



Environmental Justice Achievement Award

Academic Institution



Dillard University, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice



Dr. Beverly Wright (speaking) at the 2nd Anniversary Katrina Day of Service "Safe Way Back Home" soil remediation block cleanup in New Orleans East.

EPA is pleased to present a 2008 Environmental Justice Achievement Award to the [Deep South Center for Environmental Justice \(DSCEJ\)](#) at Dillard University for its work to help residents of New Orleans, Louisiana, address environmental contamination and return home after the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Since Hurricane Katrina, DSCEJ has focused much of its work on the research, policy, and community outreach needs of the displaced minority population of New Orleans. DSCEJ has been engaged in job training and placement related to environmental cleanups, with a focus on training displaced New Orleans residents. As a result, DSCEJ has mobilized minority residents and minority contractors to participate in the cleanup and rebuilding of New Orleans. The United Steelworkers labor union was a major partner in this effort.

Community residents have taken a proactive approach to supporting the cleanup of their neighborhoods. Block captains are selected to help organize the cleanup; residents also receive health and safety training and work with volunteers to remediate their yards. DSCEJ, through its array of partners, identified a large number of displaced New Orleans citizens in Jackson, Baton Rouge, Houston, and Atlanta and targeted these cities for its community outreach initiatives. The project has cleaned up neighborhood blocks in New Orleans East, thereby reducing the health risks of exposure to harmful contaminants, and environmental education and training has empowered residents to return home to a safe environment. The "A Safe Way Back Home" Project assisted in safely removing contaminated soil from yards and replacing it with new topsoil and sod.

