



*Maya Rivers of East Greenbush counting out her allowance money she is donating for storm relief.*

As an example of the generosity of Capital Region residents, a six year-old from East Greenbush, Maya Rivers, came with her mother to the Pastoral Center in Albany to turn over her allowance money to the campaign.

Young Maya had overheard her mother making a donation to Catholic Charities and asked if she could help the flood victims by donating her allowance money. "I saw them on television and I wanted to help," she said. Receiving those precious funds from Maya were Bishop Hubbard and Vincent Colonno, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Charities of the Albany Diocese.

In expressing his appreciation to her, Mr. Colonno noted that this contribution demonstrates how even a young child can recognize the need that so many people are now facing. "It is donations such as this one that allows Catholic Charities to continue to provide so many vital disaster relief services."

Catholic Charities agencies in Otsego, Delaware, Schoharie, Greene and Schenectady counties have been providing food, housing, medicines, clothing and a countless number of all the other of life's necessities throughout the storm recovery effort.

Bishop Hubbard noted that, "Once again these donations from our community come pouring in whenever and wherever disaster strikes. Whether due to tsunamis or earthquakes halfway around the world, or hurricanes and tropical storms here at home, the people of the Albany Diocese can always be depended upon for their deep compassion and their incredible generosity."

"Especially impressive in response to the present disaster," he said, "is the number of parishioners, along with priests, parish and Catholic Charities staff all involved in assisting victims directly."



*(Left to right) Vincent Colonno, Catholic Charities CEO; Laura Rivers (mom) holding Shelby (sister); Bishop Howard J. Hubbard; and Maya Rivers (Center front).*

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Below is a recent article from The Schenectady Daily Gazette.

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ROTTERDAM JUNCTION

## **Tradesmen pitching in for flood victims**

*BY JUSTIN MASON Gazette Reporter*

Roger Williams picked up an application for senior housing after his Erie Street home was flooded in late August. The devastation was simply too much for the 77-year-old veteran to process. Williams was already contending with the death of his wife earlier this year and didn't even know where to begin rebuilding. "I can't afford to buy everything new," he said. "I just lost too many things."

But Williams also didn't want lose the autonomy of having his own home, a place to call his own. Then somewhere amid the confusion, Williams ended up with the phone number of someone offering to help.

Williams can't recall exactly how he got in contact with Gary Riggi. But a short time later, the volunteer contractor from Scotia arrived at his home and began taking charge.

Pretty soon, a volunteer was rewiring Williams' home so that he could get his electricity restored. Several days later, Riggi found him a new hot water heater that soon will be installed.

Now the clouds of despair hovering over Williams are beginning to part. And for the first time since the disaster, he's feeling a sense of hope. "If you get the walls back up and heated and you have your hot water, you can live there," he said. "I can see a light down the tunnel there."

Since the disaster struck, Riggi has contacted 22 families in need of help. Volunteers he's organized are working to restore 19 homes in the hamlet before the weather turns cold.

Riggi was profoundly moved by the destruction left by Tropical Storm Irene and the stories he heard of the flood victims. He initially came to the hamlet as a volunteer, but quickly found himself taking a more active role in organizing the recovery effort.

He brought the plight of Rotterdam Junction to the attention of the Church of St. Clare in Colonie, where he serves as a deacon.

The appeal for help resulted in a three page list of skilled laborers willing to volunteer their service.

The congregation also began collecting donations along with Catholic Charities. The donations are now being used to purchase everything from electrical fixtures to new furnaces so the volunteers can help restore basic functions in the flood-ravaged homes.

Riggi said the magnitude of the disaster and the amount of work to recover has left many of the flood victims in a state of helplessness. He said a few meaningful steps taken toward recovery can help instill optimism.

"We're basically taking it one step at a time," he said. "Every step you take forward, there's a little grain of hope."

Right now, the volunteers are racing to get electricity, heat and hot water into the damaged homes. Riggi said the next step is to begin insulating them and installing drywall.

"We're running out of time," he said. "It's October and we're in the Northeast. We really want to make sure everybody has a safe environment when the frost hits."

Riggi sees the volunteer effort as a way to bridge the gap between the funding provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and what is actually needed by the flood victims. In many cases, Riggi said, homeowners are given about \$20,000 of federal funding to tackle a repair project that ranges up to \$80,000 or more.

The volunteer effort in Rotterdam Junction is just the beginning. Riggi has discussed recovery efforts with the Albany Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church and hopes to spread the work he's started in Rotterdam Junction to some of the other areas in the Capital Region struggling to recover.

"If anybody is falling through the cracks, we want to be able to help them," he said. "We know these people aren't alone."

### **How to help**

Anyone interested in helping the recovery effort can contact Gary Riggi through the Church of St. Clare at 453-6112 or Catholic Charities at 453-6650.

Flood victims in need of help can also reach out to volunteer laborers through these numbers.

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