

# Katrina survivors settling in

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Central Piedmont Community College and though he cheered for the New Orleans Saints last Sunday as they beat the Carolina Panthers, that will change when he puts roots down here.

"You have to root for the home team," he said.

Benedict Smith, who arrived in Charlotte with a convoy of three cars and nearly a dozen family members said Charlotte has been good to him, but he's ready to go home.

"Everywhere we go, when they find out where we're from, it's like here you go, take this," he said.

Smith said he and his family had moved in with his nephew, who'd already had a full house with his three children and wife, but too many people in one place caused problems.

"We had 22 in the house up until two days ago. It was hard to shower or do anything else," he said. "It was too crowded, we were at each other's throat."

Smith said he and his displaced family members headed to the coliseum, which he calls his headquarters, for help. They received a voucher for a 14-day hotel stay. It kept the family peace and everyone's getting along now.

## How to help with Katrina relief efforts

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**Corporation for National and Community Service Disaster Relief Fund**  
202-606-6718  
www.nationalservice.gov/about/donations/index.asp  
**America's Second Harvest**  
1-800-344-8070  
www.secondharvest.org

Smith, his wife Lavern, and other family members are actively seeking an apartment or house to rent because their children are in school and they hope to be working soon.

"My aunt, by her being handicap, she's complaining about the hills in North Carolina," he said with a laugh. "I said we can't control that."

Smith said when he knows that he can go back to the west bank of New Orleans and live, he and his family will load up and go. But he has to make sure something else is available to him and his family-jobs.

"We have no jobs and if we have to stay here to make an income and if it takes six months or a year, I'll be here. Just as long as we can keep the family together," he said.

But if families have to stay in Charlotte for years, will the charity and good will last?

City Councilman Warren Turner said the city of Charlotte has always come together in times of need to help people get on their feet.

"This really hits home because it's local, it's not overseas, it's about people in need and sometimes people have to go through things to understand that there is somebody going through something worse than you," he said.

Turner said he thinks the giving will continue but as time goes on, he expects the donations will come in on a smaller scale.

"Once we start getting people placed into housing, some people are going to go back home and some people are going to go live with relatives. Then we'll be able to deal

with individuals on a more personal basis," he said.

Turner said he expects Charlotte to keep giving to Katrina's victims but not at the level that people are giving now.

When asked about Charlotte's own homeless and poor families and why efforts like the one organized for the evacuees haven't been extended to them, Turner said that people need to understand that this isn't just the city's effort.

"The difference here is that this is not just Charlotte. This is a federal event here as much as anybody else, if FEMA wasn't involved or some other national organizations weren't involved like the (American) Red Cross and the Salvation Army, would we be able to organize on this level, would the city of

Charlotte be able to afford this, no we wouldn't," Turner said.

City officials hope to have the coliseum closed by Saturday, moving the few displaced people into other shelters or hotels depending on the number of people remaining in the shelter at the end of the week.

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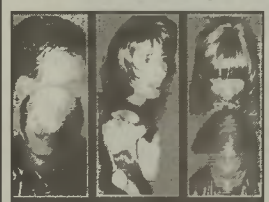
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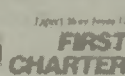
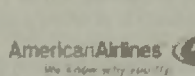
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