



**State of Florida
Department of Children and Families**

Jeb Bush
Governor

Lucy D. Hadi
Secretary

October 11, 2006

The Sun-Sentinel
200 East Las Olas Boulevard
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33301

BY E-MAIL

To the Editor:

Project H.O.P.E. has assisted thousands of people statewide suffering from emotional trauma and stress as a result of Hurricanes Wilma and Katrina, but your October 8 story and October 10 editorial failed to highlight these accomplishments.

While you made light of some of the activities offered by Project H.O.P.E., you neglected to explain the purpose of the program and the methods used. You also failed to note that the activities and exercises you described have been very effective in achieving the project's primary purpose: increasing the comfort level of storm victims, so they are more apt to open up to crisis counselors. In fact, between March and September of this year, 23,521 people felt comfortable enough in the program to seek out one-on-one crisis counseling sessions, and 9,965 others attended group sessions. Those numbers do not even include 20,507 people who were referred for additional disaster-related and mental health services as a result of Project H.O.P.E. outreach. Consider what Florida's response would have been to the two most devastating hurricane seasons on record without the support offered through Project H.O.P.E.

Confidentiality laws prevent us from providing you with the names of clients served by Project H.O.P.E., so we realize you may be unable to provide an accurate sampling of its success. We understand there are opportunities for improving this program, so we will continue to strive to do just that. We are, however, proud of what the program has accomplished in providing some of Florida's most vulnerable citizens with peace of mind, and as the name suggests, hope.

Sincerely,
Lucy D. Hadi
Secretary
Florida Department of Children and Families

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency