

Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge Hurricane Relief and Social Justice Project
(Funded by the UUA/UU Service Committee Gulf Coast Hurricane Fund)
225-926-2283

Who We Are

The Hurricane Relief and Social Justice Project was created to aid the people of South Louisiana as they recover from the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Minister to the Community, **Rev. Marilee Baccich**, is exploring avenues to affordable housing, advocacy of hurricane-related social and environmental issues, case work among hurricane survivors, organizing volunteers in relief efforts, establishing work projects and much more. The Project will soon offer a comprehensive, informative Web site to connect people with interfaith and non-profit organizations and government agencies, plus keep the public updated on the Project's activities. The church is also developing liaisons with many grass roots organizations, some of which the UUA/UUSC Hurricane Fund has awarded grants.



The **Reverend Marilee Baccich** has accepted the position of **Minister to the Community** and began her work with our Hurricane Relief and Social Justice Project on Feb. 1. She is moving from California for a year to do this relief work. Marilee grew up in New Orleans and is a graduate of Starr King School for the Ministry, a UU theological school in Berkeley, California. She is an Interfaith Minister, ordained by the Sufi Order International. She is the founder and director of the Udana Institute for Spiritual Studies and the Pursuit of Peace, from which she will take a one-year sabbatical. Marilee spent three weeks with us in September, organizing and running the Relief Center that we had set up in our church office.



Cheré Coen is the Coordinator of Volunteers, although her position includes outreach and support, among other duties. Cheré is a native of New Orleans, currently living in Lafayette. She is a journalist and published writer, with more than 20 years experience in print journalism. Cheré has been a Unitarian since her teens.

What We're Doing

- Weekend Warriors, a group of Baton Rouge congregational members, have been traveling to New Orleans on weekends to help residents gut and rebuild their homes. Five of these members of the Baton Rouge Unitarian Church alone have worked an estimated 150 work hours at 10 sites in the Greater New Orleans area and Algiers.
- Networking with nonprofits and interfaith communities, organizing the relief effort, connecting needs to resources and developing advocacy.
- Connecting volunteers with relief organizations to help in the recovery efforts of South Louisiana.

What We've Done

Recent accomplishments by the Project include:

- With the help of Matt Thomas, who recently joined the Baton Rouge UUs in its relief efforts, the Project has connected with two relief organizations – one in New Orleans and one in the Rita-affected regions – that will provide UU volunteers with housing, safety equipment and work projects. Matt represents the church at the Greater New Orleans Disaster Relief Project's weekly volunteer management meetings.
- Placed 75 Red Cross beds with Hands On Network in New Orleans.
- Connected with inter-faith groups, nonprofit relief organizations and governmental agencies throughout South Louisiana.
- Placed out-of-state Unitarian volunteers with Louisiana relief organizations for volunteer work projects.
- Supported the continuous work of the church's Weekend Warriors, a group of volunteers who visit New Orleans on weekends to assist in the relief effort.
- Provided information on statewide relief work to the congregation.

Future Plans

The Project's future plans include developing the hurricane relief steering committee into a working committee where subgroups will discuss and develop action plans for affordable housing, work projects, advocacy - monitoring the Louisiana legislature and Congress, examining environmental issues and more.

What You Can Do

If you have time to volunteer, please let us know. You can help the Weekend Warriors or sign up with established relief organizations who need volunteers for longer projects. Donations, from money to school supplies and everything in between, are always needed. If you are interested in adopting a particular cause, church, community or family, we can help arrange this as well.

For more information, contact Marilee or Chere at uukatrina@bellsouth.net. We can match up offers to the needs of South Louisianans.

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