

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
www.sbcounty.gov



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 23, 2006

For more information, contact
David Wert, Public Information Officer
(909) 387-4082
dwert@sbcounty.gov

County earns Red Cross' highest honor for Katrina aid

The Inland Empire Chapter of the American Red Cross presented its Humanitarian Award to the County of San Bernardino this week for the county's efforts assist victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The award, the Red Cross' highest honor, was presented to County Administrative Officer Mark Uffer during the chapter's Annual Meeting on Thursday at the San Bernardino Hilton.

"When Hurricane Katrina struck, everyone was looking for people power to help," said Chapter Chief Executive Officer Toni Callicott. "The county, led by Mark, rose to the occasion."

The County of San Bernardino gave county employees time off with pay to work with the American Red Cross in the disaster zone, sent county health care and rescue workers to the Gulf Coast, adopted the City of Gulfport, Mississippi, and led an effort to collect new and surplus goods worth an estimated \$27,000 to help Gulfport restore basic services. County employees donated nearly \$45,000 in gift cards to assist Gulfport residents in purchasing clothing, household goods, and home repair supplies.

"That was money out of our employees' own pockets that we personally handed over to Gulfport Mayor Brent Warr," Mr. Uffer said. "This was truly a 'we' effort. The Board of Supervisors and everyone got together to help."

In presenting the county with the Humanitarian Award, Ms. Callicott also cited the county-organized September 19 fact-finding mission to Gulfport, which gave county disaster responders, community leaders, the news media, and disaster responders from several county cities the opportunity to see first-hand the effects of a major disaster and one community's efforts to recover. The information gathered during that trip, which was funded entirely by private donations, has led to better disaster planning in San Bernardino County.

"Although the news media questioned the appropriateness of that trip, the county stands strong as 17,000 people who are all dedicated to doing the right thing for the taxpayers," Mr. Uffer added.