

Blessings to you from Almighty God, who is greater than any hurricane; whose power supersedes any flood.

This is the first of (hopefully) many quick messages meant to communicate where we are in our response to Hurricane Katrina's devastation. I have included everyone who gave me an e-mail address when they signed up to volunteer. If you know of someone who wants to be kept informed, ask them to send me their e-mail address (but be careful, getting on this list means you're volunteering to work).

First, give thanks to God for the generosity and compassion being shown by Americans in general and Christians in particular. People are sacrificing, opening their homes, giving until it hurts. Our elected leaders could learn a thing or two from the people they are supposed to be leading, but who seem to be miles ahead of them.

Janice Durant works for Acuity, the makers of Zep brand cleaners. Her company donated everything we could possibly need to clean, disinfect, deodorize, sanitize and polish our empty houses. She even threw in bug spray. You may have heard that our five empty houses have mold infestations in varying degrees. Zep makes a product for that. After this week we can probably do a testimonial for the product.

Tomorrow (Wednesday) Cindy Roberts is going to begin cleaning the house in the morning (Cindy, I hope you've recruited some helpers!). Then, at 3 p.m., I'm leading a crew of six to finish what Cindy started. We'll begin with removing the mold in the bathroom and in the hallway. Then, we'll wash the walls (and ceilings where needed). Then, the baseboards. Then we'll clean the floors. We'll pull all the nails out of the walls and remove the outdated drapery hooks. We'll clean the kitchen and bathroom really good. And we'll throw the two refrigerators (neither of which works) out on the street. And we'll pull the carpet up in the enclosed porch.

Wednesday or Thursday, Eric Roberts will bring in a crew of carpenters to fix and patch anything that needs fixing, like wall paneling that's loose, the front door, which is in disrepair, and other odds and ends.

John Aycock will probaby also drop by on Wednesday to help with the fix-it jobs.

Thursday afternoon, painters from DeKalb Medical Center will come in and finish patching and sanding all the scars and nail holes in the walls, and on Friday morning at 6 a.m., they'll come in and paint the house from ceiling to baseboard.

Bill Tatum will coordinate the volunteer painters to assist these skilled professionals. The paint crew will prep the house on Thursday, laying paper on the wood floors to protect them, and beginning the wall preparations.

Once the house is painted (it'll take two coats, according to the pros), we'll be ready to outfit the house with furniture, linens and kitchen utensils. Many, many people have volunteered to donate these materials. I will enlist one of the donation volunteers to serve as a coordinator for gathering the donated items and placing them in the house.

Don't worry if someone has already donated what you wanted to donate. We have four more houses . . . If we finish setting up this house and have enough stuff left over, we'll start on the next house.

The other pressing job is the yard. I'll tap two of the yard volunteers to serve as crew leaders (one for the front yard and one for the backyard). The overgrown bushes right against the house make the house look a lot worse than it really is. Cutting back the overgrowth will make the house look 100% better. Yard work can also be done on the weekend because it won't hold up the preparation of the house.

This is your hurricane response coordinator, George Miranda, signing off.