

## **THE NEW ORLEANS DISASTER ...**

Update from RI President Elect Bill Boyd

Our RI President Elect Bill Boyd was a visitor to New Orleans just before the hurricane Katrina struck. He was there with members of the 2007 RI Convention Committee taking part in a planning meeting for the Convention which will be held in the city.

His comments are invaluable for those clubs planning to provide aid for victims of the disaster ...

Bill writes:

"Our first response to a tragedy like that experienced in New Orleans is to give support to our fellow Rotarians, but the problem is to know how to give that support.

"As I write this, no one is sure of what needs to be done first to assist those in the city, but the plan seems to be to evacuate the city, mend the levees, and pump out the water. Then the utilities such as water, electricity and sewerage need to be repaired. This will take around two months according to our technical friends in Rotary from the area. Only then can people re-enter the city. There is little point in trying to send goods.

"The need will be money, and the Rotarians have established a bank account, which you will find on the Rotary website. I would think at this stage, what is important is the visible support of fellow Rotarians rather than the amount given. There is a lot of heartbreak and despair. If we can give even the proceeds of a sergeant's session to the relief fund, it will help those who are hurting in New Orleans."

The exchange of emails between Bill and members of the RI Convention Committee provides a further insight into the tragedy of the situation ...

My Rotary friends,

Last week I was in a meeting of the Convention Committee in New Orleans. We closed the meeting early on the Saturday morning, as we had been told that an evacuation notice was about to be made, and we all left as quickly as possible. Lorna and I flew out, one group of committee and RI staff took a cab far enough out of the city to be able to rent a car, another group managed to get a rental, and all were out before the hurricane struck. One member of the committee was Subash Kulkarni, a New Orleans resident and Chairman of the Host Committee. Today I received the following email from him. I think it expresses the horror of what they are facing, and club members may be interested.  
Regards, Bill.

Greetings from NuOrleans! Neela and I are so glad that all of you left early enough before the city closed down. I am sorry I had to leave early. I had bring in all the outdoor furniture from our backyard, pickup all the insurance papers from office and so on. It was almost late afternoon before we left for Houston. Looking back it would not have made any difference. We are expecting about ten feet ( 3 m) of water in our house. Our house being located facing the lake, we were the first victims. The city looks like a huge lake. Neela always wanted a large swimming pool in our backyard . Now she got wish come true! Just kidding! We will stay in Houston till Sunday and then decide what to do. I am trying to get info on our HOC members. We might rent an apartment 40 miles west of New orleans or set up a trailer home on an empty lot I own across the lake. I am trying get local govt. officials to set up a tent city for homeless people

who do not have money to eat, to stay in apt or to pay for the hotels. Our need here is enormous. We need to take care of the sick, the old, babies, children. Need blankets, food, medication, so on and on and on. As a Rotarian and especially as Governor, I raised funds for the victims of two earthquakes in India, floods in Bangladesh, Tsunami , etc worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. I visited India to meet the victims of earthquake in 1993 and returned home with a shock of my life. Our disaster in New Orleans is serious ten fold in magnitude, may be fifty fold. We need help from everyone in the world. I am afraid the people will die of hunger, of deseases and sheer of depresion. I will keep you posted. Pray for us , pray for my beautiful city and my lovely people. We will start accepting donations on the account District 6840 Katrina Relief Fund . I cannot give the mailing address but it could be sent to R.I address, if that is acceptable to R.I. My present situation is similar to an old man I met during my visit to India after the earthquake who told me that he was always on giving end all those years and now he was the one begging for himself and his people. Today i am lucky that i can take of myself but I will have to ask help for my people, even if I have to beg. This town has given me and my family a good life. I pray Lord to give all of my generous people the strength to endure. God Bless us all. A Humbled Rotarian in pain - PDG Subhash