

November 10, 2004  
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# Aid sought for victims of storms

By FELICIA HUNTER, Correspondent

BRIDGEPORT

Hurricane Ivan left thousands living in the Caribbean devastated, and members of Bridgeport's West Indian community want to help.

They're soliciting monetary and in-kind donations to the Jamaica and Grenada Hurricane Relief Fund and Collection Center, a joint project established by the West Indian American Association of Greater Bridgeport and local businessman Mutti Lewis. WIAAGB is collecting funds, while Lewis is amassing food and clothing items.

"We're getting clothing now. We can use some more, but we're also looking for canned food and water," said Lewis, owner of Uptown Laundromat and a native Jamaican.

"There's a lot of people still going through so much. They haven't recuperated yet."

WIAAGB President Val Peterson said her in-laws, who live in Jamaica, lost crops because of the hurricane.

"They lost fruit. We've had other members who have family there and they've told of different losses."

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Consulate General of Jamaica soliciting help. Around that time she was

approached by Lewis regarding a citywide relief effort, and they consolidated their efforts, she said.

Lewis said he has traveled to New York to meet with Stafford Neil, Jamaica's ambassador to the United Nations, and other Jamaican officials regarding the Bridgeport project.

Hurricane Ivan hit the Caribbean area, as well as parts of the United States, in September. With reported wind speeds of up to 165 miles per hour, Ivan was the fifth and most devastating hurricane and in a rash of 2004 hurricane-season storms. Scores of deaths were attributed to Ivan, as well as massive structural damage. Lack of safe drinking water is one of the many concerns for residents.

The U.S. Agency for International Development reports that 100,000 people were affected in Grenada during this year's hurricane season and in Jamaica, 19,000 people were evacuated to shelters.

The United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Republic of China and South Africa lead an international community that has pledged millions of dollars for hurricane relief efforts in the Caribbean. Lewis and WIAAGB join local, national and international organizations contributing money, food, clothing, health services, manpower and other humanitarian assistance. Lewis said the deadline for making contributions to the Bridgeport relief effort is shortly after Thanksgiving.

Lewis asks that food and clothing donations be taken to Uptown Laundromat, 987 State St. Pick-up of items may be arranged by calling 331-1825. Peterson requests that monetary donations be mailed to the West Indian American Association of Greater Bridgeport, 955 Connecticut Ave., Unit 1112, Bridgeport, CT 06607. Checks should be made payable to the Jamaican Consulate Hurricane Ivan Relief Fund.

For more information, call 335-2999.

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