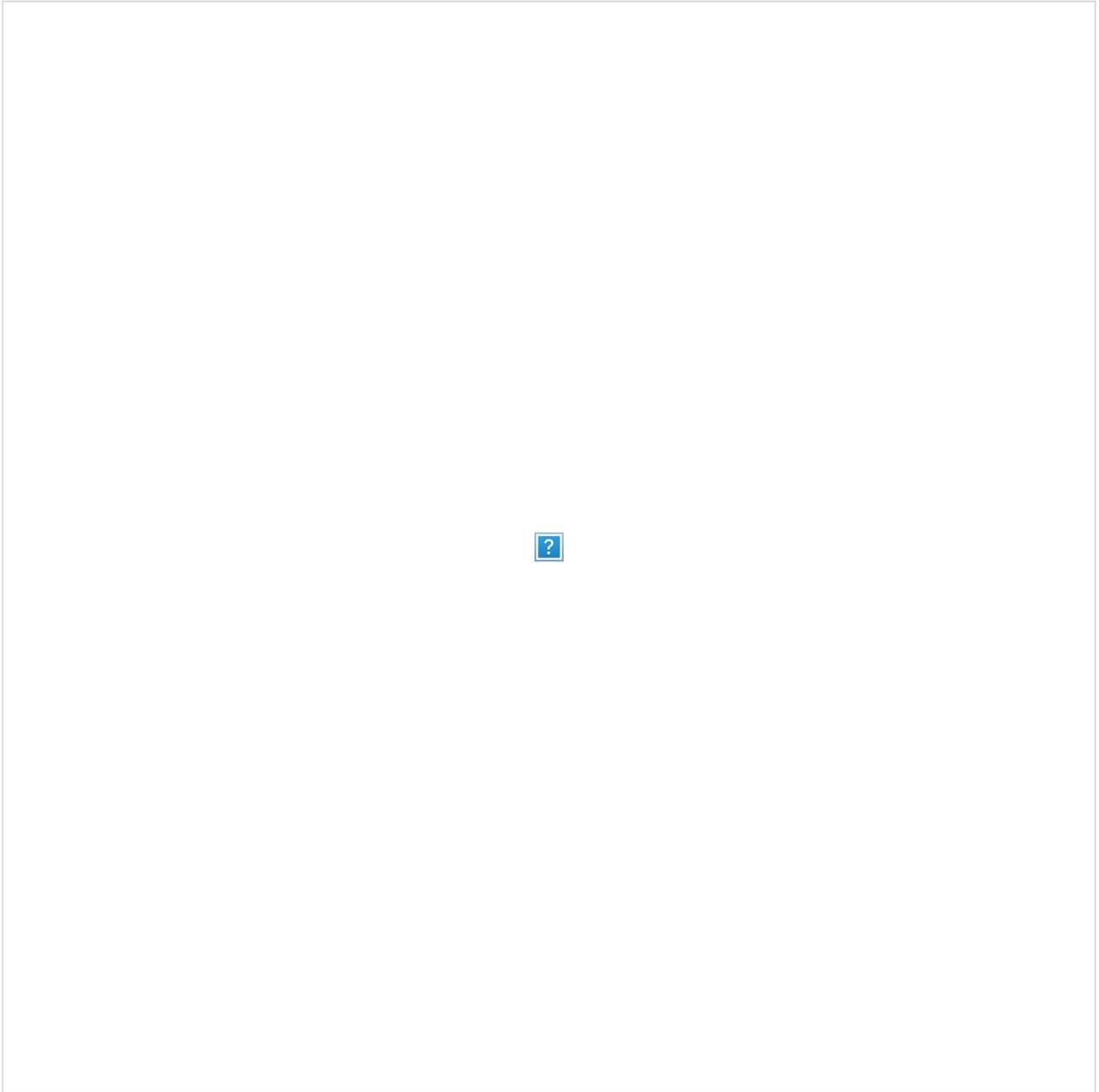


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The Heart of the Storm - An Eyewitness News Extra

| Posted Nov 25th, 2004 @ 9:39pm



Carole Mikita Reporting

The state of Florida is still recovering from a horrendous hurricane season. Not since the late 1800s in Texas have four storms of that magnitude hit any state. Carole has the story of how relief agencies and Latter-day Saints worked hand-in-hand to rescue residents. They became "The Heart of the Storm".

When thanking those who helped, Gov. Jeb Bush mentioned state agencies, local organizations and churches who came to the rescue, singling out The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for its swift response and organizational skills. And much like what happened here during the floods of 1983, Latter-day Saints by the thousands left their own damaged homes to help others.

First came the fury of the storms-- four hurricanes in six weeks devastated parts of Florida, taking lives, destroying homes and businesses, leaving hundreds of thousands of residents without clean water or power.

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So many had to run for their lives, those who live near the water were this time surprised how quickly their houses became flooded. In the case of the Grace family, as they gathered what they could, they only had time to swim out.

Angela Grace, Pace Resident: "So, we got on our surfboards; I had the dog on mine, the boys on theirs, we paddle out. I could see just the tip of my mailbox and my daughter, and the other neighbors on the other side, they're holding flashlights, so we

could swim toward the light."

Dana Cromer, Navarre Resident: "When the storm surge came through, the water was about chin deep in my house and it just blew everything out the windows, and then just sucked everything back through."

An army of volunteers mobilized, including a battalion of well organized Latter-day Saints. Others set up tent cities, bringing their own heavy equipment, coming from as far away as Louisiana and South Carolina.

Mark Daniels, Pensacola Stake President: "Had trucks on standby all ready to roll as soon as the storm was over. So we had supplies, generators, chainsaws."

John Carter, Pensacola Resident: "I can't believe it. I guess it's short of a miracle, but I wasn't expecting it in the first place. And I just can't believe what's taken place."

There were so many, in fact, that local newspapers and television stations did news stories on them. "250 strong, they descended upon snug harbor village to cut up trees, pick up debris and make life a little more livable. It's just great what they've done and are doing..."

Cell phone in one hand, steering wheel in the other, Jeff Bradshaw mobilized work crews. Pensacola took the worst hit; everywhere you looked there was destruction. Dressed in T-shirts and jeans, church members participated in a quick Sunday meeting, then hit the road...

Word spread quickly and people began calling for help, each request was put on a work order. Church building gyms were turned into makeshift storehouses, water, generators, food and toilet paper packed into boxes for families of two, four, six or more.

Wendy Jennings, Fox Run Ward Storehouse: "They're pretty much desperate. They have nothing, they've lost, this one family that came in, their whole house was destroyed."

Imagine the contents of your home, tossed together and broken, imagine losing everything. So many needed a helping hand.

Dana Wainwright, Disaster Relief Team: "I've got someone at home watching my

children so I could come and help other mothers, because we helped a lot of single mothers and a lot of widows today. And that's a great feeling to be able to help each other."

Florida's Senator Bill Nelson visited with Bishop Burton telling him how impressed he is with the church's quick response. Friday night, join us for more of "The Heart of the Storm".

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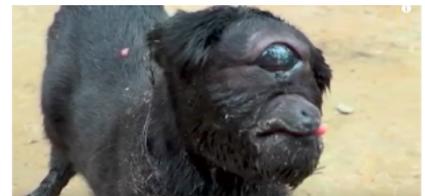


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