

Chronicles

2005, their neighbors went door to door yelling, "Get Out! The city is flooding." When the storm hit land, Johnny declared, "We were stuck."

He and his family were advised by NOPD to get food out of a store and seek refuge on a rooftop. They obtained provisions, went to the nearest high school, popped the locks, and as the water rose, they went on the roof where they waited three days.

"By the 31st we saw five bodies floating," he stated. Through it all, they remained resilient, started a fire on the roof, and was spotted by helicopters who flew them to Aline St., where they boarded Greyhound buses headed to Atlanta and Houston. "The Red Cross gave us each \$500," he said. With those funds he and his family, who ended up separated, rebuilt their lives.

He now lives in Jackson and his accent is thick like gumbo. Their former home on Fourth St. in New Orleans was renovated and rented to another family. His two sisters returned to Louisiana. One lives in E. New Orleans, and the other

lives in Violet, 7.5 miles south-east of the city.

Jackson resident Lakandra Johnson was living in Woodland Apartments off Hwy. 18 when the storm uprooted trees causing massive power outages. "Everyone living in Woodland was without lights for three days," she noted. "Everyone sat on the balcony or on their porches all day trying to stay cool," she added.

Some residents purchased a block of hot ice which cost \$100.00, and sold pieces to neighbors to keep their food cold. However, once the meat in the freezer of others unfrozen, that family grilled their meat, and shared with their neighbors. Then, the next family cooked their meat, shared, and the cycle continued. "We became one big family," she said smiling.

Her cousin Kelysey found a sick dog, and named him "Miracle Katrina." A veterinarian predicted it would not live long. "Kelysey's love kept Miracle Katrina here for three years," she said.

"Katrina was the worst time in my life," Vickie Barlow declared, who arrived in Gulfport Aug. 21st to assist her mother with her father who

had just had heart surgery. "I was so glad I was there to help them evacuate to my Aunt Eunice's house in Leaksville," she declared.

Vickie drove her parents' home Aug. 31st to access the damage. Everything was gone. "Only the postings of the house remained," she said. It was a nerve-wrecking experience.

She declared, "The heat and humidity was horrible." She helped her parents find temporary housing, and stayed with them a month. Unfortunately, a few weeks after she returned home her father died.

On another note, the storm blew love to Toya Gaddis, a Byram (Jackson suburb) resident. "Orlando Kelly and his family evacuated New Orleans and were headed to Memphis in two cars when one broke down near the Byram exit off I-55 S. His mother, Zidia Kelly, a RN, who was transferring her job to Tennessee, refused to leave her family. She called the VA in Jackson and they agreed to hire her, and assisted her to move in Bradford Place in Byram.

Orlando became a cook at Waffle House where Toya often dined. He soon noticed

Toya, struck a conversation with her, asked for her phone number, when she declined, he asked to borrow her phone, called his phone with hers, called her after he got off work, and the rest is history. The history must be good because Toya Kelly is still smiling like a new bride.

The storm hit on William McGee's 39th birthday. "I was moving a refrigerator for a friend when we heard a radio announcement telling us to take shelter," he said. By then, tree limbs were falling on Northside Dr. "I stopped to get gas at Gas Plus and the lights went out in the station before I got my gas," he stated.

On the 30th of August, his friend Craig Johnson ran out of gas in Clinton while waiting in a line which stretched several miles. William recalled, "It took over an hour before we got gas in Craig's car that day."

William's lights were out nine days; his family of three lost all their perishable foods. Every day he cooked rice, grits, and eggs on the grill, and they used kerosene lamps at night for light.

The final account introduces Sherita Fletcher and her five year old son Mark Owens who

Jackson Advocate ■ Jackson, Mississippi

were living on Southbrook Dr. in Northeast Jackson. "I had just made groceries the Friday before the storm. Our lights were off for two weeks," she proclaimed.

Luckily, her brother Anthony and his wife Victoria, who lived in Advantage Apartments, had lights. Every day, Sherita drove to her sister Alice's house nearby and grilled meat. Then, they and other family members crowded in the den in the Advantage Apartments. Life in Jackson was abnormal. Schools and grocery stores were closed. People could not even get cash from ATMs.

At night Sherita and her son slept at home with every window up in the house. "It was so hot. We were miserable," she declared. The second night after the storm she stood on her porch naked; it was pitch dark; not a soul could see her. Not one house on the block had lights. However, Entergy restored the lights for homes across the street in seven days.

Ten years ago, Mark was in kindergarten at McCloud Elementary School. Today, Sherita Fletcher Miller is married, the mother of two boys, and a graduate student at Missis-

issippi College. Mark is a 10th grade small forward/power forward basketball player for the Ridgeland Titans at Ridgeland H.S. His peers call him "Clutch", referring to his style of throwing the ball.

Since Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans struggled to rebuild. Tourism is in full swing. There remains plighted property in low income communities, but crime has decreased. Marreno Commons Apartments containing 175 units replaced the humongous 1,546 unit Calliope Apartments which was overpopulated, and known for its high crime and murder rates.

On August 28, 2015, Former Pres. George W. Bush will commemorate the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in Gulfport. Former New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin is serving a 10 year sentence for bribery and fraud in federal prison. Former Gov. Haley Barbour, whose leadership for Mississippi was exceptionally well, is selling his new book: *America's Great Storm: Leading through Hurricane Katrina*.

The final thought belongs to Lakandra, "I ain't ever gonna forget Katrina."

Recovery

major impact on the recovery of the five-state Gulf region devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Working closely with state disaster recovery leaders in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Alabama and Florida, HUD has allocated nearly \$20 billion in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding. To date, these investments have contributed toward the long-term recovery of the region's housing stock, economy, and infrastructure. In the aftermath of the storm, more than 82,000 families lived in HUD-assisted apartment buildings across the Gulf that suffered damage by Hurricane Katrina. Today, a remarkable 98 percent of these apartments are fully restored and families are back in their homes. And to help tens of thousands of families find permanent housing after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program has expanded assistance to more than 17,000 households in New Orleans today, nearly double its pre-Katrina figure. These vouchers are critical to ensuring that very low-income families, the elderly and the disabled can afford to live in safe, decent housing in the private market.

Investing in Public Safety and Neighborhood Redevelopment. The Environmental Protection Agency has partnered with various local school districts to provide grants and assistance to improve indoor air quality, provide mold removal and perform rodent and pest elimination in schools. Over \$55 million has been provided for over 100 neighborhood watershed, marsh habitat, and the Mississippi barrier island restoration projects and over \$67 million has gone to communities to upgrade drinking water systems. Additionally, EPA has awarded over \$7.5 million in Brownfield funding for property assessment and clean-up for redevelopment. While providing grant money and training for neighborhood redevelopment, EPA has also performed site assessment and remediation for over 300 sites affected by Hurricane Katrina, including over 116 Underground storage tanks and 124 sites with confirmed releases of petroleum.

Launching New Resilience-Focused AmeriCorps Partnerships: The Obama Administration has formed public-private partnerships to apply the lessons learned and best practices from the national service response to Hurricane Katrina. In 2012, the Obama Administration announced a partnership between CNCS and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's FEMA that created FEMA Corps. FEMA Corps is an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) program. In addition to serving along the Gulf Coast, the AmeriCorps NCCC FEMA Corps unit has been part of the federal response to Hurricane Sandy, the Oklahoma tornadoes, and other disasters. In June, the St. Bernard Project, CNCS, and Toyota announced a three-year, \$5 million investment from Toyota that will train 420 AmeriCorps mem-

bers to help 30 communities to become more resilient. In July, CNCS, the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, with guidance and financial support from The Rockefeller Foundation and technical assistance and programmatic support from Cities of Service announced the first-ever Resilience AmeriCorps, a two-year pilot program that will recruit, train, and embed AmeriCorps VISTA members in ten communities. The new partnerships will enable AmeriCorps members to increase civic engagement and community resilience in low-income areas, and help those communities develop plans for becoming more resilient to any number of shocks and stresses, including better preparations for extreme weather events.

Strengthening Access to Public Health and Disaster Aid for Veterans: In advance of the Affordable Care Act, the New Orleans area began moving toward a health care system that included preventative primary care delivered in neighborhood clinics. The Obama administration provided funding for these community health centers, which serve more than 50,000 people. Additionally, to replace the Veterans hospital destroyed by the storm, a nearly \$1 billion, 1.6 million-square-foot VA Medical Center, is under construction near downtown New Orleans. To better prepare for emergencies, the new medical center will have five-day, self-sustaining capabilities for 1,000 people and all mission-critical services are 20 feet above ground elevation. Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System's commitment to partner with Louisiana State University and Tulane University Medical schools for expanded acute care services, medical education and research has grown in the decade since Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, in response to situations faced by many Veterans following Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs pursued legislation (and later achieved in P.L. 112-154) that allowed VA to subordinate its first-lien mortgage status to another state, federal, or local entity in instance of major disasters. This allows Veterans impacted by future disasters to obtain disaster relief funds from programs which require first-lien status to rebuild or repair their homes.

Ending Veterans Homelessness in Katrina-Impacted Communities: In June 2014, the First Lady announced the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness as part of the Joining Forces Initiative. Since the announcement, 585 mayors, 8 governors, and 152 county and city officials have publicly committed to ending veteran homelessness in their communities by the end of 2015. The New Orleans VA Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC) is the first of VA's referral centers to integrate federal, city, and private sector resources to serve both Veteran and non-Veteran homeless citizens and their family members. VA's CRRC was an instrumental resource, along with an inter-agency council consisting of UNITY

of Greater New Orleans; the Housing Authority of New Orleans; the State Office of Community Development; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and the New Orleans Interagency on Homelessness, in accepting, and in January 2015, meeting the First Lady's challenge. In April, the First Lady joined with Mayor Mitch Landrieu to celebrate this momentous achievement. And in June, Houston became the largest city in the country to end veteran homelessness.

Investing in Innovation and Economic Growth of the Gulf Region and Communities: The Obama Administration and the U.S. Department of Commerce have invested \$178 million to support economic development opportunities and increase assistance to entrepreneurs in high-growth, high-wage industries in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Investments have supported workforce development partnerships, business development services, technology transfer activities, and the expansion of industries that rebuild wetlands, implement water management strategies, promote clean technologies, and perform other risk mitigation activities. The Department's SelectUSA program, established by President Obama in 2011, has also worked to win more than \$10 billion in foreign direct investment for Gulf Coast communities. To promote U.S. goods and protect Gulf Coast manufacturing jobs, the Department's three U.S. Export Assistance Centers in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi have supported more than twenty international trade missions, 80 export outreach and counseling events, and touched more than 560 local businesses. Through these efforts, exports from Gulf Coast have grown more than 77 percent or nearly \$126 billion since 2009.

Building Prepared and Resilient Gulf Communities and a Weather-Ready Nation: The Obama Administration and the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have invested significant funds to increase the resilience of Gulf communities and their environment. In 2010, NOAA established the Gulf of Mexico Disaster Response Center in Mobile, Ala. to serve as a regional coordination center for federal, state and local emergency managers and partners to help Gulf communities prepare, respond to, and recover from disasters and serve as an emergency operations center during crisis. NOAA has helped to rebuild Gulf barrier island chains and natural wetlands critical for protection from storms and has provided more than \$9 million in grants for projects to help make coastal communities more resilient to the effects of extreme weather events, climate hazards, and changing ocean conditions. The Administration has also made significant advancements to improve predictions, hurricane forecasts and storm surge models through investments in technology, data and innovation. Moreover, scientists from the U.S. Department of Interior's U.S. Geological Survey have engaged in a sustained program to understand and forecast hurricane-

related impacts, developing and using the latest technology to provide reliable scientific information to communicate the threats associated with major storms and support decisions made by citizens and coastal managers. Together, these improvements will allow Gulf communities and businesses to better prepare for and respond to future storms – protecting infrastructure and property, minimizing economic losses, and protecting our communities and saving lives.

Repairing the Criminal Justice System and Strengthening Crime Prevention Efforts: The Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) worked with the City of New Orleans and service providers, including Catholic Charities, to rebuild and transform the City's response to domestic violence and sexual assault victims. This work culminated in the New Orleans Family Justice Center – a co-located facility for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. In addition, OVW's work resulted in the development of the multi-disciplinary New Orleans Sexual Assault Response Team (New Orleans SART). In July 2012, the Department also partnered with the City of New Orleans to enter into a consent decree to help ensure that the New Orleans Police Department engages in constitutional policing. In September 2012, New Orleans was selected by the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention through a competitive application process to join the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, a network of communities and federal agencies that work together, share information and build local capacity to prevent and reduce youth violence. Supported by the Forum, New Orleans developed the NOLA FOR LIFE PLAYbook: Promoting Life for all Youth – a strategic plan for action to prevent youth violence. The PLAYbook takes a collective impact approach to addressing youth violence, and emphasizes the tools of public health: a focus on prevention, data-driven strategies, collaboration, and a population-level scale for action. Since 2012, Forum funding to the City of New Orleans Health Department is nearly \$500,000. DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) also worked closely with the City of New Orleans to provide valuable research to support rebuilding the city's criminal justice system after Hurricane Katrina, resulting in three key research reports funded by the Bureau: first, an assessment of the city's technology and information sharing systems, as it related to criminal justice work; second, BJA partnered with University of Maryland to produce a research study and recommendations regarding crime issues in New Orleans; and third, an assessment of the New Orleans Police Department's homicide policies and procedures, resulting in a set of recommendations for better processing of homicides with the ultimate goal of increasing the clearance rate.

Creating A New Model of Federal-Community Partnerships: The Obama Administration has also modeled a new partnership effort in cities and

towns across the country, including in New Orleans. Using a new approach the Administration has put federal supports in place to focus on the direction that cities and small towns want to go in and to partner with communities on their visions. New Orleans is now home to seven federal "place-based" initiatives including: the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, the My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge, the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, Strong Cities Strong Communities (SC2), Partnership for Sustainable Communities, USDA's Strike Force initiative, and the Youth Violence Prevention Forum. New Orleans' main priorities for these collaborations included Post-Katrina community development and increasing access to affordable housing for its residents. The Strong Cities Strong Communities customized approach to working with local partners placed a federal team on the ground with a team lead working directly with the Mayor's office to help cut through the red-tape. Some of the impacts of this community lead work in New Orleans include:

- A collaboration between the Housing Authority of New Orleans, HUD, the local VA hospital and other groups the New Orleans "Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness" was able to bring the number of homeless veterans in New Orleans to functional zero by December 2014, a full year earlier than the proposed goal of 2015.
- President Obama's TIGER grant program helped to expand and accelerate the return of streetcars to a city famous for them. A \$45 million TIGER grant was awarded to open the Loyola Avenue-Union Passenger Terminal Streetcar Line in the city's business district after years of development.
- The DOT members of the New Orleans (SC2) team provided extensive technical assistance to the city of New Orleans for this project, and this support helped ensure that the streetcar line expansion was completed in time for use during the 2013 Super Bowl.
- The President's New Orleans team (SC2) helped prevent substantial reductions in service delivery in New Orleans' community health clinic system by facilitating conversations among government officials at the federal, state, and city levels that extended the timeframe for submitting claims for reimbursement. This effort kept funding flowing to the clinics, kept them from drastically reducing services or closing down operations, and enabled them to continue to serve their communities.
- While almost all of the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority's old buses were destroyed in the flooding after Hurricane Katrina, today thanks to help from the federal government it operates over 80 buses on 32 bus routes and boasts one of the newest fleets of any transit system in the country. The average vehicle age is just one year. FEMA has obligated a total of more than \$121.5 million to pay for a variety of the RTA's costs, including new buses.