The entire country has been watching the plight of our fellow citizens in the states affected by the recent hurricanes, Katrina and Rita. The outpouring of support from the President, Congress, and supplies and support from the U.S. military as well as national organizations such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army must be commended. Many of the true heroes involved in saving lives and assisting those stranded in the aftermath of these storms are the elected officials, firefighters, and local and state police who live and work in the affected areas. Hundreds of nurses, physicians, and other medical personnel are included in this acknowledgment. Many of these medical professionals stayed in their hometowns while many more came from across the nation as volunteers. Others joined the relief efforts in caring for displaced individuals and families in need of medical care. All of the volunteers, no matter their station or occupation, worked diligently to assist the victims of these natural disasters.

Hurricane Katrina devastated the New Orleans area, which is home to SUNA’s Magnolia Chapter. The SUNA Board of Directors has been in close contact with them since the first hurricane touched land. SUNA members of that area were sent emails and calls were made in attempts to assure that they were safe. The Board discussed how we could best assist any of our members who were affected. The Board released a statement soon after Katrina’s devastation was known (see Figure 1).

Since this initial message from the Board, Hurricane Rita touched ground. Many cities in Texas, especially the city of Cameron, sustained significant damage. Cities in Louisiana including New Orleans were again affected. SUNA’s efforts to support our members continued. Jeffrey Albaugh, MS, APRN-BC, CUCNS, SUNA president, spearheaded the Board’s efforts to reach and assure the safety of our members in this entire region starting with the advent of Katrina. Several of our SUNA members were some of the first-responders in relief efforts. Nancy Mueller, MSN, MA, RN, CURN, immediate past president, and her husband Dr. Ed Mueller, who reside in Helotes, Texas, were among them. Ree Page, BS, RN, CURN, past president, was another active volunteer. In Figure 2, Ree describes her volunteer activities following the Katrina disaster.

The SUNA Board of Directors thanks each and every one of our members for their varied efforts to assist in the relief efforts of the hurricane victims. Your time, donations, thoughts, and wishes are all appreciated. We wish all members who were affected by these storms the best of luck in rebuilding what you have lost.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you. ☣

Donna Clar, MSN/MBA, RN, CRRN
SUNA Western Regional Director

Figure 1.
Hurricane Katrina Member Information

Caring, compassionate, committed — all words to describe SUNA nurses. Many of you have recently contacted SUNA headquarters to see how you can donate to the hurricane Katrina victims. We are most grateful for your concerns and generosity. Although SUNA will not be taking donations directly, we encourage you to make your monetary contributions to national support groups directly. You may also contact them if you want to provide volunteer assistance at the local or national level.

http://www.redcross.org
http://www1.salvationarmy.org/
Our hearts and prayers go out to our SUNA members affected by hurricane Katrina. We have had many questions regarding the welfare of our SUNA colleagues in the Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama Gulf Coast area. We are in the process of trying to contact each SUNA member in the hurricane area and will share some of their responses with our members via our Web site as we hear from them. We will also maintain a list of which members we have or have not heard from.

The SUNA Board of Directors has been struggling to determine the best way to help our members most affected by Katrina. In an effort to assist our members who were directly impacted by the hurricane, we will be extending their SUNA membership for an additional year as they attempt to rebuild their lives, their homes, and communities.

The willingness of our SUNA members to provide assistance is heartwarming. Our thoughts go out to all of the people affected by this devastating hurricane and we thank you for your concern.

Nancy Mueller, MS, APRN-BC, CUCNS
SUNA Immediate Past President

The SUNA Volunteer Recounts Her Hurricane Experiences

My experience with the refugees (refugees are simply people who have fled for safety) from Katrina follows.

Busses were arriving at the Hirsch Coliseum in Shreveport, LA. I had just gotten there when someone put a case of bottled water in my arms and told me to go to the bus area. I couldn't see the people in the bus but when I called out that I had water, hands shot out of the open windows and gladly took the water as fast as I could hand it out. I went back for more and handed out water until I was told to go inside to help in a different area.

Inside, the newly arrived people had to register and get an armband which identified them so they could have access to the facility. Each person was given a plastic bag with various toiletries so they could get cleaned up. They also had to go to a clothing area to get something other than the clothes they had on. They had been wading in the contaminated water of New Orleans so those clothes had to be discarded before the people were allowed onto the floor of the coliseum which would eventually house several thousands of the now homeless. The objective of discarding the old clothing was to not allow any sources of intestinal disease into the living area if possible since that would only complicate the horrible situation even more. They all smelled bad and looked so tired, but all were grateful to finally be at a place where they knew they could finally rest and take care of their basic human needs.

I was then asked to work in the “baby room” to help hand out baby clothing, diapers, and baby supplies to the mothers who were absolutely worn out from the experience and the long trip on the busses with their equally worn out children. To simply hold a baby for a moment so the mothers could have a break was such a relief to some of them. For many of the women, taking care of their own hygiene had been out of the question for several days. Can you imagine the difficulties of menstruation with no supplies or privacy for an extended period of time?

In the end, no matter how much time I devoted, money I contributed, or supplies I donated, it didn’t seem like enough. The reality of their predicament is something I would hope to never have to go through myself. It made me most of all realize what a wonderful life I have and to not take even regular daily “nice” things for granted.

Marie Page, RN, CURN
SUNA Past President