

Oakland County
Planning & Economic Development Services

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Support Builds For Oakland County Hurricane Katrina Clean-Up

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David Spencer of Spencer Roofing in Commerce and three of his crew members just spent thirty hours in Hurricane Katrina-damaged Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and they were tired. Walking from their direct flight home Thursday night from Jackson, Mississippi, they recounted the damage they surveyed as they helped shore up the roof of the old Hattiesburg High School.

“It’s pretty ripped up down there. I’d say about fifty percent of the city is covered in ‘blue shingles’ - that’s what we call tarp,” said Spencer. “They really need the help.”

Spencer and his crew, Vladimir Tamahkyarov, and Anguel Valtchev, flew to Hattiesburg February 1 as part of a team from Main Street Oakland County who are helping repair the old Hattiesburg High School, a structure destined to become the University of Southern Mississippi’s Department of Art and Design and Museum of Art. Damage to the building and the amount of clean-up has significantly delayed the rehabilitation project. Spencer and his crew volunteered their time to patch the roof before rainwater does further damage to the structure.

Spencer and of his crew members plan to return to Hattiesburg later this month, accompanying more than 40 volunteers from Main Street Oakland County.

“We worked about eight or ten hours straight the first day, into the night with flood lights,” recounts Spencer. “I hand-lifted over 1,000 board feet of lumber to secure the tarps on the roof. We got a lot done, and there’s still at least one big hole to do . . .”

Last month, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson announced that a team to include members from Main Street Oakland County will assist in Hurricane Katrina clean-up efforts in Hattiesburg, Mississippi in late February. Around 40 team members will travel by bus to Hattiesburg, leaving Friday, February 24 and returning Sunday, March 5, 2006.

Transportation and supplies are being made possible through donations provided by the Oakland County Economic Development Corporation, the Oakland County Business Finance

Corporation, James Lumber Company of Ortonville, Spencer Roofing of Commerce Township, Metro Aircraft Instruments, Inc. of Waterford, the Oakland County Drain Commission, Dillman & Upton Lumber Company of Rochester, James Lumber Company of Oxford, Kerton Lumber Company of Holly, Grace Centers for Hope, Kelly Services, Butzel Long, Industrial Cleaning Supply, Inc. of Waterford, Robertson Brothers, Inc., WCHB AM 1200, Galaxy Transport, Inc., Akwa Water of Ortonville, Rochester Mills Beer Company, Blue Lakes Charters & Tours, Archive DS of Detroit, the Joseph Kube Family, Michael's Arts and Crafts, Contemporary Sign & Design, American Flag & Banner, Oakland County, and the Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association.

The response to MSOC's call for volunteers was overwhelming. A waiting list had to be set up for the more than seventy community volunteers who offered to join the assistance team. Volunteers, Oakland County Main Street managers, MSOC staff, family members, as well as local contractors will make up the team.

Main Street Oakland County (MSOC), a leader in providing support to traditional downtown communities, responded to the call from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to provide assistance to other Main Street communities damaged by Hurricane Katrina. MSOC Coordinator Bob Donohue made contact with the Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association and worked out an assistance plan. In addition to assisting a fellow Main Street program, the assistance team will develop hands-on skills in disaster preparation & response training, historic preservation & building rehabilitation training, and leadership and team building skills.

An online slide presentation can be seen at www.albertassociates.com/slideshow-2.html

Farmington, Ferndale, Highland, Holly, Keego Harbor, Lake Orion, Ortonville, Oxford, Pontiac, Rochester, Royal Oak and Walled Lake are members of Main Street Oakland County. More than \$334 million has been reinvested in Main Street communities in Oakland County since the program was formed here in 2000.

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