

# In Response



A Publication of San Francisco Community Agencies  
Responding to Disaster –  
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**d**isaster

The Disaster Files: SF CARD's In Response Newsletter

## *SF CARD Hires New Coordinator*

Alessa Adamo was hired in December 2005 to continue SF CARD's outreach to assist community based organizations that assist and serve San Francisco's most vulnerable populations.

Alessa has experience in both emergency preparedness support and organizational management. Her experience is varied and ranges from active and reserve duty in the armed forces to office management, recruiting and training in the business community. She was a volunteer with San Francisco Office of Emergency Services where she assisted with community outreach and special events. She is also a member and trained volunteer of San Francisco NERT.

One of the things Alessa intends to accomplish during her term is to increase the general membership of SF CARD. Some of the benefits to CBO's include:

- On-going training and informational meetings on current aspects of disaster preparedness and safety information.
- Support for developing and updating agency disaster plans.
- A forum to network with area agency representatives and become familiar with available resources and services.
- The opportunity to collaborate and develop disaster MOU's (memorandum of understanding) with neighborhood and city agencies to maximize the community resources component of their agency disaster plan.
- Encourages the sharing of available resources between member agencies to continue to provide necessary services during and after a disaster.

For more information on how to become a member agency of SF CARD please feel free to contact Alessa.

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Guest Column

## Katrina Lessons

By **Brian Cahill**

Executive Director      Catholic Charities CYO

As the St. Mary's Cathedral basement transitioned from a shelter to a service center in early September, we began working with Red Cross, OES, DPH, DHS, Salvation Army and Westside Community Mental Health Center to serve families as they arrived. Approximately 300 families came through the Cathedral. Initially, we provided all the transportation for pharmacy, prescription pick-ups, dialysis or chemotherapy appointments, trips to Tom Waddell Clinic, and transportation for those who were going right to hotels or other temporary housing. We also provided airfare for reunification of family members who were separated during the initial flooding or during the evacuation. We purchased mattresses, household goods, eyeglasses and clothing, and we assisted in school enrollment. We also distributed 100 gift certificate cards from Old Navy and 500 pairs of jeans and shirts from Levi's.

Later on, we focused most of our efforts working with the Mayor's Office of Housing here in San Francisco and Catholic Charities of the East Bay either in getting families into subsidized transitional housing, or for those who can sustain themselves providing first and last month rent with PG&E and phone hook-up. We received \$100,000 specifically for transitional housing from Catholic Healthcare West, and we are getting and \$50,000 for the same purpose from the San Francisco Foundation. We continue to work with a number of our colleague non-profit agencies and a number of Churches in addressing the ongoing needs of Katrina families who are here.

My own view on lessons to be learned:

Government agencies in general need to better understand the role of non-profits and for that matter Churches and synagogues in being responsive and flexible in times of crisis. Secondly, for those donors who chose not to give to Red Cross or Catholic Charities USA or other nationals, local non-profits can be an effective funnel for receiving and distributing cash contributions as well as new clothing. Also, I believe non-profits and Churches can assist all parties in making sure the client perspective is always uppermost.

Another lesson learned is that there needs to be a lead agency (Red Cross/OES), and that needs to be clearly laid out.

Final lesson, there was some confusion about how to handle spontaneous volunteers and clothing donations and that confusion also produced some tension. Those issues need to be clearly addressed. And at least partially connected, any local effort needs always to be an inter-faith and inter-racial response.

**For more information on Catholic Charities visit them on the web at [www.cccyo.org](http://www.cccyo.org)**