

# SPOTLIGHT on AFT Washington



AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

www.aftwa.org

November-December 2005

Season's Greetings and Happy New Year from AFT Washington Staff

## AFT kicks off major fundraising effort for AFT hurricane victims

The AFT executive council last week approved a major fundraising campaign to boost the union's disaster relief fund and directly help thousands of AFT members devastated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. AFT vice president **Herb Magidson**, who is chairing the fundraising effort, reported to the council meeting in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 19 that the losses among AFT members—15,000 along the Gulf Coast were affected, including 6,500 in New Orleans alone—are unprecedented in the union's history. Although the union has raised nearly \$300,000 so far for disaster relief, the need is so great that an extraordinary effort must be undertaken to increase donations, he said.

The union has sent a letter to every state federation asking affiliates to participate in the campaign and to meet

minimum fund-raising goals based on membership in each state. The national AFT has committed to no less than \$1 million to the relief effort, and the New York State United Teachers, the union's largest state affiliate, has pledged to raise at least another \$1 million, he said. All affiliates outside of New York, combined, have been asked to raise another \$1 million. This base will provide a sound start in the union's initial quest to provide affected members with immediate individual grants of \$500, Magidson said. See AFT's online [hurricane tool kit](http://leadernet.aft.org/tool_kit/katrina/) for fundraising materials and resources at [http://leadernet.aft.org/tool\\_kit/katrina/](http://leadernet.aft.org/tool_kit/katrina/)

AFT Washington Labor Liaison **John Scott** will be coordinating this fundraising effort for our state. He can be reached at 206-242-4777 x12 or [jscott@aftwa.org](mailto:jscott@aftwa.org).



Patricia Chantrill

## Local member helps hurricane survivors

by Patricia Chantrill, member of United Faculty of Eastern L4904

When Katrina whirled a violent path toward New Orleans late in August, I was rushing to cancel airline tickets and plans to visit that famed city as part of a research jaunt to study the roots of American music. Reluctantly, I

ended up on a truncated version of the research jaunt, visiting the Mississippi delta during the second week of September.

Before leaving for that trip, though, an urgent message from AFT called for volunteers from the membership, anyone who could devote the time and energy to serving one of seven disaster relief centers set up across the south. I replied immediately, indicating that—for the first time since I began teaching back in the late 80's—I had a one-year sabbatical to do research, and could afford to volunteer for at least the two to three weeks AFT said was needed per rotation. While waiting for AFT, in conjunction with the Red Cross, to organize volunteers to areas in need, Hurricane Rita cycled into the Gulf, convulsing

the region into a second spasm of hysteria and creating additional havoc with relief organization efforts.

When I returned from the week-long Delta tour, with still no word on volunteer placements, I wrote again. Within hours of that subsequent email, **Connie Cordovilla** with AFT responded with the news that two cities, Houston and Baton Rouge, still had urgent need for volunteers.

I responded with an additional offer: my 20-year old daughter **Amanda**, newly graduated from Pharmacy Tech School, also wanted to help. We were told to report, ASAP, to the Plumbers and Steamfitters Training School, Local Union 198, in Baton Rouge. The Training School had been converted to an emergency shelter for New Orleans union members as well as a handful of Red Cross and AFL-CIO volunteers. Arriving at 2:00 a.m. on Saturday morning, Oct. 16, **Bill Hauenstein**, AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison with the United Way, met us at the gates and found us surprisingly comfortable places to sleep...for a few hours.

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## Member helps hurricane survivors (cont'd from p. 1)

Early the next morning, we arrived at the Red Cross Disaster Relief staging area where we received our assignments, identification badges, and a hurried orientation. I was asked to contact **Chrisandra Lee** with the Louisiana Federation of Teachers (LFT) to begin working as a labor liaison on behalf of New Orleans' many displaced K-12 teachers.

My daughter and I have been in Baton Rouge over a week now. Amanda works at a shelter for evacuees and I answer phone calls from New Orleans and surrounding area teachers who are beginning to confront the long-term consequences of the disaster.

Such a seemingly innocuous phrase like "disaster leave," the status all New Orleans public school employees were placed on following the hurricane, means the end of their paychecks and the ominous end of their health care by Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>. They also have to deal with the dangers associated with toxic mold and water lines that extend well above the ceilings in their schools and homes, the lack of information about when, if ever, they can return to the city and "normal" life there, and most of all, the status and whereabouts of their surviving students and co-workers. My work with the Louisiana Federation of Teachers includes connecting those who call, many of

them displaced to states far flung from Louisiana, with the disaster relief resources provided by the AFT, Red Cross, and FEMA. I help callers locate the make-shift offices of the Teacher's Credit Union, the employment office, and the benefits hotline. Many of the teachers, paraprofessionals, and school staff who call the LFT offices in Baton Rouge are staying with relatives or in shelters. Many have yet to find anything even approaching "permanent" solutions to a cacophony of problems stemming from the disaster and the muddy, toxic sludge that seized their beloved city.

The shelter where Amanda and I have spent our nights is ready to return to its former life as a training center after having sheltered hundreds of evacuees. Within a week, we will be returning to the Pacific Northwest to resume our lives, charmed by the many people we've met and somehow changed by the experience of purposeful service. We have learned how caring and generous people can be, giving of themselves, their time, and their talents and treasures. And Amanda and I have found that no matter how dire the national news becomes regarding scandalous tales of incompetence and neglect at the highest levels of government responsiveness, on the ground here in wounded Louisiana, healing has begun.

## Procedurally Speaking

*by K. Ann McCartney, C.P., P.R.P., Parliamentarian*

**Q**uestion: At our last meeting, when someone was talking on a motion, another member called "question" and the president immediately took a vote on the motion. What was happening?

**A:** This is a very common error on the part of members and presiding officers. The assembly was violating a basic parliamentary principle: **The right to full debate and discussion cannot be taken away from members without a two-thirds affirmative vote.**

To stop debate and vote immediately, at least two-thirds of the assembly must vote to cut off the debate. This can be done in two ways:

1. By unanimous or general consent if no one else wishes to speak. The president says "If there is no objection [pause], we will vote on the question." Or a member can notice that no one else wants the floor and can call out "question" and the president can say, "Does anyone else wish to speak? If not, we will vote on the motion."
2. A member can obtain the floor (when no one else is speaking) and say "I move the previous question." The chair immediately says:

"The previous question is moved on \_\_\_\_\_. We will now vote on whether to stop debate on this motion and vote immediately. All those in favor of stopping debate and voting immediately, stand/raise your hands [pause]; all those opposed stand/raise your hands [pause]."

The chair then announces the results:

If the previous question motion passes: "There are two-thirds in the affirmative and the previous question is ordered on the motion to \_\_\_\_\_. We will now vote on the motion with no further debate. All those in favor of the motion . . . etc. . . ."

If the previous question motion fails: "There are less than two-thirds in the affirmative and the motion for the previous question is lost. We will continue debate on the motion to \_\_\_\_\_."

The call for the question can **NEVER** interrupt a person who is speaking.