



Community Spirit

Fixing Broken Lives

by *Brian A. Gallagher*

(NAPSA)—While contributing to various relief funds is an essential element of our response to a hurricane or other national tragedy, money alone doesn't fix broken lives. What is needed is a human-based response that addresses the less obvious, but no less significant challenges created by the devastation.

What America needs to do now in addressing the long-standing challenges facing communities nationwide is to think and act beyond the traditional stimulus-response formula to serving those in need.

The current delivery system for relief and social services is heroic but clearly inadequate. A new system, can have a long-term, positive effect on those in need.

• **Adopt a human-based approach.** Contrary to the system- or institution-based approach, which often results in bureaucratic gridlock because agencies require clients to conform to their individual intake and service systems, the human-based approach caters to the needs of the affected person.

• **Operate from a master plan.** Community leaders need to develop a comprehensive plan to cover a broad scope of services ranging from crisis counseling, housing and daycare to cash assistance, education and job training. This same comprehensive approach is no less valid for communities seeking to eradicate teen pregnancy, drug use or illiteracy.

• **Integrate the delivery of services.** There's a need for a single source of information regarding

relief services. Congress should establish an integrated nationwide network to let service providers seamlessly help those in need.

The customer-first principle is a hallmark of successful companies, but remains a stubborn challenge for public and private agencies.



• **Stay committed to a community's long-term needs.** We need to resist the temptation to shape programs and deploy resources based on the day's headlines. Agencies need to set long-term goals and make the necessary commitments to achieve them.

• **Create a \$10 billion Human Development Fund.** Let's invest in rebuilding human lives through mixed income housing communities and neighborhoods; jobs that pay enough to sustain a family; and services like grocery stores in all neighborhoods. Let's create family development accounts for college and home ownership; neighborhood redevelopment accounts that provide incentives to establish small businesses in challenged areas; and quality early education and education support services that include the building of YMCAs attached to public schools to better serve kids and their families.

With the well-being of hundreds of thousands of people hanging in the balance, isn't it time that America forged a new and better way of serving those in need?

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