



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Contact: Aaron Baker
(573) 751-1507

In Our Desire to Help Others, We Must Not Forget Our Neighbors

Our nation has seen a relentless string of natural disasters this year, and American citizens residing on the Gulf Coast and in Florida have suffered greatly. The response from members of Missouri Citizens has been encouraging. Members of our communities have given their time, effort and resources to help those who have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters that have struck the South. I also commend the Missouri National Guard for their significant contributions.

While I do like to see such a positive response to the suffering of fellow Americans, I want everyone to remember those in need here at home. Local charities, such as the United Way, provide for families and individuals in our own backyard who need a helping hand. However, in part because so many in our district are giving to Gulf Coast victims, local charities are not meeting their fundraising goals this year. I encourage everyone to dig a little deeper and give to those charities who work to meet local needs.

For example, the United Way of Saline County recently wrapped up their annual fall pledge drive short of their fundraising goal. The organization, which helps fund 21 area charitable agencies, including Lighthouse Shelter and Child Safe of Central Missouri, raised less than 12 percent of their \$85,000 goal through Oct. 17. Although that is more than \$10,000 for much-needed local programs, it is far short of what we need as a community. I know we can do better, and I urge everyone to contact the United Way of Saline County and donate whatever you can give.

Other charitable organizations need your help. Meals-on-Wheels and Senior Meals programs in Boonville, Excelsior Springs, Kearney, Lexington, Marshall and Macon provide hot meals for those in need. Volunteers willing to deliver meals are in high demand, and any extra help local residents can provide is greatly appreciated.

Habitat for Humanity may also have a chapter in your area. The program works to help develop communities and families by building and renovating houses.

I am pleased to see constituents are responsive to national crises. However, I want everyone to remember there are those in our own communities who also need help. Please remember their needs when you choose to give.

To contact the United Way in your area you can visit www.unitedway.org. To volunteer your resources to Habitat for Humanity, you may call the national hotline at (800) 422-4828, ext. 2551 or 2552, or visit www.habitat.org. Check your local listings for Meals-on-Wheels and Senior Meals programs. I apologize if there are any local charities I may have missed.

If you have questions or comments about this issue or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by email at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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