

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.thedailytimes.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Article published Sep 7, 2007

Woman displaced by hurricane gives back to nonprofits

By Aaron Killian
United Way of Blount County

Every year, United Way touches the lives of more than 20,000 people in Blount County.

Libby Beasnett is one of them, and today she is doing her part to give back to Blount County.

Beasnett and her 90-year-old father were living in Gulfport, Miss., when Hurricane Katrina struck.

“My house had survived so many hurricanes,” Beasnett said. “I felt we could survive another.”

Beasnett and her father gathered a handful of clothes and a few days’ supply of medication. They traveled to Blount County to stay with Beasnett’s daughter, Anna Graham, for what they thought would be a few days.

“I had no idea Hurricane Katrina was as serious as it turned out to be,” Beasnett said. She and her father lost almost everything to Hurricane Katrina.

Beasnett said United Way community partner, the American Red Cross, reached out to her and her father, supplying them with medication, new eyeglasses and clothing. “I continue to wear those clothes to this day,” said Beasnett.

While living in Mississippi, Beasnett was very involved in her community, working extensively with her church and several nonprofit organizations, including the Special Olympics, the Very Special Arts Festival and the American Red Cross.

“I had volunteered on the Gulf Coast for almost 25 years,” Beasnett said. “But I never dreamed I would need help myself.”

Beasnett brought her volunteer spirit with her to Blount County, and she continues to volunteer with the Red Cross as a water safety instructor and a water safety training instructor.

“According to the Red Cross, I have taught over 7,000 students,” Beasnett said.
Giving back to God

Beasnett also volunteers extensively with St. Andrews Episcopal Church where she has designed and donated several pieces of art, including a prayer cloud used for prayer

requests.

“I volunteer to the glory of God and to show my love and concern for people,” Beasnett said.

Beasnett’s art will be honored at the House of Bishops later this month. She designed four angel banners for St. Andrews Episcopal Church, and the banners will be on display at the upcoming bi-annual House of Bishops meeting in New Orleans.

More than two years after Hurricane Katrina, Beasnett finally feels settled in Blount County, and she plans to expand her volunteer efforts by working with the local Special Olympics and the Very Special Arts Festival.

“I was in such a state of grief after Katrina that I’m just now beginning to function and be a healed human being again,” Beasnett said. “From tragedy, we have to find our new path in life.”

Contributions to United Way support 61 programs through 31 community partners. For more information on United Way of Blount County, please call 865-982-2251 or visit unitedwayblount.org.
