

Local residents reach out to families victimized by Hurricane Katrina

By Jennifer J. Lockrey

It has been over one month since the Al-Bataineh family has slept in their own home; they are not sure when, if ever, they will go back.

"We were lucky. The levee broke toward the east and we live on the west," said Samia Abu Hardan as she clutched a small stuffed cheetah, one of the few items salvaged from her home in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Most of their belongings are still in their house in Metairie,

Jefferson Parish, one of the first suburbs on the outskirts of downtown New Orleans. They are not allowed to return because the remnants of a noxious mixture of water, sewage and other toxic substances linger in the streets of their hometown, leftover from damage caused to levees built to protect them and other residents from such an occurrence.

With the help of Tredyffrin and Easttown Care, a local organization dedicated to helping those displaced by the hurricane, they have been trying to

make a new home, even if it may be temporary, in Berwyn.

Chesterbrook residents Sandi and Kirk Gorman started T&E Care. Like many, over the Labor Day holiday, the Gormans were watching the television and they were overwhelmed by the images of anxiety and anguish of the hurricane victims.

"We thought, we are from a community with a lot of good people and we began to think if there was anyway we could rally them together to help," said Sandi.

The Gormans began by send-

ing e-mails to almost everyone they knew. Fortunately, many were receptive and began to volunteer their services. The group then got together and began brainstorming.

"We thought about how much money it would take to host four families for six months, until they could get back on their feet," said Sandi. "We wanted to do four families because we thought then we could bring some people maybe who knew each other and maybe it would

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Tredyffrin/Easttown community welcomes Katrina victims

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be a little more comfortable for them."

Sandi said they put the word out anywhere they could think of: housing lists, Web sites, even a message sent with the Tredyffrin SWAT team, which went to the affected area to offer their assistance. "It seems that many do not want to come this far away from their home," said Sandi.

T&E Care is currently sponsoring the Al-Batainehs and one other family from the area. They have placed the children in district schools and are housing the families at the Residence Inn in Berwyn.

"We are lucky; we are all together," said Abu Hardan. "At first, we were so busy looking for a place to stay and trying to get the kids settled we didn't have time to really think about it. Now we are realizing we have big problems and we have a lot of decisions to make."

Mohammad Al-Bataineh said he is not sure whether his family

will stay in the area or return to Louisiana. The family is originally from Jordan. They moved to the United States so that both Al-Bataineh and Abu Hardan could study medicine.

He is a cardiologist, who just opened his own practice on Aug. 1. While their home was spared from a lot of the flooding, his new practice was put completely underwater. His wife was in the process of finishing her residency as a dentist at Louisiana State University.

"The city is going to be vulnerable for a long time," said Al-Bataineh. "How can I trust this thing not to happen again?"

If you are interesting in donating services or money to the effort, you can find more information on the Tredyffrin Township Web site www.tredyffrin.org. Click on the T&E Care link on the left of the screen, you will find explicit directions for forwarding money or contacting the group to offer other services.