



The Leader In Recreational Aviation

eea news

EAA CHAPTER 513 COLLECTS 3,000 POUNDS OF RELIEF SUPPLIES

September 19, 2005 - It's amazing what a group of committed, organized EAAers can do to benefit a worthy cause, and these days in Southern Louisiana and the Gulf Coast, there is no shortage of worthy causes.

EAA Chapter 513 in Houma, Louisiana, changed the emphasis of this year's third annual Cajun Fly-in from fun and fellowship to the more serious task of collecting relief supplies for Hurricane Katrina evacuees. The Chapter's home base, Houma-Terrebonne Airport (HUM), is about 45 miles southwest of New Orleans, but it became a destination for about two-dozen aircraft throughout the day Saturday, September 17.



Alex Roca arrives in his full Zodiac 601 XL from Texas. In the background are (l to r) Randy Bazel, Chapter 513 president; E. J. Hebert, Evacuee flyaway coordinator; and Chuck Borne, chapter secretary.

Pilots loaded up their baggage areas and backseats, or removed them to create more useful load and space. What resulted was more than just a symbolic show of support: they filled three pickups and a van with about 3,000 pounds of relief supplies—a ton-and-a-half of relief for the battered area.

"We were really pleased with the turnout," said Chapter President Randy Bazel. "We had about 20-25 aircraft fly in, from experimental homebuilts to production planes, including a Diamond DA-40 all the way from Tennessee." That was Fred Ecksten, EAA 751986, from Sevierville, Tennessee.

The relief supplies will be distributed locally - several emergency shelters continue to operate in the area - with any unused materials sent off to other evacuation centers. Supplies collected include toothbrushes, baby wipes, toys, diapers, paper towels, toilet paper—all the things that people use and need every day. Folks on the ground did everything to help off-load the donated items, get them packed onto pickup trucks and sent off to the shelters.

"I am just amazed," Bazel said. "People in their small airplanes, some flying as much as four- and six-hour legs to get here, some in IFR conditions, all paying their own fuel costs... the dedication is just unbelievable, trying to help the people who need it the most. My hat really goes off to them."

Employees at New Piper, headquartered in Vero Beach, Florida, got wind of the fly-in through the EAA website and *e-Hotline* and decided to participate. They packed the company's Malibu test-bed full of supplies, including some innovative "kids packs" they created, and Piper employee Jack Mill flew the airplane into HUM.



Jack Mill of New Piper carries box of supplies while Tommy Guidroz (right), immediate pass president, and Newton Boudreaux, help unload the aircraft.

"Right now a lot of children have to cope with the psychological aspect of being cooped up, knowing they have lost everything at home," Bazet said. "This just really has to help in a big way."

EAA member Jim Riviere noted, "Fly-ins are always fun and to give this one such a great purpose was a terrific idea. Thanks to Randy and his team, and thanks to all of those who took their time and money to help those that have essentially lost everything."

Among the other pilots were:

Fred Ecksten, EAA 756986, Sevierville, Tennessee; Ray Fleming, EAA 489137, Duson, Louisiana; Jesse Hercules, EAA 722838, Oxford, Mississippi; John Current, EAA 752166, Jackson, Mississippi; John Thibaut, EAA 374572, Napoleonville, Louisiana; Philippe Heer, EAA 693741, Kathy, Texas; Ted Landry, EAA 697230, Maurice, Louisiana; Brian Hashhemi, EAA 592071, Houston, Texas; Peter Diebold, Houston, Texas; Jack Mill - (New Piper) - Vero Beach, Florida; Alex Roca, EAA 706421 - San Antonio, Texas; and Rick Mcwhorter, EAA 762650, Pearland, Texas. "A little determination and clear-headedness can make up for a lack of available resources," Bazet added. "It just takes a little coordination and effort. And common sense. With a grassroots effort, clear thinking wins out over bureaucratic red tape."

For the folks on the ground, the motto was, "either lead, follow, or get out of the way." Everybody did what was necessary to off-load the donated items, get it packed onto the pickups and sent off to the shelters.

Much still needs to be done, however. A lot of the people in the Mississippi and Alabama gulf coast area need a lot of help as well. Some of the Chapters in those areas are still trying to sort their lives out.

"The people in Biloxi and Gulfport and those areas were spared absolutely nothing from the wrath of this storm," Bazet added. "A 30-foot tidal surge went in about a mile, which is where the majority of those communities are. It's very disheartening. Hopefully future operations similar to this one may be organized to help them out. We do what we can."