

All Around News

Hurricane Gymnastics Relief Fund Update

Deb Kornegay, RACC

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Hurricane fund last season. Over \$110,000.00 was donated to the Hurricane fund. \$94,025.00 has been dispersed to clubs affected by the Hurricane. The Hurricane Steering Committee is now accepting applications to disperse the money remaining in the fund. We are looking for USA Gymnastics athletes who were affected by the hurricane and now need assistance with college tuition. Please look for the application form in this newsletter.

Recently we sent an email to people who received help from the Hurricane Gymnastics Relief Fund. We wanted you to hear how they are doing now. Following are some of the letters received from the hurricane victims.

Hurricane Victims Report One Year Later

Debbie,

Thanks for your inquiry. Alexis finished the acrobatic gymnastic season at Nationals on July 25th—her tenth birthday. She was able to go to Belgium in the Spring, commute to Belle Chasse—a far distance from our home for training, attend all the local, regional and National competition and was even selected to be on the J.O National team. It is amazing that through all the chaos in New Orleans she was able to continue her gymnastic training. She will now be able to train closer to home because another gym has gotten up on its feet and will begin training athletes closer to home. We appreciate all your help and have donated all the leos and warm-up suits (you helped purchase) to the previous gym to help someone starting new that may need them. We will be starting anew at this gym (we are getting used to new beginnings!). Wish us luck.—thanks again for your assistance in our time of need.

C. Thibodeaux

Deb,

I have had a great summer. My camps were smaller because people could not get motels so I did not have any out of town kids but my recreational camps were good because a lot of other activities are not going again yet. Classes were good also. It's hard to believe its already been a year. My gym is doing great and I can't thank you and everyone enough for all you have done for me and the other gyms. Everyone down here just prays that we won't get another one anytime soon.

Thank you again, Cindy Wallace

Dear Debby and our USAG Family,

Thank you for helping us through the unimaginable. We could not have paid our rent and insurance and replaced equipment without your financial support. We have been praying for a year to receive a loan from the SBA for Hurricane relief, and I just found out this morning that because our business is only two years old, the SBA does not feel safe in giving us a loan. Thanks to all your financial help we have been able to pull through anyhow. The tumble trak is all we have left to replace. (Hurricane Steering Committee mailed check to replace tumble trak 9/8/06)

Our enrollment is getting back to pre-hurricane numbers. We are, however, still short on recreational teachers, having lost three after Katrina.

The children that received donated leos from The Courthouse Gymnastics Co., Dreamlight, and Look-It Activewear were so grateful.

Many of our students lost all of their clothes and weren't finding any leotards at the relief centers. Thank you too to The Courthouse Gym for all the gymnastics t-shirts. The girls appreciated those just as much.

I have often bragged to the cheerleading and dance companies in our facility about how wonderful the gymnastics community is in that we genuinely care about each other and reach out to each other in a time of need.

Thanks for your support and friendship,

Holly Beaugez & Heather Clower
Dreamweaver Gymnastics Academy,

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Dear Deb,

As you know yesterday was the one year anniversary of hurricane Katrina. The coast had all kinds of services, celebrations of hope and renewal. As I spent the day reflecting on the events of that day of the hurricane and the following weeks, I felt compelled to send a thank you again to our region and the state of Mississippi. I remember exactly how I felt the day after the storm when it was obvious that so much of the gulf coast was destroyed. I remember fearing for the life of friends who did not leave for the storm. I remember what it felt like to NOT have communications with loved ones on the coast and wondering if my business partner Cynthia Dedeaux and her family were dead or alive. When I was at my wits end trying to find people, I found help from our "gymnastics family". There was an email from Nancy Hawkins asking for everyone to report in to her after the storm. She became my life line of communication and was willing to send out mass email for me as to the whereabouts of gymnastic friends and families. She kept up my hopes and kept telling me that we would find Cynthia...and we did. She made sure everyone knew that everyone had survived from the gymnastic community here on the coast.

I remember when weeks went by and it became obvious that the cities we serviced in our gym were 90% destroyed, I was certain that our gym would not be able to survive. We considered selling the building to FEMA. Then, once again, the gymnastics family came to the rescue. Nancy kept telling me...our region is raising money, we will help! Then with the organization of all of you, help came. And with that help came hope for us, for our families, and for our athletes. My dear friends, Richele and Pat Gray, sent there hard earned money for two months to make sure I had money to pay the bills when we had all of 18 gymnasts back in our gym. MS NAWGJ came through and donated money and rearranged the State's Judges Cup so that gymnast's on the coast would have a chance to participate. Courthouse Gymnastics was sending leotards and chalk to our gym weekly so that returning athletes could have something to work out in. Those kids had lost everything and having leotards to pick out and work out in made the world of difference to them. Elite II gymnastics club donated huge amounts of money to the Region 8 Hurricane Fund. Madison County gymnastics donated there meet fees to our club even though we had to cancel our meet because of the storm. They also had fund raisers and continued to donate money to the coast gyms months after the storm. Without the help of all of those who supported the recovery efforts of our gym, The Brook-Lin Center would not be open today. The gymnasts who train here would not have had a place of refuge to keep some normalcy in their lives. The recreational gymnasts would not have had an escape to come to when they needed to forget the loss and remember how to be a kid again.

So, as I reflect on the changes in one year, I am overwhelmed with gratitude to you, the state of Mississippi and all of those who contributed to the Region 8 Hurricane Fund. We are a business back in full swing because of the love and support of our gymnastics community. People are slowly returning to the coast, most of the debris is gone and there is hope for rebuilding. Please let people know that their hard earned money they donated was well spent and allowed kids to have a place to continue there hopes and dreams!!!

One year later the support continues on. This week we thought that hurricane Ernesto may be coming our way. My gymnast's were so upset about this "happening to them again". They desperately did not want to evacuate and lose training time again like last year. I did not want this to happen again. So, I called Teri Jenkins and asked her to call Gene Alexin to see if we evacuated to Memphis, if he would allow the girls to train in his gym until the storm passed. The Gymstars without hesitation agreed to let us bring as many gymnast as we wanted, to house them and to let them train for free. When I told the girls of this plan, there was a huge sigh of relief and a look of hope in there eyes instead of despair. The acts of kindness continue on and I will forever be grateful to belong to such amazing friends in the gymnastics world. Katrina has brought us many blessings in the face of so much destruction!!

Sincerely, Terry Kruchowsky,
Brook-Lin Gymnastics