



MEBA's Gulf Coast V.P. John McCurdy (right) and Patrolman Moose Mallini have restored the Union hall on Carondelet Street to normalcy following the hurricane - though it will be years before the city recovers. At the holiday party at the hall, they are seen here with India Robinson, the delightful daughter of member George Robinson.



CAPE VINCENT officers at a Beaumont ceremony honoring their efforts in the Gulf following a pair of devastating hurricanes. The CAPE VICTORY was also honored. Left to right are Captain David Scott, Chief Mate Ian Stevenson, 2nd A/E Ralph Barber, 3rd Mate Jay Wedman, C/E Luis Quinones, 3rd AE Danny Colon and 1st A/E Dan Gifford.

## Good & Welfare Fund Aiding Members in Need

*Though MEBA's Union hall and Diagnostic Center in New Orleans have been fully operational for months now following Hurricane Katrina, some of our members and retirees in the area continue to put the pieces of their lives back together. MEBA's facility on Carondelet Street was spared damage from the wrath of the hurricane but just a few blocks away evidence of the storm is ubiquitous. Businesses and homes have become wreckage and many of our people in the area have needed a helping hand to recover from the devastation.*

MEBA continues to administer a fund to help Hurricane Rita and Katrina victims get their feet back on the ground. The Good & Welfare Fund is not only available to hurricane victims, it is providing assistance money for members and retirees in need who are seeking to navigate life's many obstacles. Those who are in need of assistance can contact MEBA Headquarters and Secretary-Treasurer Cecil McIntyre.

### Gulf Coast Ports Back in Business

In a show of resiliency, strength and determination, most of the U.S. Gulf Coast seaports impacted by back-to-back hurricanes this season have returned their operations to or near what they were before the storms hit in August and September. Even those with the most extensive damage are reporting significant progress toward accommodating the normal volumes of freight and passengers on which their communities and the nation depend.

"I'm awed at the speed at which these hurricane-ravaged ports have worked to bring their operations back on line," said Kurt Nagle, American Association of Port Authorities president and CEO. "America's seaports make up the backbone of our economy, so the faster they can get back to normal operations after a disaster, the better off we are as a nation."

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#### NCL Raises \$250,000 for Katrina Relief

In the wake of the Gulf Coast hurricanes, MEBA-contracted Norwegian Cruise Lines raised a quarter of a million dollars for Katrina relief. The company matched the funds that were donated by shipboard crew, shoreside staff and passengers aboard NCL ships among others. NCL President and CEO Colin Veitch then presented a \$250,000 check to the American Red Cross Hurricane Katrina Relief fund.

#### Vacationing Member Aids Katrina Victims

MEBA member and Chief Engineer Michael Willard probably had a dozen more relaxing things to do on his vacation but he probably used his precious off time in the best possible way. Fresh off his ship, the ENERGY ENTERPRISE, he took a cue from the MEBA weekly e-mail newsletter, the *Telex Times*, which reported on AFL-CIO’s request for volunteers for Gulf Coast cleanup and recovery. On September 15th, Brother Willard left his Underhill, VT home and drove to Baton Rouge, LA where he was put to work with the Red Cross through the AFL-CIO.

“I was assigned to Logistics to deliver supplies to the shelters and kitchens the Red Cross was supporting through Louisiana,” he noted. For two weeks he traveled back and forth across the state. At night, he often stayed at the Plumbers and Steam Fitters Training Facility in Baton Rouge. The Plumbers union had converted their classrooms into a shelter housing both evacuees and volunteers.

As anyone would be, Brother Willard was deeply affected by the devastation foisted upon Louisiana residents. “As horrific as the damage is to the homes, businesses, and landscape in the area, the stories of the people that I came in contact with were absolutely heartbreaking,” he said. During his stay, Hurricane Rita hammered the coast further adding to the burden.

When his two weeks were up, he returned home for his last few vacation days before going back to sea. The experience left an indelible mark on him and though glad he did his part to help, Brother Willard was stunned by the dark transformation of New Orleans and the surrounding region. “To see the areas between downtown and the airport that had been flooded – and a city almost completely devoid of people – are still in many ways beyond comprehension,” he said.

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MEBA was prominent at the MLK events both at the conference and later on at the march and helping out in the community. Part of the MEBA contingent included (l-r) Organizing Director Robert Martin, Robert’s sister Sheila, poet Theola Christian Bright who performed at the conference, MEBA friend Deborah Mack and member Charles Feist.



Though Hurricane Katrina forced evacuations of New Orleans, members reassembled in time for the MEBA holiday party in December. Right to left are Jimmy Tims, Garrett Kirby, Charles Feist (in back), Mark Moser, Mrs. Kirby, Andy Hake and a U.S. Naval Reserve guest.



Left: Aboard the CAPE VINCENT are applicants Chad Gonzalez and Beth Starbeck, both mates. Of late, the ship has been housing evacuees and emergency personnel from the St. Bernard Parish near New Orleans.

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#### CAPE VINCENT, CAPE VICTORY Receive Additional Accolades

Officers and crew of the Beaumont-based Ready Reserve Force vessels CAPE VINCENT and CAPE VICTORY have been recognized in a Congressional Proclamation penned by Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX). The vessels helped secure emergency equipment for the city until Hurricane Rita blew over. The VICTORY was then used as a headquarters for relief operations and the VINCENT sailed off to lend assistance near New Orleans. Both ships are crewed with MEBA deck and engine officers.

The ships were also awarded a large plaque from the City of Beaumont, a Public Service Award from the Police Department of Beaumont and a Certificate of Appreciation from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department.

#### MEBA Assists Katrina-Hit Community in the Spirit of MLK

MEBA members assisted communities in Louisiana while honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., at a weeklong event honoring the great leader in January. At the annual AFL-CIO MLK celebration in Baton Rouge, LA, members took part in a conference and march and spent a day helping victims recover from Hurricane Katrina.

From January 12–16, union members walked door to door registering new voters, helped repair homes and buildings destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and discussed strategies to rebuild the devastated Gulf Coast. The President of the Louisiana State AFL-CIO, Sibal Holt, delivered an enthusiastic greeting to the MEBA from the podium as she kicked off the conference. Soon after, Sibal wrapped up over 40 years of union service as she headed into retirement. She has been a longtime friend of the MEBA and will be sorely missed.

MEBA's Organizing Director Robert Martin was our point man during the five-day affair. He is part of the director's committee for this annual event and organized the MEBA contingent. He rallied our members together as they helped paint homes in an impoverished neighborhood and also helped better the community by cleaning up vacant lots. The celebration culminated on Monday, Jan. 16 as hundreds of union members and activists took part in a march and the MLK Day parade. ■



Left: At the conference, MEBA sponsored a nurses' station which offered free blood pressure checks and diabetic education. Denise Martin (Robert's wife at right), a registered nurse who teaches at a local college, and MEBA friend Alma Stewart (far left) ran the station. MEBA member Charles Feist and MEBA Organizing Director Robert Martin are at center left and right respectively.