

The Beam

October 2005

We need your help to make *The Beam* the most helpful resource it can be!

- Share successful practices you have developed or helpful resources you have used;
- Submit an interest story about the success of a student or family in your program; or
- Write a feature about an issue that needs our attention!

Send submissions to:
tstahlke@mail.utexas.edu

Deadline for the Winter issue is December 15, 2005.

Deadline for the Spring issue is March 15, 2006.

Inside this issue:

Hurricane Stories	2
President's Greeting	3
Legislative Update	4
NAEHCY Board Election	5
Regional Updates	5
McKinney-Vento History	6
McKinney and Vento	7
NAEHCY's Mission	8

The Ambulance Down In The Valley

Joseph Malins

The following poem was written in 1895—and rings true still today, over 100 years later! Consider again what your role might be in the life of a child.

Twas a dangerous cliff,
as they freely confessed,
Though to walk near its crest
was so pleasant;
But over its terrible edge there had slipped
A duke, and full many a peasant.
The people said something
would have to be done,
But their project did not at all tally.
Some said, "Put a fence 'round
the edge of the cliff,"
Some, "An ambulance down in the valley."

The lament of the crowd
was profound and was loud,
As their hearts overflowed with their pity;
But the cry for the ambulance
carried the day
As it spread through the neighboring city.
A collection was made, to accumulate aid,
And the dwellers in highway and alley
Gave dollars or cents –
not to furnish a fence –
But an ambulance down in the valley.

"For the cliff is all right if you're careful,"
they said;
"And if folks ever slip and are dropping,
It isn't the slipping that hurts them so much
As the shock down below –
when they're stopping."
So for years (we have heard),
as these mishaps occurred,
Quick forth would the rescuers sally,
To pick up the victims who fell from the cliff,
With the ambulance down in the valley.

Said one, to his peers,
"It's a marvel to me
That you'd give so much
greater attention
To repairing results than to
curing the cause;
You had much better aim at prevention.
For the mischief, of course,
should be stopped at its source,
Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally.
It is far better sense to rely on a fence
Than an ambulance down in the valley."

"He is wrong in his head,"
the majority said;
"He would end all our earnest endeavor.
He's a man who would shirk
his responsible work,
But we will support it forever.
Aren't we picking up all,
just as fast as they fall,
And giving them care liberally?
A superfluous fence is of no consequence,
If the ambulance works in the valley."

The story looks queer
as we've written it here,
But things oft occur that are stranger;
More humane, we assert,
than to succor the hurt
Is the plan of removing the danger,
The best possible course
is to safeguard the source;
Attend to things rationally.
Yes, build up the fence and let us dispense
With the ambulance down in the valley. ■

Providing Essential School Access and Stability to Hurricane Evacuees

Undoubtedly, the unsung heroes of the recent hurricane disasters along the Gulf Coast include thousands of homeless liaisons from school districts who worked tirelessly to get children and their families out of harm's way and to help them adjust to their new lives in the communities where they have relocated. NAEHCY salutes all of the liaisons across the country who have been so diligent in providing relief and hope for so many children in distress. Here are a few of their stories.

Dallas Independent School District

Mark Pierce, Homeless Liaison; Dallas, Texas

“Nearly 2,500 children displaced from the hurricanes have enrolled in Dallas Independent School District (DISD). I think Dallas is a success story largely because I have been doing so much staff development with principals, registrars, and area superintendents, that most everyone in the district (at the front-office level) knows me and the law. We have had no disputes about enrollment whatsoever.”

San Antonio Independent School District

Estella Garza, Homeless Liaison;
San Antonio, Texas

“What is happening in San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) is that as the families are being placed in housing from the shelters, they are being placed in the SAISD boundary area. The McKinney-Vento Act is what has expedited the enrollment. Schools are very receptive to the children of the disaster. Families are amazed that SAISD can enroll so fast—they are delighted. They can't believe that SAISD is not requiring immunizations, birth certificates, social security numbers, and other documents—even special education records! Many parents themselves have been the advocates in some local emergency shelters to get their children in school. Yesterday, I was in one of the shelters enrolling kids. Doctors and mental health professionals working with the family were doubtful of school enrollment because of the trauma the kids have been through. The parent was the one saying ‘they need to get in school and create a normalcy in their lives.’ Another parent indicated that she needed to get her kids ‘out of the shelter and in school.’ This would allow her to go out to find the necessary resources for the family and their new life. There are as many stories as there are families we have worked with!”

Austin Independent School District

Cathy Requejo, Homeless Liaison; Austin, Texas

“I believe that clear understanding of the intent of McKinney-Vento, and proper planning, have made for a more effective transition for the students. Because liaisons existed, we were immediately able to link with surrounding school districts to immediately enroll evacuees, so people understood what to do and why. Homeless Liaison offices were a key

and a quick starting point for student support for the whole city!”

Allegheny Homeless Children's Initiative

Gail Odorcich, Educational Coordinator;
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

I am so proud of the Allegheny Schools. When agencies were fumbling in the dark to find their way, homeless families were finding their way over tree-strewn roads and total blackouts, searching for open gas stations to find fuel so that they could travel north to their families and friends. Because our schools had knowledge of McKinney-Vento, and have attended workshops with shelter providers for 15 years, all was in place. Kids were enrolled as soon as they arrived and are attending school here. Our executive director's family of six (four children) made that harrowing journey from Louisiana and was impressed with the speedy enrollment of her grandchildren. One teen lost her eyeglasses. Because of our program, she was referred to me. Because people know about homeless kids, they respond quickly. We were able to connect her to a caring person who arranged for her and her mother to receive examinations and glasses without any cost to them. The families enrolling in the Pittsburgh Project are coming into the site for disaster relief and the registration volunteers reinforced what I already knew. One of them said, ‘Gail, all of the families we have seen have their children in school!’ That is McKinney in action!”

Fairfax County Public Schools

Kathi Sheffel, Homeless Liaison;
Fairfax County, Virginia

“We have around 140 children from the hurricane. I can see no value in changing anything about the McKinney-Vento act. These children are now in school and getting back to the only normal part of their lives. They have all the necessary school supplies, meals at school, tutoring if they need it, and everything else our non-homeless children have. All of this is possible because of McKinney-Vento. It has allowed us to have a procedure already in place that we can use to assist children displaced by the hurricane. It is critical that we continue to include these homeless children in our existing programs.”

(see “Hurricane” on page 8 for conclusion)

NAEHCY Update... *from the President*

Dear Fellow NAEHCY Member:

Our back-to-school issue of *The Beam* was receiving its finishing touches when Hurricane Katrina entered our lives and our vocabularies and, along with Rita, brought the critical and important work we do to serve children and youth experiencing homelessness into the national spotlight. That issue of *The Beam* was set aside as everyone directed their efforts to more immediate needs of children and their families. Looking back at the letter I had prepared, some of my requests and comments seem so small and unimportant...at first glance. Then, I thought a bit longer about our work. The work has been going on for years, in large and small communities, in quiet ways, and sometimes with a small bang. School is one of the most normal activities all children experience and we have been providing that normalcy in times of stress and transition that accompany homelessness to children across the United States. We have done so through the tireless efforts of many partners. From changes in federal, state, and local legislation and policies, to practical implementation issues, we have seen our understanding of homelessness and how to meet children's need improve and grow. And yet, it seems awareness has continued to haunt us as one of our greatest challenges...until Katrina.


Suddenly, our years of building a system of state coordinators and local homeless education liaisons and developing a system of communication and technical assistance was put to the test with the massive destruction from the forces of nature and the never-before-experienced exodus of hundreds of thousands of people, including children. Our infrastructure, built quietly over the years, has provided decision-makers with much-needed data quickly and the ability to disseminate information and guidance immediately to local school systems. Most importantly, we have enrolled thousands and thousands of children in schools that have welcomed them and provided that haven of stability and common experience in the midst of great turmoil. Never have I been so proud of the work I do and awed by the commitment, compassion, and passion of those who work in the field of homeless education.

I know I speak for the NAEHCY board in offering our condolences to all those affected by the recent hurricanes and in offering our most sincere appreciation for the Herculean efforts we have witnessed, not only through these disasters, but also, day-to-day as children and youth experience homelessness and face their own, personal disasters. There is so much to be learned from recent events. The creative initiatives to provide housing and other services need to be captured and catalogued. This is an opportunity to increase the supportive strategies to address homelessness. This is an opportunity to make sure the individual disasters of homelessness are not forgotten and that awareness in our communities and in our nation of the many faces of homeless are recognized. We need to prepare for the aftermath we have yet to face. How will we meet these challenges? Partly, by continuing all those day-to-day functions that I originally thought might be deleted in this letter. Now, I realize the following requests are even more important. So, please keep reading!

Through the BEAM and our national conference, NAEHCY provides you with a means to voice your concerns, challenges, and successes. These efforts need your support. Please consider writing an article or identifying topics that should be included in future issues of the BEAM. We recognize the wonderful expertise our membership brings to efforts that improve the lives and educational experiences of children and youth in homeless situations. Besides the BEAM, consider submitting a proposal to present at next year's conference. The NAEHCY website (www.naehcy.org) has the latest information on upcoming conferences and appropriate application and registration forms.

There are many ways to become involved in NAEHCY. All our committees are open to additional members. Furthermore, we are in need of volunteers to fill the positions of at-large members on the board. Identifying ways to support our members is an ongoing focus of the Board and we are very interested in your input. If you would be willing to serve in such a capacity, please contact me at ppopp@naehcy.org. The application for the at-large board position is included in this issue. Again, thank you for all you do to improve the lives of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Popp, Ph.D.
NAEHCY President

Legislative Update

By Barbara Duffield, NAEHCY Policy Director

If you would like to receive timely legislative updates via email, please contact Barbara Duffield at bduffield@naehcy.org to be added to the NAEHCY legislative email list.

Hurricanes and Emergency Funding for Homeless Education

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have had an enormous impact on many McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) programs. The "Hurricane Katrina Education Relief Act," S. 1715, introduced by Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY) and Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), provides \$50 million in emergency supplemental funding for the EHCY program.

The supplemental funding would be distributed to States by the Secretary of Education on the basis of demonstrated need, rather than the current Title I, Part A formula. States would be authorized to distribute the emergency funding to school districts on the basis of demonstrated need, thus bypassing the competitive sub-grant application process.

As of this writing, there is no bill in the House that would provide supplemental funding for the EHCY program, despite the massive increase in demand for homeless education services. Please write your Members of Congress and urge them to provide emergency funding for the EHCY program. More information can be found at www.naehcy.org/legislative_update.html.

FY2006 Funding for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

The U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 3010, the FY2006 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, on June 24, 2005. The bill contains \$62.5 million for the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program. This is the same

amount as last year.

The Senate bill was passed out of committee, but has not yet been voted on by the full Senate. The Senate committee bill also contains \$62.5 million for the EHCY program. More funding is desperately needed to reach more children and provide direct services for school enrollment, attendance, and success. Please write and fax your Members of Congress and urge them to support \$70 million for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program in the FY2006 appropriations bills. An alert and sample letter can be found at www.naehcy.org/legislative_update.html.

Head Start Reauthorization

On Thursday, September 22, the House passed H.R. 2123, the "School Readiness Act of 2005," by a recorded vote of 231 - 184. The Senate bill, S. 1107, "The Head Start Improvements for School Readiness Act," passed out of committee in May and currently awaits floor action.

Both H.R. 2123 and S. 1107 contain numerous amendments to remove barriers to Head Start faced by children experiencing homelessness. These amendments include requirements for Head Start programs to identify and prioritize homeless children for enrollment; to allow homeless families to apply to and enroll in Head Start programs while paperwork is being obtained; and to coordinate with efforts to implement the McKinney-Vento Act. Both bills help ensure categorical eligibility for homeless children: the House bill would deem homeless children to meet the low-income criteria, while the Senate bill would deem homeless children eligible for Head Start ser-

vices.

Numerous other amendments addressing service, coordination, planning, and technical assistance needs are included in the legislation. For more information, please see www.naehcy.org/legislative_update.html.

Higher Education Act Reauthorization

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee passed legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act on September 8, 2005. The Higher Education Amendments Act of 2005, S. 1614, includes numerous amendments to increase access to postsecondary education for children and youth experiencing homelessness and children and youth in foster care. For more information, please see www.naehcy.org/legislative_update.html.

A Matter of Definition: Responding to Homelessness Among Families, Children and Youth

This paper was released in July 2005 by the Child Welfare League of America, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, the National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness, and Volunteers of America. The paper addresses the definition of homelessness employed by HUD and the barriers it has created, and encourages adoption of a definition of homelessness more similar to the McKinney-Vento education definition. For more information, visit www.naehcy.org.

NAEHCY Board Nominations and Elections

NAEHCY serves as the voice and social conscience for the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness across the United States. Have you been looking for an opportunity to get involved in this national effort that reaches into every town and city and seeks to reach every homeless child? NAEHCY is seeking nominations for three offices on its Board of Directors: Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice-President. Officers meet monthly through phone conferencing and communicate through regular emails.

Position descriptions

Vice-President: Works closely with the President on all NAEHCY matters, and involves a six-year commitment—serving for two years as Vice-President, two years as President, and two years as Immediate Past President.

Secretary: Responsible for taking notes at all Board and Executive Committee meetings and submitting the minutes to the President for distribution to the board.

Treasurer: Works closely with the Business Manager (located at the NAEHCY

office in Minneapolis, MN) to keep records regarding NAEHCY's accounts, including operational accounts and the LeTendre Scholarship account.

Elections

Elections will take place at the annual membership business meeting during the conference in Kansas City.

For more information, or to submit nominations, contact Melinda Dyer at (360)725-4968 (phone), (360)664-3575 (fax) or via email at mdyer@ospi.wednet.edu.

Properly completed nominations for board members will be accepted at the membership meeting. The nomination form is included in this issue of The Beam.

Bylaws

A number of changes to the association's bylaws are being recommended to the membership by the board. These changes involve bringing the language in the bylaws up-to-date with the current structure and operations of the association. ■

Elections:
Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer;
Bylaws Changes

East Region Update

Project HOPE-Virginia is sponsoring a professional development conference entitled *Flinging Our Arms Wide: Providing School Stability for Students in Need*. The conference will be held February 27-28, 2006, in Williamsburg, VA. The principal speaker will be Jonathan Kozol, whose new book, *The Shame of the Nation*, was released in September.

Session topics include community collaboration, challenges and successes of implementing the McKinney-Vento Act, IDEA reauthorization, the effects of domestic violence on children, and strategies for helping all our students achieve academic excellence. Additional details about the conference may be found at the Project HOPE-Virginia website at www.wm.edu/hope. ■

Project HOPE-
Virginia
Conference
February 2006

Southern Region Update

The **6th Annual Regional Conference** for homeless liaisons and service providers in the South will be hosted by the Texas Homeless Education Office at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, Texas, March 20-23, 2006. Interested persons from outside the region are encouraged to attend and experience our southern

hospitality! Conference workshops will focus on caring for caregivers—including parents and liaisons.

For information, contact the Texas Homeless Education Office at (512)475-9702, or via email at theo@uts.cc.utexas.edu ■

Alabama
Arkansas
Louisiana
Mississippi
Texas

The McKinney and McKinney-Vento Acts: A Brief History of the Law

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (PL100-77) was the first—and remains the only—major federal legislative response to homelessness. This history is adapted from the Project HOPE-Virginia website at www.wm.edu/hope/national/mckinney/mckinney.html.

The Homeless Persons' Survival Act was introduced in both houses of Congress in 1986. This act contained emergency relief measures, preventive measures, and long-term solutions to homelessness. Only small pieces of this proposal, however, were enacted into law. The Homeless Eligibility Clarification Act of 1986 removed permanent address requirements and other barriers to existing programs such as Supplemental Security Income, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Veterans Benefits, Food Stamps, and Medicaid. Also in 1986, the Homeless Housing Act was adopted. This legislation created the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) program and transitional housing demonstration program; both programs were administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In late 1987, legislation containing Title I of the Homeless Persons' Survival Act -- emergency relief provisions for shelter, food, mobile health care, and transitional housing, was introduced as the Urgent Relief for the Homeless Act. After an intensive advocacy campaign, the legislation was passed in 1987. After the death of its chief sponsor, Representative Stewart B. McKinney (R) of Connecticut, the act was renamed the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-77). President Ronald Reagan signed it into law on July 22, 1987.

At that time, the homeless population was rapidly increasing, and there were early indications that the demographics were changing, with women and children representing a growing portion of the population. Recognizing the expanding diversity of the homeless population, Congress included provisions in the Act requiring states to ensure that all homeless children have the same right to a free and appropriate public education as non-homeless children. Congress adopted additional provisions requiring states to review and undertake steps to revise residency requirements for school attendance to ensure that homeless children did not experience delays with school enrollment.

To help states meet the new requirements, Congress appropriated funds so that states could establish or designate an office of coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth. In addition to other responsibilities, the state coordinator's office was given authority to gather data on homeless children in the state and develop a state plan providing for their education. These provisions sought to give states the ability to gain a better understanding of

the challenges facing homeless students and make states responsible for ensuring homeless children were not denied access to a free and appropriate public education.

In 1990, Congress took another major step toward improving the educational opportunities for the nation's homeless children and youth. In response to new information and data that revealed significant educational obstacles, Congress amended the McKinney Act (P.L. 101-645) and expressed an intolerance of any barrier that prohibited the enrollment of homeless children and youth. Furthermore, Congress acknowledged that academic success, not merely enrollment, was critical for homeless children.

The amendments required state coordinators to identify all issues keeping homeless children and youth out of school. States were required to review and revise ALL policies, practices, laws, and regulations that might act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or academic success of homeless children and youth. States were also to ensure that local education agencies review and revise policies and procedures that might hinder educational access for homeless children and youth.

The 1990 amendments authorized states to award grants to local education agencies (LEAs) for an array of educational and support services in response to the needs of homeless students such as before- and after-school programs, tutoring, referrals for medical and mental health services, pre-school programs, parent education, counseling, social work services, transportation services, and other services that may not otherwise have been provided by the public school program. In furtherance of this policy, Congress increased appropriations significantly from 1987 levels.

Congress amended the McKinney Act again in 1994 as part of its reauthorization of the Improving America's Schools Act (P.L. 103-382). Under the new amendments, states are authorized to extend the program services funded by McKinney to preschool children and on sectarian property, where it is constitutionally permissible to do so. LEAs receiving McKinney funds were provided greater flexibility in developing programs by removing categorical spending limits within the law. Congress also added protections requiring states to ensure that school

(see "McKinney-Vento History" on page 7 for conclusion)

McKinney-Vento History *(continued from page 6)*

districts abide by a parent's or guardian's request to enroll a homeless child in a particular school to the extent that such a request is feasible. Congress also strengthened requirements for interagency coordination and collaboration between state/local education agencies and other agencies and organizations.

In 2001, Congress again reauthorized the McKinney Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program as the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act* in the *No Child Left Behind Act* (P. L. 107-110). Reportedly, Congress was influenced by statistics that over one million children and youth were likely to experience homelessness in a given year, and extreme poverty, coupled with high mobility and loss of housing, placed these children at great risk for educational chal-

lenges. These data resulted in additional supports being incorporated into the law. Among the changes for the Office of State Coordinator is the requirement to strengthen state support to all school divisions by coordinating with local liaisons to ensure accountability, greater flexibility to use McKinney-Vento funds, and increases in funding. The reauthorization explicitly prohibits segregating homeless students through the creation of new separate schools or separate programs within schools. The Act also defines homelessness.

A PDF version of the full legislation P.L. 107-110 is available at: www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/. McKinney-Vento Title X, Part C can be found on pages 565-583 or visit www.utdanacenter.org/theo/mckinneylaw.html.

The Men Behind the Law

Prepared by Carol Lundin and Joyce Austin, former staff of Project HOPE-Virginia.

Stewart B. McKinney

Stewart Brett McKinney was born of wealth in 1931 in Pittsburgh, but raised in Connecticut. His educational background included Princeton University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University. He also served in the U.S. Air Force from 1951 to 1955. McKinney was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1970. He represented his home state of Connecticut in Congress for nine terms.

Although he was the wealthiest congressman during his terms in office, McKinney was regarded by his peers as a fighter for the causes of the forgotten. An independent-minded, liberal Republican, McKinney worked tirelessly for urban aid and social welfare programs. He supported the availability of low- and moderate-income housing. In the 97th Congress, he spearheaded the passage of the Amerasian Immigration Act, which gave children of military servicemen in Asia the right to obtain visas. However, McKinney was most outspoken of the plight of the homeless – especially those with mental illness, left on the street.

Stewart B. McKinney was a heavy smoker and plagued with heart disease. He died at the age of 56 on May 7, 1987 from pneumonia brought on by acquired immune deficiency syndrome. In his eulogy Senator Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. (R-Conn.) said of McKinney, "From alleviating wretchedness in housing...to loving the unwanted children of Americans in Vietnam, this was a working patriot..."

Bruce F. Vento

Bruce F. Vento was born October 7, 1940 in St. Paul, Minnesota. The second of eight children, Bruce took great pride in calling himself a lifelong resident of St. Paul's East Side. He was educated at Thomas College, Wisconsin State University, and the University of Min-

nesota. Elected to the Minnesota State Legislature in 1970, Vento served three consecutive terms. In 1977, he was elected by the Fourth District for the state of Minnesota to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Committed to improving the welfare of his fellow men and protecting natural resources and the environment, his work on behalf of the environment earned him the 1994 Ansel Adams Conservation Award from the Wilderness Society, honors from the Sierra Club, and the National Parks Conservation Association's Conservationist of the Year Award for 1987. In June of 2000, Vento received special recognition from President Clinton for his years of work on behalf of America's homeless population. Bruce F. Vento worked alongside Stewart B. McKinney and was co-author of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, which created federal funding for support services, transitional housing, and emergency shelter grants for the nation's homeless. He was an honored member of the National Alliance to End Homelessness and earned a host of awards for his leadership and legislative contributions to improving the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness.

After being diagnosed with lung cancer, brought on by asbestos exposure during his early work as a laborer, Congressman Vento decided not to seek another term. In a released statement, he stressed that many of the best ideas were the "can do attitudes... and the expectations that the government and I could make a difference in the quality of life." He further quoted Hubert Humphrey in his closing statements: "The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." Congressman Vento died at his home on October 10, 2000.



**NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR THE
EDUCATION OF
HOMELESS CHILDREN
AND YOUTH**

P.O. Box 26274
Minneapolis, MN 55426

Phone: 866-862-2562
Fax: 763-545-9499
E-mail: info@naehcy.org

**We're on the web!
www.naehcy.org**

NAEHYC, a national grassroots membership association, serves as the voice and the social conscience for the education of children and youth in homeless situations.

NAEHYC connects educators, parents, advocates, researchers and service providers to ensure school academic achievement and overall success for children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the lack of safe, permanent and adequate housing.

NAEHYC accomplishes these goals through advocacy, partnerships and education.

Everyone with an interest in supporting children and youth in homeless situations is encouraged to become a member of the Association.

Hurricane *(continued from page 2)*

Santa Rosa School District

Carol Calsee, Director of Federal Programs; Santa Rosa, Florida

"Santa Rosa District Schools, located in the Panhandle area of Florida, has welcomed over 389 student evacuees. Because of the McKinney-Vento Act, 100% of those students were immediately enrolled in schools, and certified for free breakfast and lunch services. Our schools felt comfortable with making age-appropriate decisions on program placements, and students with special needs were placed in classes with teachers who are trained to meet their needs. The students and parents look "shell shocked!" Their worlds have turned upside down. To *not* have a problem enrolling their students was truly a blessing. I have spoken to parents who have told me that enrolling their students has been a turning point on their road to recovery. Knowing their children are somewhere 'safe' while they struggle with the tough decisions about the future...what could be a better service for a public school system to offer? Without McKinney-Vento, we would probably be still waiting for academic and shot records! McKinney-Vento protects the rights of children while their lives are in turmoil! The school-of-origin services over the next few months are going to be *critical* to promote student achievement. Without McKinney-Vento, we would have a huge group of children 'left behind' over the coming months - and years!"

Kyrene School District #28

Roxanne Richardson, Homeless Liaison; Tempe, Arizona

"Our state McKinney-Vento coordinator prepared us well ahead of the arrival of Katrina kids by providing up-to-the-minute reports as to what to expect and how students would be disbursed throughout the Valley. We were provided counts of evacuees, children-of-schoolage counts, and expectations of future flights into Sky Harbor. We were asked to track families coming into our district and to report same to the Arizona Department of Education. Liaisons were also given valuable websites to assist evacuees. We had every available resource at our fingertips! Our individual schools were already accustomed to registration processes for Arizona's homeless families and they were able to quickly, and efficiently, move families through this process in their front offices, on through the quick interview with the Homeless Liaison, who immediately connected them with clothing, shoes, socks, underwear, backpacks and school supplies, toiletries, and other resources through the Kyrene Family Resource Center. A family who came to us already aware of the placement date in an apartment within our community was able to give prompt notice to our resource center in order to allow them to set aside much needed furniture for beginning their new lives in Arizona. This was a very orderly process for families to participate in and the end result was that their children found themselves back in school immediately upon presenting themselves. One school registered three Katrina kids from two different families within days of one another. They soon learned that both had been schoolmates at the same school in Metairie, LA. Though they did not have the same lunch schedules, staff kindly arranged a meeting time where the girls could reunite on campus! What a coincidence to have found one another in an Arizona school, so many miles away from home!" ■