

Disaster Training Gets High Marks

By Royce Armstrong

The American Red Cross Disaster Training Institute held in Lucedale this past week apparently got high marks from both students and instructors.

"I have been involved with three different disaster institute trainings, and this is the most successful that I have been involved with," said Jerry White, the DSHR Administrator for the Southeast Mississippi Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Approximately 60 people from Mississippi south of Jackson and Meridian, as well as Louisiana and Alabama, spent the best part of last week in Lucedale taking disaster response classes.

White said that attendance was what stood out as making the George County institute successful.

"If I had to venture a guess, I would think that it was because that we have been fortunate to stimulate interest in Red Cross disaster work in this area because a number of people have already deployed on disaster assignments. There is an interest that has been peaked; it gives them the motivation to come to these trainings," White said.

White also was impressed with the facilities used for the training. Classes were held at the First United Methodist Church, the Lucedale Church of God in Christ and the George County campus of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

"The facilities could not have been better," White said. "They definitely rolled out the red carpet for us."

One of those attending classes was Doris Moorman,

Pascagoula.

"I was involved with the Red Cross earlier in my life when my children were in Brownies and Girl Scouts," Moorman said. "I became a lifeguard and a Red Cross First Aid instructor and that kind of thing. Then I got out of it. Then after I retired, I kept saying that I was going to (get involved again). But, until we were actually faced with Katrina, I hadn't really thought about it. They (Red Cross) were so good to respond to us when we really needed help. It makes you know how other people who are going through a disaster, how much they welcome somebody coming and giving them a hand. It kind of brings organization to catastrophe. You need somebody at that time. Like anything else, once you have been through it, you know how to help other people. Just being there is a big thing, you know.

"I am 71, and a lot of people think that you should be slowing down at this age, but I am enjoying it too much.

"The first time I was deployed this year was to Iowa," said Moorman. "Then I was deployed for hurricanes Gustav and Ike. I like to travel. Take Iowa, I would never have picked to go to Iowa, but once I got up there, the country was beautiful and the people were so receptive. I liked it. Everywhere that I have been I have made friends that I have kept in contact with since I left the disaster."

Bernard and Vivian Wabel, Ocean Springs, saw classes at the institute as an opportunity to further their disaster service skills.

"We have been deployed out in Texas and looking at

something maybe additional or different than what we did out there," Bernard said. "We went out there for three weeks with an ERV, serving meals. We were serving meals to people who were displaced or who had no electricity and water. We were bringing them meals, water and ice. It was a very good experience."

Shirley Phillips, the local branch manager was also pleased with the way things went this week.

"This gave volunteers the opportunity to take classes that will qualify them to perform different duties when

they are deployed in the future, whether for a hurricane, tornado, whatever type of disaster that may occur," she said.

Responding to people during times of disaster has been a Red Cross responsibility for more than 100 years, according to White. Ninety percent of the Red Cross staff is volunteers and without volunteers, nothing happens, he said.

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