

**Morgan finds helping hands
Volunteer center benefits with pros from 3 states
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By: Paul Higgins**

A big problem was evident when the Volunteer Center of Morgan County found an army of volunteers wanting to join local Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

Somebody had to organize them, find the best way to use them and then set up a database to notify them at a moment's notice. The center had to coordinate efforts of other relief agencies. The regular volunteer staff, however, was inundated with requests to help evacuees as well as carry on previously scheduled events, such as last week's Day of Caring and Ducky Derby.

The Points of Light Foundation recognized the dilemma and established help by sending out a national call for help for professional volunteer center staffers then sending them to communities like Decatur.

Last week, the volunteer center benefited from three of these: Nancy Hults-Rubin of Morristown, N.J.; Audra Dolan of Providence, R.I., and Adam Molzer of Fort Collins Colo.

"I'm sure it's like other volunteer centers, it was already stressed before the hurricane," Hults-Rubin said.

Each had specific duties.

Molzer set up a system to connect the more than 50 people who have offered housing with displaced families in need of permanent places to live.

Dolan, who specializes in disaster services in Providence, was a consultant to the local Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster, which consists of all the agencies that can assist victims during a disaster. She specifically helped the agencies be prepared for future needs as more evacuees come to Decatur in search of a return to normalcy.

Hults-Rubin worked to fulfill needs of evacuees, supported Volunteer Center Executive director Mary K. Braddock with emerging needs and distributed Wal-Mart gift cards with money donated by herself and her church.

Molzer and Dolan said the week impressed him with how important it is for a volunteer center to bring relief to agencies together before disaster strikes.

Hults-Rubin said the week was satisfying because she got to return the favor of volunteers from Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana who helped New York City dig out from the Sept 11 terrorist attacks. Her hometown is 25 miles from New York. She had a friend who lost a family member and Hults-Rubin's husband was working near the Pentagon when a plane crashed there.

"I can never say thank you to all those people, but I can come here and do what I can," she said. "I didn't come here to be thanked. I came here to thank."