

National Black Church Initiative

P.O. Box 65177
Washington, DC 20035-5177

Tel: (202) 636-5339

Fax 202-429-5289

dcbci2002@yahoo.com

www.babyfund.net

For immediate release
PRESS RELEASE

Contact Person:
Rev. Anthony Evans
(202) 744-0184

NBCI PRESIDENT REV. ANTHONY EVANS AUTHORIZED 15,000 VOLUNTEERS TO HELP IN THE AFTERMATH OF KATRINA

*Call on all Americans to pray for the victims, to give money
and for racial unity*

NBCI President the Rev. Anthony Evans and his executive ministerial alliance headed by Rev. Mark McCleary, Pastor of First Adventist Church, authorized 15,000 volunteers immediately after Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana and the Gulf area. Those volunteers are already on the ground and are working with the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army and NBCI Southern network of faith-based communities. This is an extraordinary call up of volunteers because of the magnitude of these storms. NBCI volunteers are working in all of the 12 states providing shelter, food, clothes, counseling and contributing money.

Unlike most, NBCI will not engage in the blame game here. Our number one focus is to serve the storm victims, and all that are in need. We would like to commend our black and white faith communities who came together to provide needed services in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and affected areas in both Georgia and Florida. NBCI will meet in Charlotte, NC with its leadership in two weeks to map out a yearlong plan to assess the victims in a long-term structure. There are approximately 1,356 families who are victims of the hurricane who are now being sheltered by NBCI member congregants in their homes. We are now working with the popular African American radio program the *Tom Joyner Show* to make sure these families receive financial assistance for food and life sustaining items for taking on such a noble and worthwhile task.

NBCI plans to meet with FEMA officials during the coming week to make sure that all of the above families and other victims are adequately taken care of. We plan to speak to FEMA authorities on how to begin to register those families for benefits, and about providing long term care in the areas of counseling and employment. In addition we plan to work with the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army in making sure that there is sufficient shelter and foodstuff. Approximately 4,500 of our NBCI churches are willing to turn their fellowship halls into shelter space. We have not received word from neither FEMA, nor the American Red Cross on what they want us to do with all that shelter space.

We are immensely concerned about the state of the affected families mental health and how they can access additional psychological services especially for their children. NBCI in the coming weeks will make available through existing mental health services networks, 257 pastoral care clinicians to provide intervention services along with mental health professionals. The names of pastoral care clinicians will be emailed to the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and FEMA once they have decided how they want to use them. In relation to the immediate services the victims needs, NBCI are also concerned about restoring the dignity of grave yards, the rebuilding of faith communities and finding a proper memorial for those who have died.

Rev. Evans stated, “this is devastating beyond words and we are dreadfully concerned about the overall health of the people. However, we are enormously happy that our faith communities in unaffected areas of Louisiana, the Gulf States and neighboring states came to share their Christian love and concern to virtually strangers but neighbors in the human family. We had two chief concerns to provide hope and assurance to those who found their backs against the wall of the storm and the response of their government.”

The Rev. C.H. Johnson, Past President of the Eastern Region of the Progressive National Baptist Convention said, “I am personally hurt to see the misery and horrible condition of our people in Louisiana and the Gulf Coast that this have fallen upon. Women, children and the poor just sat there without food or water and died without dignity. But I am extremely proud to be a part of NBCI and the leadership of Rev. Evans of pulling together these 15,000 volunteers from NBCI churches in the neighboring states. I am immensely proud of our church people and what they have done to ease the misery that this hurricane has caused.”

Rev. Mark McCleary in a tearful plea said “I’ve been working the phones since Tuesday and it works. Our system works, we were able to get volunteers. We were able to utilize church vans, their fellowship halls and by simply picking up the phones and speaking to men and women of love that we haven’t spoken to in a year, to get meals served to the victims. We will need additional resources to permanently put this network of churches in place in order that we may be able to respond to any crisis in the future. We will be at this for a long time and we are prepared for the challenges ahead. There is much still needed to be done like providing counseling, restoring the graveyards, rebuilding the faith communities. I am so proud of the leadership and the commitment of NBCI and Rev. Evans.”

NBCI does not have a budget to move these volunteers and to authorize such an outpouring of humanitarian services. We are neither the Red Cross nor the Salvation Army and we are not sure how much this is going to cost us, but we will stay the course.

On September 11, we will call for a nationwide day of prayer for all the victims of Katrina.

About the National Black Church Initiative

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare. It is a faith-based health organization dedicated to providing critical wellness information and pre-screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI's purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality healthcare.