed. Such is the scope of a storm that ranks among the most severe in modern North American history.

To this day, residents' lives are still wrecked. Vital services are still wanting. Homes and businesses remain unrepaired. The effort to do so is not lacking; far from it. The hard fact is that the resources available are still spread too thin.

Recently, the Washington Post conducted a survey to determine an accounting of the charitable aid that has been provided to date. The results are impressive, showing this to be the largest donation drive in American history. Almost \$3billion has been raised and approximately \$2billion of that amount has already been disbursed.

It's a mind-jolt to grasp the concept that, even with a record level of heartfelt giving, only a dent has been made in improving lives there and that the remaining \$1billion will be impossibly stretched in order to have any overall impact. Very little has apparently slipped into administrative hubris. Virtually all monies, says the Post, have gone toward cash, food and temporary shelter, medical care, tarps for damaged homes and school supplies for displaced

children.

Here are other facts which were determined by the Post's survey:

The Red Cross , which was criticized for slow distribution of donations after the Sept.11, 2001, terrorist attacks, has given out 84 percent of its Katrina and Rita donations.

Fifty cents of each donated dollar went out in cash to victims.

Six percent of contributions came in the form of supplies – building materials, food, water, clothing, heavy equipment – contributed mostly by corporations.

Fifty-six percent of remaining donations are controlled by faith-based organizations. They include such well-known institutions as Catholic Charities USA and the Salvation Army but also lower-profile groups like the United Methodist Committee on Relief and United Jewish Communities.

It's estimated that the American government will need to spend a minimum of \$200billion, simply to rebuild infrastructure and re-establish basic services in the region. There will be budgets for housing grants, low-income food support and medical care, but longstanding parameters on those programs will still leave many hurricane victims out in the cold. Literally.

Some of the Gulf states, such as Mississippi and Louisiana, were far from the richest in the USA before the disaster struck. Now, with much of their tax base blown away, their resources are hardly sufficient to cope with anything more than the most urgent requirements.

Americans should take great pride in going to amazing lengths to look after their own. That those being assisted are doing all they can to become self-sustaining again makes the act of donation feel even more rewarding.

It is still time to experience that feeling. There are many causes in life, but this one is about providing fundamental needs to people who are aching to provide for themselves. If you're visiting the Longer Life site, don't make those Red Cross boxes on each page fade into your background. Once a month, or more if you can, use them. When you're out on the town, instead of ordering an extra round of beer, wine or spirits, re-direct that amount to the Katrina relief fund. When you're in the store, instead of purchasing an extra snack item, re-direct that amount to the Katrina relief fund.

Those proceeds will be used for so much more by people who are grateful to

receive because they have no other choice.

It's still difficult to comprehend that a few dollars can do so much good when billions are needed, but we can never 'massify' the human condition in the Gulf states or anywhere else. The few dollars you give will help one person, or one family, who will then be allowed a welcome moment of respite for at least another day.

To them, your donation would seem like a million dollars. Maybe even a billion.