



In Katrina's wake, Catholic Charities aids those in need

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Catholic Charities USA is on the front lines like other major human service organizations, serving the needs of victims across the Gulf Coast states.

After sending \$1 million in initial grants to affected regions, Catholic Charities USA's Office of Disaster Response has been financially aided by Catholic Charities offices in dioceses throughout the United States.

Since Bishop Donald Trautman announced a diocesan-wide collection to aid Katrina victims, parish, school and individual donations have totaled \$334,610.67 as of Sept. 19.

The initial grants helped meet the immediate emergency needs of victims including establishing temporary shelters and supplying food, water, clothing, medical care and prescription drug services. The long-term efforts will be focused on rebuilding the affected cities.

"At the level of the Bishops' Conference and in our concern as Catholic people, our money will be distributed through other Catholic Charities agencies and through other dioceses," says Mary Maxwell, executive director of the Catholic Charities Office of the Erie Diocese. "None of the money we are col-

lecting will go to governments or other agencies. It will go through other Catholic entities in the Gulf states. It will help evacuees from Catholic parishes and people who would come to Catholic Charities in those areas."

To date, 15 agencies have each received grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$110,000 to help provide immediate support. Some of the vital community support may include temporary housing; food, clothing, and other basic necessities; crisis and grief counseling; and financial assistance.

The agencies receiving grants include Catholic Charities of New Orleans, La.; Catholic Community Services of Baton Rouge, La.; Catholic Social Services of Houma-Thibodaux, La.; the Diocese of Shreveport, La.; Catholic Charities, Inc., of Jackson, Miss.; Catholic Social and Community Services of Biloxi, Miss.; Catholic Social Services of Mobile, Ala.; Catholic Social Services of Robertsdale, Ala.

On Sept. 12, Catholic Charities of New Orleans began distributing 400,000 pounds of food on a daily basis throughout the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. The agency has also distributed more than 2.5 million pounds of food out of an empty Wal-Mart near Baker, La.

Although many would like to send food and clothing and other



CNS photo from Reuters

Fr. Gregory Barras celebrates Mass outside Our Mother of Sorrows Church in Biloxi, Miss., Sept. 11. The church had significant flooding and wind damage from Hurricane Katrina. Most surrounding homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged by the storm.

material goods to the Gulf states, it is very difficult to connect such goods with those in need right now, Maxwell says.

"Right now we need to put our energies into what we can send down there monetarily and what needs to be done for any evacuees who come into any of our communities here in the diocese," she says.

Locally, 74 evacuees have relocated to Erie and are living at the Motel 6 on upper Peach Street. Most of the people relocating in Erie have relocated themselves, says Rose Graham,

director of development for the Erie Diocese's Catholic Charities Office.

"The government is not currently sending people this far north," Graham says. "That doesn't mean that won't change. They are asking for all our housing stock throughout our 13 counties. They're asking us to keep track of what apartments are available that are not rented. They do not want to put people in private homes."

Acting as a hospitality agent, the Catholic Charities Office hosted a meeting Sept. 9 inviting

roughly 30 local agencies to coordinate efforts in providing services for evacuees relocating in Erie.

Hurricane Katrina relief

Donations should be sent to:

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Attn: Katrina Collection

Dioceses devastated by Katrina

(CNS) — While Katrina has destroyed and damaged homes and businesses throughout the Gulf Coast, it has also devastated dioceses in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

- The Archdiocese of New Orleans is planning to establish satellite elementary and secondary schools in communities where thousands of students have taken refuge.

- Catholic schools across the nation have opened their doors to Gulf Coast students displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

- More than 20 percent of churches and one third of schools in the Biloxi Diocese were destroyed or severely damaged in the hurricane.

- The National Religious Retirement Office is serving as a center to help relocate elderly religious men and women displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

- The U.S. bishops are appointing a task force to coordinate the Catholic response to recovery efforts.

Katrina puts local man to test in Biloxi

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

Placed in Hurricane Katrina's path, all Jesse Wickham wanted to be was a source of strength to the people who needed him.

Wickham, a fourth-year medical student at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM), was in Biloxi, Miss., during Hurricane Katrina. As part of his Air Force medical scholarship, Wickham must complete two clinical clerk shifts at a medical hospital. His second month-long shift was scheduled at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi beginning Aug. 8.

"That first night there was just a real feeling of anticipation with everyone being there," he says.

The next day brought momentary power outages before it went out and the base went to backup generators.

"Then the storm surge came and basically flooded the entire base," Wickham says. "There were white caps in the parking lot and cars floating around. The ER is on the basement floor, so we evacuated ER and took

patients to the general medical floor."

The first floor, which houses the center's cafeteria and pharmacy, began to flood. The generators on the basement floor were flooded out, and the base was without power.

"Immediately nurses began hand-bagging the patients on ventilators," Wickham says. "We heard word of roof damage and flooding coming from the fifth floor. They closed that floor, and we were basically sandwiched between these two floors."

The two patients he was caring for in ICU were stable, but everyone at the medical center was concerned.

"We were just trying to make them understand the situation," Wickham says. "Luckily we had no fatalities during the hurricane. But afterward, we heard of everything going in New Orleans and other areas. We just wanted to make sure their vital signs were stable. We wanted to keep everyone stable throughout this ordeal."

Back in Erie, Wickham's wife, Laura Sellitto, was trying to remain calm. Sellitto, the development director of St. Martin

Center, had only brief and intermittent contact with her husband during the early stages of the hurricane. And for two days, there was no contact at all.

"I knew the storm was hitting," Sellitto says. "When I talked to him, he said he was safe. Then the storm hit. It was a little nerve wracking not being able to talk to him. Thursday was the last time I talked to him. I was a little scared after he left the base. We finally got in touch."

The couple, married in October, are parishioners of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Erie.

"By the next day, it became clear we needed to get everybody out," Wickham says.

Personnel coordinated a critical air transfer team, and patients were also transferred by ambulance.

That day, staff performed an emergency C-section in ICU with equipment hooked up to emergency generators. There was also a premature birth.

"During the hurricane, we actually added two to the population," Wickham says. "I'm not sure what day it was. That whole week is pretty much blurred together."

With patients being evacuated, Wickham found himself wondering how he would get himself back to Erie.

"I was pretty scared as to how I'd get back," he says. "I was supposed to start a new rotation Tuesday. With airports not functional, I didn't know how I'd get back."

He ended up catching a ride with a fellow resident and his family who were driving to Lancaster, Pa.

The experience is hard to put into words, he says.

"I thank God, really," he says. "I was in a safer place than a lot of people there. I truly thought of myself as blessed, especially after hearing stories of people who lost everything or couldn't find their family."

Thinking back, Wickham says he did whatever he could to provide support to the people at the medical center.

"I hope I could be a source of strength," he says. "They're strong people. There is a great concept of southern hospitality. The first thing out of everybody's mouth was, 'We've got to rebuild now,' not 'We have to move.' They're very strong people."



Clergy Appointments

The Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, S.T.D., S.S.L., Bishop of Erie, announces the following clergy appointments:

Fr. Zab Amar, appointed pastor of Christ the King Parish, Houtzdale, and the mission churches of Immaculate Conception, Madera, and Holy Trinity Parish, Ramey, for a term of six years ending June 30, 2011. Effective Aug. 29, 2005.

Fr. Regis J. Meenihan, appointed parochial administrator of St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Walston; St. Joseph Parish, Anita; and St. Adrian Parish, Delancey, with residence at Ss. Cosmas & Damian rectory, Punxsutawney. Effective Aug. 29, 2005.

Fr. John R. Neff, appointed administrator of St. Luke Parish, Youngsville, for a term of six years ending June 30, 2011. Effective Aug. 29, 2005

News Briefs

U.S.

Vatican delegation tours devastated regions of Gulf Coast

BILLOXI, Miss. (CNS) — Archbishop Paul Cordes, the Vatican's top humanitarian aid official, urged Biloxi Catholics Sept. 12 not to lose hope in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and assured them that with God's help they would "be able to overcome" the struggles they faced from the devastation. The archbishop, who is president of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum," which coordinates charity efforts, was sent to the Gulf Coast region by Pope Benedict XVI as part of a delegation visiting the hurricane-devastated areas of the United States. He was accompanied by Washington Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick and Father Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, for a three-day visit that included visiting evacuees in Baton Rouge, La., going on a helicopter tour of New Orleans and driving through hard-hit areas in Biloxi. Archbishop Cordes said his visit was "a sign from the pope that he'd like to be close to you and show his compassion."

Convention focuses on pastoral care of ethnic groups in church

ARLINGTON, Va. (CNS) — People in metropolitan areas, such as Washington, are aware that they live with a culturally diverse population: Spanish Masses, international festivals and ethnic groups have become commonplace, even within the church. But these urban dwellers may be surprised to find that people in rural towns all across America are facing a similar phenomenon, according to a priest who addressed a Sept. 7-9 gathering of Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees Networks. "It's very hard to find any part of the country without multiculturalism in their midst," said Father Robert Schreiter, a professor of theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

WORLD

Turkish government invites pope to visit in 2006

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The government of Turkey has invited Pope Benedict XVI to visit the country in 2006, apparently ruling out a hoped-for papal visit this fall. Turkey's Foreign Ministry said Sept. 15 that President Ahmet Necdet Sezer was inviting the pope to come to Turkey next year in order to help "strengthen dialogue between civilizations." The Foreign Ministry said Turkey was closely following the new pope's efforts to promote interreligious dialogue and tolerance. It said the government was awaiting a response from the Vatican to its invitation. The Vatican press office had no immediate comment on the Turkish announcement. Only a week earlier, Vatican officials had expressed hope that the pope would be able to travel in late November of this year for a meeting with Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who invited the pope several months ago. Cardinal Walter Kasper, who coordinates ecumenical dialogue at the Vatican, said Sept. 8 that the pope had welcomed the Orthodox leader's invitation and hoped to make the trip Nov. 30, the feast of St. Andrew. The pope's visit has political

overtones in Turkey, a predominantly Muslim country that has been trying to gain membership in the European Union.

Experts say Catholics still don't read Bible regularly

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While it may be a best-seller, the Bible still is not regularly read, nor has it become an integral part of many Catholics' lives, said a panel of biblical experts. "Unfortunately, it must be said, there is still little Bible in the lives of the faithful," said Italian Bishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Catholic Bible Federation. Recent research conducted in Italy, Spain and France found that many Catholics consider the sacred Scriptures as something "reserved for the clergy" rather than as an accessible resource for them to draw upon for truth and inspiration in their own lives, he said. Bishop Paglia, together with a number of biblical experts, spoke at a Vatican press conference Sept. 8 to present an upcoming international congress commemorating the 40th anniversary of "Dei Verbum," the Second Vatican Council document on Scripture and divine revelation.

Pope says synod will be fitting close to Year of the Eucharist

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI looked ahead to the October Synod of Bishops, saying it would bring a fitting close to the Year of the Eucharist initiated by Pope John Paul II. Speaking at a noon blessing at his summer residence outside Rome Sept. 4, the pope said bishops around the world were studying the working document of the Oct. 2-23 synod, which will focus on the Eucharist. The pope asked the entire church to join in preparation for the synod, especially through prayer and reflection. He said the synod would highlight the importance of the Eucharist as "the true treasure of the church."

PEOPLE

Pope to preside over first canonizations in October

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI will create five new saints when he presides over his first canonization ceremony Oct. 23 in St. Peter's Square. While Pope Benedict will lead the canonization Mass and ceremony, it was his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, who approved the decrees creating the five new saints. The late pope had also approved the decrees authorizing several beatifications this autumn; various cardinals will preside over those ceremonies, Vatican Radio reported. Pope Benedict has not yet signed or approved any decrees that would conclude pending causes for a beatification or canonization, said Vatican officials. In an attempt to highlight the difference between a beatification and a canonization, Pope Benedict is presiding over canonizations only. Those who have been beatified and are scheduled to become saints Oct. 23 are: Blessed Jozef Bilczewski, Blessed Zygmunt Gorazdowski, Blessed Alberto Hurtado Cruchaga, Blessed Felice da Nicosia and Blessed Gaetano Catanoso.

By the Way...

Two of the oldest parishes in the diocese will celebrate milestone anniversaries in October. **St. Francis of Assisi Parish** in Clearfield will mark its 175th anniversary with a special Mass on Oct. 2 at 11:30 a.m. at the church. **Immaculate Conception Parish** in Clarion will celebrate its 150th anniversary with a Mass on Oct. 9 at 3 p.m. **Bishop Trautman** will be the celebrant at both Masses.



Jason Koshinskie

Bishop Trautman will also celebrate Mass for all **diocesan Scout leaders** on Oct. 8 at **St. Brigid Parish** in Meadville. Mass time is 5:15 p.m.

On Oct. 16, the bishop will celebrate a 100th anniversary Mass for the **Catholic Daughters of America** at **St. Thomas Parish** in Corry. Mass time is 10 a.m.

Bishop Trautman is garnering national attention this month as he appears in two well-known Catholic publications. *U.S. Catholic* published a lengthy Q & A style interview in its October issue in which the bishop talks candidly about his work as chairman of the U.S. bishop's Committee on Liturgy including translating the Lectionary and the prayers for Mass. Visit the magazine's Web site at www.uscatholic.org.

America, a national Catholic weekly, will publish an article on the October Synod of Bishops in Rome written by Bishop Trautman in its Oct. 3 issue. In the piece, titled *The Challenge and Opportunity for the World Synod of Bishops*, the bishop talks about what can be accomplished when 250 of the world's bishops come together. The magazine has a subscription service at www.americamagazine.org. The synod, which will focus on the Eucharist, takes place Oct. 2-23 in Rome.

Congratulations to **Bill Herring**, who is entering his 35th year as music director of St. Peter Cathedral. As organist and choir director, he has provided beautiful and sacred music not only at the cathedral parish but also for many diocesan celebrations over the years. Happy anniversary, Bill!

After the monthly "prayer request for priests" calendar was featured in the Aug. 28 issue of *FaithLife*, **Alice Kenawell** of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in DuBois reports that she has been contacted by both parishes and individuals wanting to pray for priests of the diocese by name. If you'd like more information, contact her at 347C Patterson Ave., DuBois, Pa. 15801, or at 814.371.3909.

Katie Flynn of Kersey and her blue-ribbon winning cheesecake made it into the August/September issue of *Taste of Home* magazine. The 18-year-old Elk County Catholic High School grad is pictured, along with the cheesecake she entered in the Elk County Fair, in the issue's Stirring Comments section. The photo was submitted by her mother **Cindy Flynn**.

Jason Koshinskie is editor of *FaithLife*. Contact him at JKoshinskie@erieRCD.org or 814.824.1171.

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FaithLife

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Briefly

11th annual rosary march set for Oct. 9

The 11th annual Erie Diocesan rosary march is scheduled for Oct. 9 at 2:30 p.m. The march will begin at St. Peter Cathedral, Erie, at 10th and Sassafras streets.

Those joining in the march are asked to gather outside the cathedral at 2 p.m. For those unable to participate in the march, the rosary will be prayed inside the cathedral while the march is taking place.

Following the march, a church service will be held at the cathedral and will include exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, investiture in the brown scapular and benediction. Fr. Jack Custer, dean of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh, will be the guest speaker.

OLP Playhouse presents *Moments to Remember*

The OLP Playhouse will present *Moments to Remember: The First Fifty Years*, an original musical comedy in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Our Lady of Peace Parish, Erie. Performances are scheduled for Friday, Sept. 30 and Saturday, Oct. 1 at 7:30 pm and Sunday, Oct. 2 at 2 p.m.

The ensemble production was conceived by Dennis Jobczynski and written by Jack Chapman; it is being produced and directed by Mary Ann Muller.

Tickets, available at the door, are \$6 for adults, \$4 for senior citizens and students. All performances will be in the OLP school gymnasium, 2401 W. 38th St.

Calendar

Retrouvaille is a weekend designed to help couples who are having problems in their marriage. If you have separated or are thinking about separating, **Retrouvaille** may be the program to get you back on track. The next weekend in the Erie area will be October 7, 8 and 9. For more information, call 800-374-3723 ext. 265 or 814-824-1265, or to register 800-470-2230. Additional information is available at www.retrouvaille.org. All information is kept confidential.

In conjunction with *Mental Illness Awareness Week*, **Rhythm & Praise** will be held on Oct. 2 from 2-4 p.m. at St. Patrick Parish, 130 E. 4th St., Erie. Performances will be provided by Daystar, guitarist and poet David Devine, the Bread of Life contemporary group and other local groups. Refreshments and fellowship will follow. The church is accessible/sign interpretation provided upon request. For more information, call Jackie Johnson, 824-1257, 800-374-3723 ext. 257 or e-mail jjohnson@erieRCD.org.

Pilgrims recall encounters with pope at WYD

By Jason Koshinskie
FaithLife editor

On a trip he inherited from his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI stepped into the world spotlight and outlined the priorities and the style of his emerging papacy. To young people gathered for World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany, the pope brought an intensely spiritual message during his Aug. 18-21 visit, telling them that living their faith and imitating the saints were the only ways to transform the world.

That seemed to make a connection with many young people in Cologne, including pilgrims from the Erie Diocese.

During the week-long event, the group took part in Adoration and reconciliation at Cologne churches and catechesis sessions with other pilgrims. There was also a buzz about the city anticipating the arrival of the pope.

For Dan Kubacki, just seeing the Holy Father and feeling connected to him stands out from the trip. The diocesan group joined those around the world in gathering on the banks of the Rhine River as Pope Benedict arrived by boat.

"It was a great experience just seeing him," says Kubacki, a junior at Penn State Behrend and parishioner of Mount Calvary Parish, Erie. "We have a great pope. He seems to love his people more than they love him. He seemed to be beaming back just as much or even more."

With so many events spread out in the city, Kubacki says travel was difficult.

"It was hard to do everything," he says. "You had to leave several hours ahead of time if you wanted to do something. But it was fun, and that was part of the pilgrim-

age."

Ross Miceli, a St. Mark Seminary student at Gannon University, participated in a gathering with Pope Benedict, as he met with 2,000 seminarians from around the globe.

"I was able to really contemplate, in the presence of 2,000 seminarians, God's great plan for the church," Miceli says. "Seminarians feel the love that Jesus has for us, and through that grace we come to respond to God with a gift of self. The Holy Father said, 'Remember that you have not chosen him; he has chosen you. He is the secret of your vocation and your mission.'"

Miceli says Pope Benedict also offered advice that will deepen their spiritual lives.

"He reminded us to stay close to Mary, who 'teaches the seminarian to contemplate Jesus with the eyes of the heart,'" he says.

At the gathering, Miceli received a holy card of St. Jean-Marie Vianney, whose heart is located at St. Panteleon Church in Cologne. Pope Benedict also prayed evening prayer with the group at the church.

"The card has a great quote on it," Miceli says. "It says, 'The priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus.' It says that in all the languages of World Youth Day and is a wonderful treasure of the time the Holy Father gave to his seminarians."

Part of the group's pilgrimage included a visit to the Cologne cathedral and a walk to its dome. Much of the their interaction with other youths from other countries included trading country pins during travel and at the closing Mass at Marien Field and singing songs. "We sang a lot of songs with the Italian pilgrims," Kubacki



A group of diocesan pilgrims pose outside the Cologne cathedral during their trip to World Youth Day. From left, Dan Kubacki, Penn State-Behrend; Beth Swanson, Beloved Disciple Parish; Amanda Hovis, Penn State-Behrend; MaryAlice Garvis, Beloved Disciple; Helen Garvis, Beloved Disciple; Rachael Shade, Indiana University of Pennsylvania/St. Catherine of Siena Parish. Missing from photo is Ross Miceli, St. Catherine of Siena/Gannon University.

says. "They know a lot of American songs even better than we do."

A million people gathered for the closing Mass, many of them spending the previous evening in the Marien Field lawn with visits to the adoration tent.

At the Mass, Kubacki says the pope spoke well and in several languages.

"His message was very simple but it had a lot of meaning," he says. "He just had this great smile on his face the whole time. He just seemed to be so alive there, celebrating Mass with a million people. It was just really awesome."

Pope Benedict XVI announced that the next World Youth Day would be held in Sydney, Australia, in 2008.

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Erie DAWN celebrates 10th anniversary

By Jason Koshinski
FaithLife editor

Ever since Sr. Phyllis Hilbert met Heather Peskorski in 1995, the nun says the young woman has brought her beauty and hope.

Ten years ago, Peskorski came to her as a single mom at the age of 19 with nowhere to go. Today she owns her own home and is carrying a 3.8 G.P.A. at Mercyhurst College, where she is close to earning her degree in education. Her personal testimony is one of many success stories that have come out of Erie DAWN (Dwellings and Advocacy for Women in Need).

Since its founding in September 1995, Erie DAWN, in partnership with area landlords/realtors, has provided safe, affordable, independent transitional housing for low-income women and children. Advocacy and support services are provided so that the women can become productive members of the community.

Nearly 200 volunteers, benefactors and friends of Erie DAWN attended its 10th anniversary luncheon Sept. 15 at Gannon University. Sr. Hilbert, SSJ,

administrator, gave a brief historical overview of the organization, which is a collaborative ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Joseph.



Through a combination of case management services and personal mentoring, Sr. Hilbert says the women who come to the agency are able to secure safe and affordable housing while empowering them to gain and maintain their inde-

pendence.
100 percent achieve permanent housing
65 percent leave the program debt free
26 percent purchase their own homes
61 percent improve their income by 20 percent or more
87 percent remain free of unhealthy relationships

In thanking those for helping to make Erie DAWN's ministry possible, Sr. Hilbert noted that since 1995, area landlords have provided \$340,000 in reduced rental contributions to Erie DAWN families.

She also acknowledged the program's mentors for their service and friendship.

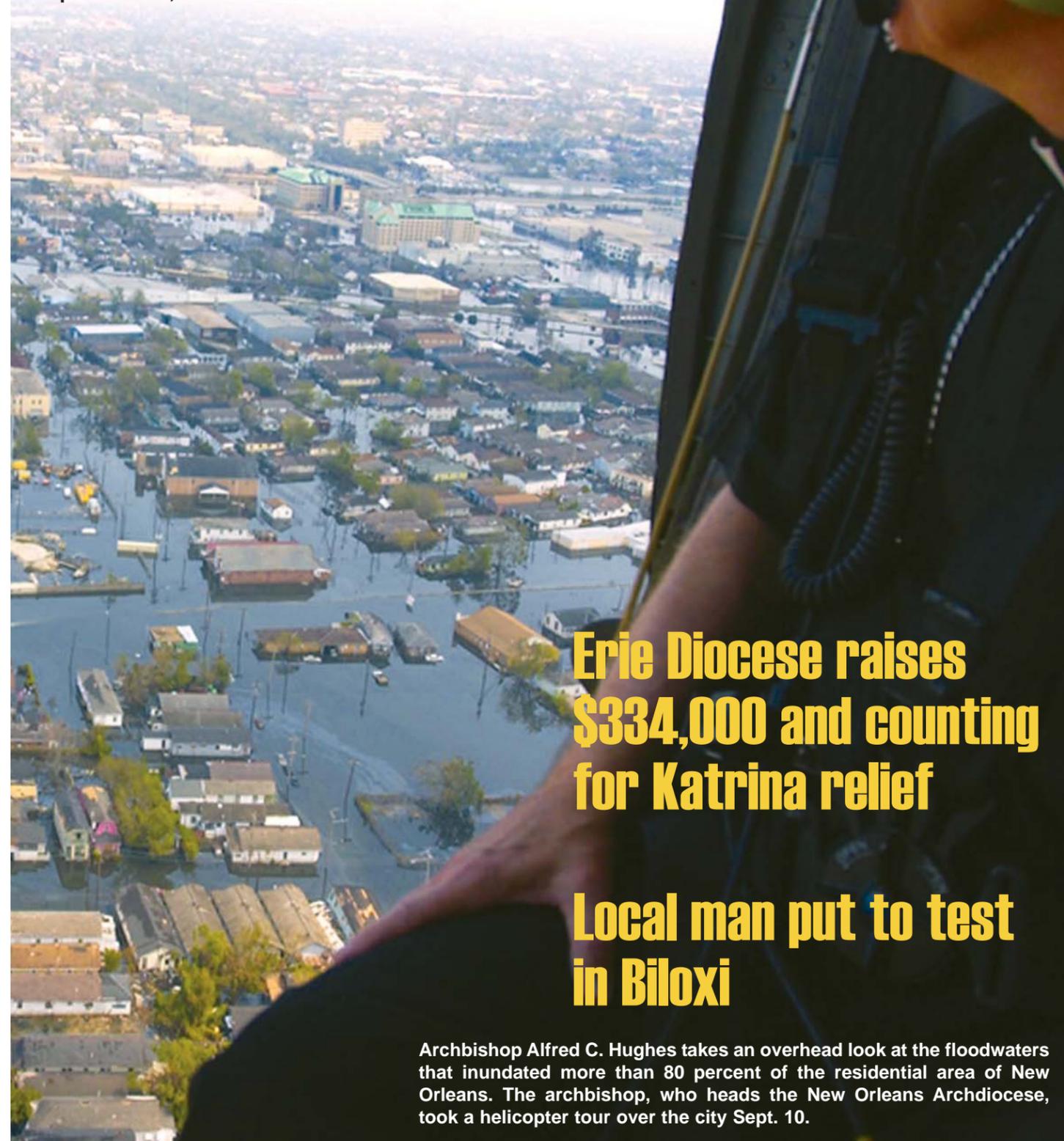
"Mentors are at the heart of the program," Sr. Hilbert says. "They're the mentors and friends of the women that may not have ever had the acceptance and guidance that they bring to them."

Erie DAWN continually seeks mentors, contributing landlords/realtors and donors willing to commit monthly rental support. For details about becoming a mentor or opportunities to partner with DAWN, visit www.eriedawn.org or call 814.453.5921

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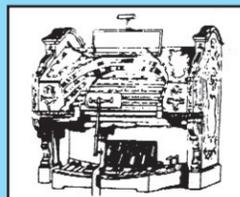


Erie Diocese raises \$334,000 and counting for Katrina relief

Local man put to test in Biloxi

Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes takes an overhead look at the floodwaters that inundated more than 80 percent of the residential area of New Orleans. The archbishop, who heads the New Orleans Archdiocese, took a helicopter tour over the city Sept. 10.

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