

ISSUE BRIEF

National Service Responds to the Gulf Coast Hurricanes



Since August 2005, the Corporation for National and Community Service has provided more than \$160 million worth of resources to Gulf Coast states recovering from the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. Working in cooperation with FEMA, state and local authorities, and hundreds of nonprofit groups, more than 105,000 national service volunteers have contributed more than 5.4 million hours to the relief, recovery, and rebuilding effort. They also have coordinated an additional 405,000 community volunteers, a major share of the overall volunteer force. Activities have included supporting shelter operations and housing placement; establishing call centers and warehousing sites; assisting with case work and benefits coordination; setting up school and youth programs; blue roofing, debris removal, and mucking out homes; serving on long-term recovery committees; and construction of new homes for low-income families. As a result of its experience with hurricane relief and recovery, the Corporation has established a number of new procedures to provide more effective and timely response to disasters under authority of FEMA mission assignments. Using lessons learned in Katrina, trained AmeriCorps teams have been deployed to winter ice storms in Missouri, tornadoes in Greensburg, Kansas, and Parkersburg, Iowa, California forest fires, and 2008 flooding in Iowa and Missouri, among other disasters. The Corporation continues to shift its resources to support a variety of disaster preparedness and response activities.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ON DISASTERS:

In June 2007, the Corporation's Board of Directors added a new strategic initiative on disaster preparedness and response to the plan that guides the agency through the year 2010. This action reflects the agency's growing expertise and increased commitment to help individuals and communities expand their capacity to prepare for and respond to natural disasters.

AMERICORPS: AmeriCorps has been a backbone of Gulf Coast hurricane relief, and continues to be deeply engaged in the long-term recovery effort. More than 12,000 AmeriCorps members have provided 4.2 million hours of service and recruited or coordinated more than 386,000 other volunteers.

AMERICORPS NCCC: More than 4,000 AmeriCorps NCCC members have served on more than 700 separate disaster services projects in the Gulf Coast region since September 2005, in coordination with such groups as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, and state service commissions. In all, NCCC members have contributed more than 1.8 million hours of service, valued at \$35 million. They have assisted 3 million people, trained and supervised more than 227,000 community volunteers, completed nearly 52,000 damage assessments, refurbished more than 9,500 homes, constructed 1,450 new homes, served 1.6 million meals, and distributed more than 2,200 tons of food.

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AMERICORPS STATE AND NATIONAL: More than 100 grantee programs of AmeriCorps State and National, collectively representing more than 7,000 AmeriCorps members, have provided more than 1.5 million hours in hurricane relief and recovery assistance in the Gulf region. The Corporation has provided more than \$72 million in funds to bring thousands of AmeriCorps members to the Gulf region through fiscal year 2009.

AMERICORPS VISTA: More than 750 full-time AmeriCorps VISTA members have served in the Gulf Coast, building the capacity of nonprofit organizations and helping low-income people out of poverty. In addition, through its Summer Associate Program, VISTA has sent 246 members to New Orleans to support summer camps for tens of thousands of children in 2007 and 2008.

SENIOR CORPS: More than 18,600 Senior Corps volunteers have served in Gulf Coast hurricane relief efforts, providing food and shelter, coordinating distribution of donated goods, managing community volunteers, meeting the needs of at-risk youth, and more.

LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA: Tens of thousands of students supported by Learn and Serve America raised funds and items needed for hurricane relief, assembled and distributed disaster relief kits, and traveled to the Gulf region to help in the recovery effort. Hundreds of college and high school student groups have traveled to the Gulf Coast to volunteer on spring break and summer trips

CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM: The Corporation revised its 2005 Challenge Grant competition to focus on disaster relief, resulting in the approval of \$4 million to six multi-state projects to recruit nearly 72,000 volunteers, with an emphasis on baby boomers.

'SKILLED SERVICE IN THE GULF' GRANTS: In June 2007, the Corporation announced that Habitat for Humanity International, Xavier

University of Louisiana, and Rebuilding Together were selected to receive awards totaling \$900,000 to engage skilled volunteers in providing disaster recovery assistance to the Gulf states. The skilled construction volunteers will lead lesser-skilled volunteers and handle the most challenging aspects of rebuilding.

COORDINATION AND PLANNING: To increase coordination at the federal, state, and local levels, the Corporation has worked with the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA on the National Response Framework, created a "Disaster Coordinator Cadre" of specially trained staff available to go to disaster zones to coordinate national service assets and mission assignments with FEMA, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2007 with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster to enable smarter, faster cooperation with the group's members.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: Through its Resource Center, the Corporation offers free online resources on disaster preparedness and response including videos, how-to guides, best practices, and courses. The Corporation also provides in-person training at conferences, including a 2007 national "Disaster Institute" for state service commissions.

ABOUT THE CORPORATION: The Corporation for National and Community Service improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation provides opportunities for four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

MORE INFORMATION: For general information about the Corporation for National and Community Service and its programs, visit www.NationalService.gov or call 202-606-5000.

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