

New Orleans puts neighborhoods together

By Zenitha Prince
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

This is the first of an 8-part series of stories about the Gulf Coast and the road to recovery after Hurricane Katrina. This project is a cooperative effort between the National Newspaper Publishers Association and the Baltimore Afro.

NEW ORLEANS — The air was thick with an oppressive silence and the smell of rot. The streets that once teemed with the play and laughter of children, the industry of mothers and fathers were empty now, reduced to mere dirt tracks.

On the sidewalks, a lone boot, a mud-encrusted car, an overturned basketball ring, a red tricycle lay like ominous and mocking reminders of a life now lost. Battered, sometimes mangled houses stood abandoned, forlorn in the gathering gloom like looming sentinels of a ghost town.

Pamela Everage's home was 1229 Deslonde St., yet on first sight, she could barely recognize it.

"This is my first time back. It's just awful," she said. "Just driving through the city, it looks like a Third World country."

With a hand on her hip, Everage surveyed her neighborhood from the remains of her front lawn. Dressed in white T-shirt, blue jeans, a white bandana and a pair of sneakers encrusted in black, pungent mud, Everage was the lone smidgen of life on an otherwise dead street.

Then we began to walk.

A slightly rusted sign proclaimed "Beautiful Blocks," an especially unseemly sentiment against the backdrop of decay. A nearby "Dead End" sign seemed much more appropriate.

Everage's face was a study of defeat and worry, wreathed in frowns and dominated by a pair of tired-looking eyes. She had not gotten much news about her extended family. She had seen one neighbor and her son at a shelter, who told her that the morning after the hurricane, people had already begun to walk their dogs and clean their yards before the floodwaters began to rise. She wondered if she would ever see them again.

"That family down there, all three of them were in wheelchairs. I think they got out when my sons left," said Everage, pointing out the houses as she spoke.

"That guy over there, he works off shore. He was gone, too. Those two people in that house over there, they're middle and high school teachers."

"The lady here, an administrator at Charity Hospital—everybody knew each other. People went to high school together, they knew your family."

Having no other idea of her neighbors' fates, Everage read the hieroglyphic markings on the houses, left there by rescue workers to document the dates of their visits and the fates of the inhabitants. A "0" meant no bodies were found, and as Everage surveyed the houses, she breathed a sigh of relief at all the zeros she saw.

Then she came to a house where a single woman lived with her five small children. She looked at the abandoned car mired in the bog of the front yard, then hesitantly raised her eyes to the markings on the wall. The "6" confirmed what she already knew in her heart.

"They didn't make it," she whispered with a shake of

her head. "I taught her son how to ride his bike."

Everage also worried about her relatives and friends, who lived on the other side of

North Claiborne Avenue between Florida and Caffin Avenues, a place where, at the time, soldiers were barring people from entering

and where, it was rumored, bodies were still being found.

"I know people on the other side and they are people I grew up with and they're not

letting you over there," Everage said. "I know a lot of the old people didn't leave. And I'm afraid that a lot of

Please see NEW/B8

What's your story? We're listening.

The Post is your community newspaper, and we're interested in reporting about the people, events and issues that shape Charlotte. If you have an idea or information, comments or opinions, e-mail editorial@thecharlottepost.com or log on to www.thecharlottepost.com

The Charlotte Post

The only thing better than saving time and money is getting \$50 for doing both.

Now when you open a Free Personal or Free Business Checking Account at SunTrust, we'll welcome you with a \$50 SunTrust Visa® Gift Card. Plus, you'll get Free Online Bill Pay, so you can pay all your bills from your computer, quickly and easily—with no minimum balance requirements or monthly maintenance fees. So hurry to your nearest SunTrust branch, call 866.422.1365, or visit suntrust.com/freechecking, and see why SunTrust is a better bank for your money and your lifestyle.

Free \$50 SunTrust Visa® Gift Card
for opening a Free Personal or
Free Business Checking Account



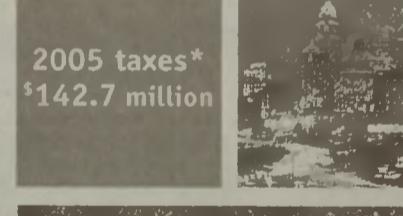
SUNTRUST
Seeing beyond money

Open a new Free Checking Account from 2/13/06 through 3/31/06 to receive a redemption certificate for a free \$50 SunTrust Visa® Gift Card. Clients must complete and postmark the redemption certificate included in the new checking account materials no later than 4/21/06. The account must remain open and in good standing as of 5/31/06 in order to qualify for the offer, only one redemption certificate per household. The \$50 SunTrust Visa® Gift Card will be sent to qualifying clients by 7/15/06.

The Visa® Gift Card is accepted everywhere in the United States. The Visa® Debit Card is accepted.

SunTrust Bank, Member FDIC. ©2006 SunTrust Banks, Inc. SunTrust and "Seeing beyond money" are service marks of SunTrust Banks, Inc.

Employer. Taxpayer. Citizen. Focused on North Carolina.



Community
partner



For 73 years, **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina** has served the people of North Carolina, handling medical claims for everything from heart attacks to pregnancies. As the only major health insurer focused solely on North Carolina, we're one of the top 100 employers in the state.

More than 4,000 North Carolinians work every day in our customer service centers and regional offices in nine North Carolina cities to support our growing membership. And as a fully taxed North Carolina business, we're also a major taxpayer, contributing to our state and local economies.

Each day we strive to make a real impact in the communities we serve. Since 1998 our company and its employees have donated more than \$4.5 million to the United Way and have logged more than 180,000 volunteer hours. And, we're partnering with the medical community to encourage improved hospital safety and to promote safer and efficient ePrescribing technology in doctor offices.

We're committed to investing in North Carolina's growth and look forward to serving the state and our members for years to come.

BCBSNC Insurance Company as of 1/1/2006. An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. © 2006 of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. All rights of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association reserved.

Innovative health care designed around you. | bcbsnc.com



**BlueCross BlueShield
of North Carolina**