A Note from Katie

Around the country, our churches are responding to the needs of their vulnerable neighbors after disasters - whether in Minot, ND or Bastrop, TX or White River Junction, VT. At Episcopal Relief & Development, we will continue to support, strengthen and raise up these ministries. Please look through the resource library stories to see the powerful work being done in our communities.

Peace,
Katie

Federal Assistance: Helping Neighbors to Register

After a string of tornadoes swept through northern Alabama in April 2011, Madison County, a poor rural county in North Alabama, had

In this Issue:

ALABAMA, DC
Federal assistance: helping neighbors to register

TEXAS
Texas Wildfires

News:

Preparedness Planning Guide is Now Online
Use this Online Guide to walk your congregation through the process of disaster preparedness planning.

Join "Ready to Serve"
Offer your services to your vulnerable neighbors after a disaster. Sign up here to be called upon to volunteer.

Building Up Our Resource Library
extensive damage. Many residents would be eligible for federal assistance if they filled out the right paperwork quickly, before the deadline. "In the end, our county, though one of the lesser populated areas of the tornado devastation, was the top county in the state of Alabama for FEMA application filings," said the Rev. Kerry Holder-Joffrion. Holder-Joffrion works for the Madison County Interfaith Mission Service, and with fellow Episcopalian, Zara Renander, they started a Federal Form Brigade - a group of volunteers trained to help individuals with home loss or damage file for federal assistance. "Our point was to get people suffering from post traumatic shock and other consequences of the devastation as much help as possible, as quickly as possible," said Holder-Joffrion. For more information on the Federal Form Brigade, please see "How To: Creating a Federal Form Brigade" in our online resource library.

Texas Wildfires

On a hot, dry September night in a small Texas town, more than 60 people gathered at Calvary Episcopal Church. The most catastrophic fire in Texas history, the one that impacted Bastrop, had begun burning six days earlier on September 4. By September 12, more than 1,500 homes had been destroyed in a town with less than 8,000 residents. But on this night, despite the hazy, smoke-laden sky outside, in the parish hall the smell of rich sauce and cheese filled the air as lasagnas were pulled from the oven. The Rev. Lisa Hines, Rector of the church, knew intimately what her community was experiencing; she had lost her own home only days before to the fire. In the midst of the disaster she opened the doors of the big brick church on Main Street and invited the community in. Parishioners, many of whom had also lost their own homes, worked in the kitchen to feed the assembled crowd.

Fires this season in Texas have burned millions of acres and left thousands of homes and businesses destroyed. The fires were exacerbated this year by...
the record-breaking heat and drought. Having experienced the devastating effects of Hurricane Ike just a few short years ago, the Episcopal Diocese of Texas was prepared to respond to this disaster. Over the last three years the diocese actively encouraged more than 150 parishes to create disaster preparedness plans. When the fires began to blaze around the state, congregations throughout Texas were already educated about disasters and prepared to help.

Even before the Texas fires had reached Bastrop, churches across Texas were supporting emergency responders, collecting and distributing cold drinks and "wet-wipes" to firefighters. The diocese was also in contact with parishes in impacted areas, staying abreast of their specific needs. "Clothing donations came first, which was great. But eventually it became clear that what people really needed was financial support," explained Luke Blount, Communications Specialist for the diocese. "We really want to be focusing on the needs on the ground, so we started encouraging donors to give money or gift cards to grocery stores and places like Home Depot."

"As time goes on needs will change," explained the Rev. Gill Keyworth, a diocesan disaster coordinator. "As the fires died out, people began requesting sieves to sift through the debris that was left of their home. Now people are turning toward the future and trying to envision what their lives will look like a couple of months or years down the road." Keyworth's fellow diocesan disaster coordinator, Archdeacon Russ Oechsel, went on to say that those who have lost their homes are facing a long process, possibly two to three years, before they can get back into homes. People will have to deal with insurance settlements, mortgage paperwork, and getting permits for new construction if the slab of their house cracked with the heat of the fire.

Read more [here](#)!
Confirm that you like this.

Click the "Like" button.

Confirm that you like this.

Click the "Like" button.