

RBIF Katrina Relief Activities

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Last summer the Gulf Coast region was devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. With hundreds of square miles still uninhabitable, the devastation has not been alleviated. Some areas are still off limits but residents and business owners should be allowed to survey the damage by August of 2006. The devastation hit close to home for the retail baking industry with 53 bakeries impacted on the Gulf Coast. Many are struggling to rebound from total losses and with no insurance to cover flood damage recovery is difficult.

One bakery owner had just bought her bakery six months prior to the storm. Her bakery was a total loss with no insurance to help defray the expense of reopening. She has managed to replace her equipment and reopen but now has two mortgage payments in place of one. Many more small 2 to 6 person shops have suffered losses and need help.

The Retail Bakery Industry Foundation (RBIF) has set out to help the bakeries recover and rebuild. RBIF sought partners from the industry and has been joined in its efforts by industry suppliers, local associations and bakers from across the country. Schnucks Markets ran a campaign for two weeks prior to Mardi Gras and donated a certain amount from the sale of each package of paczki donating over \$3,000. Pillsbury ran a campaign January 23 – March 10 that pledged \$5.00 from the sale of every bag of Danish mix sold in that time period. Upper Midwest Retail Bakers Association donated \$1,000 and individual bakers are sending donations ranging from \$100 - \$500.

The funds collected will be used to help bakeries to recover, replace equipment and supplies and reopen. Grants will range between \$500 - \$3,000; a relatively small amount compared to the losses suffered but a step toward helping get bakers back in their shops. Some bakeries may never open but we need to help those who choose to try.

Donations are still being accepted for the Katrina Relief Fund. Donations can be made out to RBIF Katrina Relief Fund and sent to the RBA address attention RBIF. The entire amount of the donation, 100%, will be used toward helping bakeries affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. None of the amounts donated will be used for administrative costs.

In addition to monetary donations, the RBIF is looking for equipment donations. The RBIF will act as an intermediary in matching bakeries in the affected areas that are in need equipment with those that have it to donate. If you have anything you would like to donate please contact Susan Nicolais at the RBA. Your support of foundation activities allows the foundation to do its work and makes it possible for bakers to help other bakers.