



Press Release

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Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Partners with American Red Cross to Offer Free Admission to Those Who Make Donations to Hurricane Katrina Victims

Springfield, IL: In response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum will be offering free admission to the Museum on Saturday, September 3rd and Sunday, September 4th for all visitors who make an individual contribution to the American Red Cross. The American Red Cross will be set up outside the doors of the Museum, collecting donations from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

“I’ve always said that the ALPLM could be a vital part of the community. In this case, the community is continental. We invite our neighbors in and around Springfield to help our neighbors in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast,” said Richard Norton Smith, Executive Director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Smith has offered to match individual donations at 50 cents on the dollar, up to \$2,000.

“Like the rest of us, I’m sure thousands of visitors will come to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum this weekend, thinking about the hundreds of thousands of Americans in the Gulf States who are only beginning to pick up the pieces of their lives,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “By donating to the Red Cross, instead of paying the cost of admission, Illinoisans can show the people of the Gulf States that Illinois cares and is doing whatever we can to help.”

Officials believe that Hurricane Katrina will be more costly than Hurricane Andrew, the previous record-breaking hurricane of 1992. In response, the American Red Cross is launching the largest mobilization of resources for a single natural disaster, involving

thousands of trained disaster relief workers, tons of supplies, and shoulders on which to lean.

The American Red Cross anticipates a sustained disaster relief effort, unlike any other in our history, lasting many months. Already, the Red Cross has provided a safe haven for nearly 70,000 evacuees in more than 230 Red Cross shelters from the panhandle of Florida, across Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas. However, because Katrina is still wreaking havoc as she tracks northward, we do not have a full report of the damage and services needed and do not yet have a firm nationwide fundraising goal. Early estimates indicate that this response could cost as much or more than the sum of the four combined hurricanes during last year's hurricane, which cost approximately \$130 million. The peak of the Atlantic hurricane season is still to come.

"It's wonderful that the community has been so generous in response to Hurricane Katrina. Community members and donors, like Mr. Smith, make what we do possible," said Jenny Antonacci, Community Relations Coordinator for the Illinois Capital Area Chapter. "By supporting the Disaster Relief Fund, people can give the greatest gift of all...*hope*."

American Red Cross disaster assistance is free, made possible by voluntary donations of time and money from the American people. You can help the victims of this and thousands of other disasters across the country each year by making a financial gift to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, which enables the Red Cross to provide shelter, food, counseling and other assistance to those in need. Call 1-800-HELP NOW or 1-800-257-7575 (Spanish). Contributions to the Disaster Relief Fund may be sent to your local American Red Cross chapter (Illinois Capital Area Chapter, 1025 S. 6th St., Springfield, IL, 62703) or to the American Red Cross, P. O. Box 37243, Washington, DC 20013. Internet users can make a secure online contribution by visiting www.redcross.org.

This is the latest in Illinois' efforts to help victims of Hurricane Katrina. Today, Gov. Blagojevich ordered Illinois public schools to waive residency requirements and enroll any child displaced by Hurricane Katrina who relocates to live with family, friends or in a shelter in Illinois. Hundreds of thousands of children in the Gulf States were displaced by the devastating storm and many schools may not re-open for months, if not the entire school year.

Yesterday, Gov. Blagojevich authorized the Illinois National Guard to travel to Louisiana to assist in Hurricane Katrina cleanup efforts. The Illinois National Guard will send up to fifty military vehicles and 300 soldiers to the devastated state. The soldiers are assembling in Springfield today and will leave for Louisiana Friday morning. On Tuesday, the Governor authorized the Illinois Medical Emergency Response Team to travel to Louisiana to assist as well. The Illinois Emergency Medical Team consists of ten highly trained doctors and specialists with clinical experience and field experience who can quickly assist in medical disasters, including setting up on site field hospitals.

In addition, the Illinois Department of Corrections is sending supplies including blankets and uniforms to prisons in Louisiana.

Also yesterday, the Governor announced that Illinois' Community College system will accept any student from Illinois who attends college in the Gulf States and needs somewhere to continue their education.

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