

# Group from Jessamine going to Louisiana to provide relief

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A group of volunteers from Jessamine County will be going to Opelousas, La., next week to help out at a local shelter and at a warehouse where food and supplies are being distributed for evacuees that live in hotels and homes.

"We'll be doing whatever they need us to do," said Carola Hartley, director of Nicholasville Now! and a member of the group.

Several trucks with bottled water and other supplies have been sent to Opelousas, and volunteers, who will drive their vans and cars, will take as many donations with them as they can. On the way back, they might bring a few people from the affected area who would accept their invitation to come to Jessamine County to start their lives over.

"There are people who lost everything. We have two homes ready for them, and we'll bring them over if they would like to come," said Hartley.

Opelousas was chosen as a destination because it's Hartley's hometown.

She called there to ask about places where Red Cross and FEMA hadn't gotten to yet, and where help was needed.

"It's such a vast area -- miles and miles of devastation," said Hartley.

She said she was told that Opelousas needed help badly, since thousands of evacuees had poured into town.

"They were not ready for that many people," she said.

Besides supplies, Opelousas needs volunteers to help distribute supplies for evacuees.

"They made an old Wal-Mart building into a warehouse, and every third day, the evacuees are allowed to go there and get supplies," said Hartley. "Most of the people left their homes thinking that they were coming home in a day or two. They had almost nothing."

Hartley said that as of today, shelters in Opelousas need volunteer help too, but in case they're shut down soon, the group can go to Baton Rouge or Lafayette.

There's a chiropractor who will take his portable table on the trip, an extension agent, several business people and a student on the group.

Hartley said that it's not the only trip organized from Jessamine County.

"Help is desperately needed there," she said.

Walt Jordan, a business owner in Nicholasville and a member of a group, said that he has some family members and friends in New Orleans that he still hasn't heard from.

"The whole thing is hard to comprehend, hard to take, and I want to do my part, whatever I can do," he said.

The group is leaving Sunday morning, for the 12-hour drive to Opelousas. Some people will stay a few days, and others will spend the whole week.

For more information, to sign up as a volunteer or to make a donation, call Carola Hartley at 881-3820.