

ARC

Continued from Page 1A

"It's been a great year," Rankin said, pointing out that the chapter's \$700,000 budget was about \$300,000 more than in an average year because of grants and donations from businesses and individuals in the community.

He said the surplus was used to bulk up the chapter's staff and increase relief preparedness in Jackson and George counties. An additional \$30,000 was contributed to the overall budget by the chapter's March Draw Down, its largest fundraiser, Rankin said.

Other than the year's financial success, Roberts said the chapter is also at its most prepared in terms of the "stuff" it has for disaster recovery and relief.

Thanks to more than \$159,000 donated by Chet Lott and the Wal-Mart Foundation, the chapter was able to purchase two one-ton pickup trucks, two fully stocked disaster-relief trailers and a new computer system at the chapter's main office in Pascagoula.

"People are the heart of



MICHAEL DUMAS/Staff Reporter

Paige Roberts, executive director of the Southeast Mississippi Chapter of the American Red Cross, addresses staff, volunteers and honorees Tuesday.

the American Red Cross, but there's no denying the need for stuff," Roberts said,

pointing out that the operating budget doesn't usually allow for the purchase of

new equipment.

"These are high-dollar items with high value to our really valuable work," she said. "My new theory is that it's going to be Murphy's Law in reverse, that since we have so much weaponry in our arsenal, Mother Nature will not dare mess with Mississippi."

Tuesday's meeting concluded with the presentation of awards and service pins to volunteers and staff members.

Last year, Roberts said she instituted the Above and Beyond award for volunteers exceeding what's asked of them during the year. For 2009, the awards were presented to Stephen Butts, Jo Longley, Dr. Bill Martin, Bill Musa, Darlene Nix, Yvonne Phillips, Barbara Ryals and Steve Torres.

Service pins, in recognition of years of dedication, were presented to: Jerry White and Paige Roberts, five-year pins; Buck Williams, 15-year pin; Priscilla Edwards, 20-year pin; Audrey and Charles "Andy" Anderson, 25-year pins; and Jayne Davis, 35-year pin.