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Filling the Boot> From left, fund coordinator Richard Lopez, an acting transportation operations supervisor at Division 9; Dereck Andrade, San Gabriel Valley representative of the Red Cross; San Gabriel Valley General Manager Jack Gabig; LASD Capt. Dan Finkelstein; Metro volunteers and volunteers from the El Monte Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's and Fire departments raised nearly \$70,000 for Katrina survivors.



Photos by Luis Inzunza

Volunteers Collect Almost \$70,000 for Hurricane Katrina Victims

- Cash donations filled a 55-gallon drum on Saturday

(Sept. 13, 2005) Some 80 Metro volunteers joined with volunteers from the El Monte Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's and Fire departments, last weekend, to raise almost \$70,000 for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Fanning out to cover four intersections in El Monte and Rosemead, the volunteers asked passing motorists to "Fill the Boot and Fill the Farebox" to help the hurricane survivors.

On Monday, the group presented a check for \$62,000 to the American Red Cross and expected to contribute \$5,000 to \$6,000 more once all coins had been counted.

Richard Lopez, an acting transportation operations supervisor at Division 9, and El Monte Officer Ed Navarratte coordinated the fundraising event.

"If it weren't for the volunteers and residents of El Monte and Rosemead, this wouldn't have happened," said Lopez. "It was a remarkable effort."

Outpouring of generosity

Postcard from El Monte



On Tuesday, Lopez was still expressing astonishment at the outpouring of public generosity during the hurricane fundraising effort, which covered only two-and-a-half hours each weekend day.

Money contributed by local residents on Saturday filled a 55-gallon drum, Lopez said. The drum was about three-quarters full on Sunday. The volunteers collected more than \$7,000 in change; \$15,700 in \$1 bills; and the remainder in \$50s, \$20s, \$10s, \$5s and checks.

One woman wrote a \$1,000 check to the Red Cross. A man pulled two \$100 bills out of his glove box. Children contributed money from their piggy banks. A homeless man insisted on giving 50 cents.

By midnight Sunday, 15 El Monte police officers had counted only \$55,750. The count had reached \$62,000 by mid-morning on Monday when a check was formally presented to Dereck Andrade, San Gabriel Valley representative of the Red Cross. The rest of the money will be donated when the count is final.

Lopez thanked LA County Fire Capt. Richie Salisbury of Station 166 in El Monte, El Monte Police Chief Ken Weldon, Transit Services Bureau Deputy Gary DeBondt and Division 9 Transportation Manager Dan Frawley as being key to the success of the fundraiser.

"I was expecting to get a lot of red tape, but everybody's response was, 'Sure, we'll do it,'" said Lopez. "It was two thumbs up all the way through the project."

