

Connected

May/June 2011

Published for the
members of



TRAGEDY IN NORTH ALABAMA

SPECIAL TORNADO EDITION



Comfort after the storm

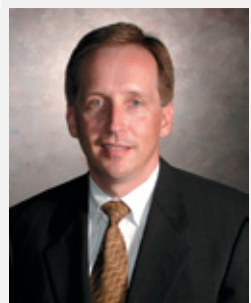
Storms happen. I wish they didn't but they do. Sometimes a few people will try to offer elaborate reasons why. Don't listen to them. There is no elaborate reason. Storms are a simple fact of nature. They happen because that's the way nature works, period, end of discussion. And in this simple truth, this essential element of nature, there is peace to be found. For you see, if we are not to blame for storms, if there is no reason the storm destroyed one home or community and left another unscathed, then we cannot be defined by those storms. We are defined as individuals and as communities not by what happens to us, but in how we react to it.

Over the past four weeks, I have personally observed the best in people: Neighbors helping neighbors, communities helping communities, and yes, even government helping government. Oh sure, I've seen a few bad things too but I am not going to bother giving that the time of day. What has impressed me most is that as I write this column I have yet to directly hear one citizen of DeKalb or Jackson County whining over what someone or some agency is not doing for them. All across the storm-ravaged areas, people are picking themselves up by their bootstraps and, with the help of friends and neighbors, carrying on. I'm sure not everything is perfect. It seldom is. I have no doubt we will all learn some good lessons and do even better next time if, heaven forbid, something like this happens again. I encourage you in the strongest terms possible to focus on the tremendous sense of community, in a way, being re-forged across our area. Get involved. Helping those devastated by storms, in whatever unique way you can, will yield a blessing you can only imagine until you experience it for yourself.

Rest assured FTC is doing all it can to return you to a state of normalcy as quickly as possible. We are making great progress. As of this writing we

had returned to service 35 miles of route cable destroyed or heavily damaged by the storms. We have a number of employees whose homes were either totally destroyed or heavily damaged back and still on the job putting your needs ahead of their own. That's typical of the folks I lead and they, not me, deserve all the credit. It will still be a while before all is perfect, but you can rest assured, we will stay with it until it's done. Elsewhere in this issue is more information about what we are doing to make sure none of you are forgotten.

Allow me to close on a very personal note. I am a Christian and not the least bit bashful to proclaim it. My home and family are safe. I thank God for it. Hundreds of you are not so fortunate and you are most definitely in my prayers. I also pray that should the worst one day happen to me, my faith will be just as secure as it now is. During times like these it is perfectly natural to ask why. Many of you may already have or yet have asked God, Himself, why things like this happen. Make no mistake about it, He can handle the question. After all, if you're asking him questions, you're talking to Him. I don't know how He will answer you. In the end, remember, storms happen. But it is not the storm that defines you. It is how you react to it. And I can promise you this, God is available, willing and capable to help in that regard. He only asks that you let Him. ■



Fred Johnson is General Manager of Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc.



is a member-owned corporation dedicated to providing communications technology to the people of northeast Alabama. The company has over 16,000 access lines, making it the state's largest telecommunications cooperative.

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Connected

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On the Cover:

Communities across FTC's service area were affected by the deadly storms that swept across Jackson and DeKalb Counties on April 27. Read more about nature's fury beginning on Page 6.

Photo by Stephen V. Smith



Internet only, please...

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**FTC Exclusive
BROADBAND**

**High-Speed Internet...
without a regular home phone...**

(unless you want to plug up and get free unlimited incoming calls)



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Need help paying for Telephone Service?

Do you, or someone in your household, participate in any of these programs?

**Medicaid • Food Stamps • Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
Section 8 Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA) • Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) • Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

For a complete set of terms for the Link-Up and Lifeline programs, call or visit your local telephone company. You may also contact any other eligible telecommunications company that is certified to provide service in Alabama by the Alabama Public Service Commission or the Federal Communications Commission. Link-Up and Lifeline are part of the Federal Universal Service Fund program. The Federal Communications Commission introduced this program, and the Universal Service Administrative Company oversees it. The goal of Universal Service is to make sure consumers throughout the United States have essential telecommunications service.

You may qualify for these two special programs:

LINK UP

This program provides a discount on the cost of installing telephone service.

LIFELINE

This program provides a discount on the cost of monthly telephone service.

To find out if you qualify for these programs, call FTC at 256-638-2144. You may also call the Alabama Public Service Commission toll free at 1-800-392-8050.



New for FTC customers: Computer Repair Center

Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative has long been your trusted leader in technology. Now the professional team you rely on for all your telecommunications needs is here for all your PC needs, as well.

FTC's new Computer Repair Center is open at our main office in Rainsville and available to all FTC customers.

In addition to repairs, customers will get competitive rates on a variety of services including malware and

spyware cleanup, hard drive upgrades and even data recovery.

Members who bring their PC in to the Rainsville office will receive a free simple diagnostic check on their computer.

"We will assess the machine before it costs the customer any money," says Keith McClendon, senior technical support representative at FTC. "There will be no surprises."

Members may also choose to leave their PC at the FTC satellite office in Higdon or Geraldine. A technician will pick up the machine and take it to the center for repairs, then return it for pick up at the satellite office. For an additional fee, FTC will even pick up your PC at your home or place of

business and return it after it has been repaired.

Members can feel safe when entrusting the data on their machines to the qualified personnel at FTC. "Being a telecommunications company, we are bound by privacy laws in everything we do," McClendon says. "When you bring your computer to FTC, you can be sure it will be serviced quickly and with an added level of security and privacy."

This new service is only available to FTC customers. "If you do not have voice, Internet or video service with FTC," McClendon says, "this is another great reason to give us a call."

At present, FTC does not offer services on Macs or Apple products. Call the Computer Repair Center at: 256-638-2144 during FTC's regular business hours. ■

Your Trusted Technology Partner is now your Computer Repair Partner!



FTC LET THE TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS AT FTC REPAIR OR SERVICE YOUR PC

Computer RepairCenter

GENERAL DIAGNOSTICS & REPAIRS
MEMORY UPGRADES • HARD DRIVE UPGRADES
BACKUP SOLUTIONS • DATA RECOVERY

"No Surprise" Policy

FTC technicians will perform a free simple test to diagnose your computer's problem. We will share the test results with you, along with an estimate of the repair costs, before any work is performed. FTC will never work on your computer and charge you without your authorization.

Service not available on Macs or other Apple products.

**For details, or to schedule your PC's appointment,
call the FTC Computer Repair Center at 256-638-2144**



"We Keep You Connected"

Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative is required by the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to furnish the following information to members prior to the annual meeting.

BYLAWS - ARTICLE IV

TRUSTEE SECTION 2. Election and Tenure of Office.

The Trustees shall be elected by secret ballot for a term of three years on a rotating basis with the Trustees from the Pisgah, Bryant, and Geraldine service areas being elected at the annual meeting of the members of the Co-op in August of 1991 and the Trustees from Rainsville and Fyffe service areas being elected at the annual meeting of the members of the Co-op in August of 1992 and the Trustees from the Flat Rock and Henagar service areas being elected at the annual meeting of the members in August of 1993, and after their election the Trustees shall continue to serve until the election of Trustees at the annual meeting of the members of the Co-op at which their term expires or if no election shall be then held, the Trustees shall continue to hold office until their successors shall have been elected and shall have qualified. If an election of Trustees shall not be held on the day designated herein for the annual meeting or at any adjournment thereof, a special meeting of the members shall be held for the purpose of electing Trustees within a reasonable time thereafter. Trustees may be elected by a plurality vote of the members. Trustees shall be nominated and elected as provided hereinafter.

The Co-op is divided into seven (7) geographic service areas and from each such service area there shall be elected one trustee to the Board. Members shall be eligible to vote for every Trustee.

The geographic service areas are set forth as follows: Bryant, Flat Rock, Fyffe, Geraldine, Henagar, Pisgah, and Rainsville as the same are shown on the map or plat of the service area on file in the office of the Co-op at Rainsville, Alabama to which such map or plat thereof reference is here made for a more complete description of said service areas.

SECTION 4. Nominations.

It shall be the duty of the Board to appoint, not less than forty (40) nor more than seventy (70) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which trustees are to be elected, a committee on nominations consisting of not less than five nor more than eleven members who shall be selected from different sections so as to insure equitable representation. No member of the Board may serve on such committee. The committee, keeping in mind the principle geographic representation, shall prepare and post at the principle office of the Cooperative at least thirty (30) days before the meeting a list of nominations for trustees which shall include at least two candidates for each trustee to be elected. Any fifteen or more members acting together may make other nominations by petition not less than twenty (20) days prior to the meeting and the Secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted. The Secretary shall mail with the notice of the meeting or separately, but a least five (5) days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of Trustees to be elected and the names and the addresses of the candidates, specifying separately the nominations made by the committee and the nominations made by petition, if any. The ballot to be used at the election shall list the names of the candidates nominated by the committee and the names of the candidates nominated by petition, if any. The chairman shall call for additional nominations from the floor and nominations shall not be closed until at least one minute has passed during which no additional nomination has been made. No member may nominate more than one candidate.

Phonebook recycling efforts pay dividends to area schools

Each year as part of a Directory Recycling Program sponsored by Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative, area students are challenged to collect old telephone books and help earn money for their school.

"The program keeps tons of paper from making its way into landfills," says Kim Williams, public relations representative for FTC. "The paper that is collected will be recycled instead."

To encourage students to collect the phone books, FTC pays each school inside their service area 25¢ for every Northeast Alabama Regional Directory students collect from the community. Students collected 4,757 of the directories and another 659 directories published by other companies.

Henagar Junior High School brought in 996 FTC directories and 98 other directories making their school the top collector.

North Sand Mountain, Sylvania, Plainview and Cornerstone Christian Academy rounded out the top five.

"We really appreciate the students, faculties and families who help make these efforts successful," says Williams. "This program is good for our schools and for the communities we live in." ■



Students at Henagar Jr. High School collected enough directories to earn "top collector" in FTC's Directory Recycling Program.

The weather may have broken records on April 27, but it was our people who made history in the wake of the storms. Faced with a widespread disaster beyond the scope of anything most had seen, the people of Sand Mountain and beyond rose to the challenge and demonstrated just what the human spirit is capable of when pushed to its limits.

In this special edition of *Connected* we have documented the facts, but we have also attempted to present an overview of the disaster through the stories of those who experienced it. While it is impossible to tell every story in this limited space, it is our hope that through the accounts you will read in the following pages you will better understand how people from various walks of life were impacted by

NATURE'S FURY ON SAND MOUNTAIN

*Stories & photos by
Tina Thurmond,
Stephen V. Smith,
Jared Dovers,
Brandi Lyles,
Kim Williams and
Carey Baker*

IN LOVING MEMORY

of those who lost
their lives as a result of the
April 27, 2011, tornadoes

Twenty-Third Psalm

A Psalm of David

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies:
Thou anointest my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

The FTC family also mourns the loss
of one of its most beloved retirees.

Eddie Joe Bobbitt died from injuries
sustained during the storm period.

Joe served FTC from 1964 until his re-
tirement in 2006. For many years Joe
supervised the maintenance of the
cooperative's cable and wire facili-
ties. He received a special commen-
dation for outstanding contributions
to the quality assurance of those facilities and for training and devel-
oping a new generation of employees who continue in his footsteps.
His legacy is one of integrity and commitment to a job well done.



DEKALB COUNTY

Chelsie Black, 20, Higdon
Charlotte Bludsworth, 36, Rainsville
Belinda Boatner, 67, Higdon
Eddie Joe Bobbitt, 71, Rainsville
Gene Bullock, 65, Rainsville
Marcella Bullock, 64, Rainsville
Jewell Ewing, 73, Higdon
Emma Ferguson, 6, Sylvania
Jeremy Ferguson, 34, Sylvania
Tawnya Ferguson, 32, Sylvania
Hannah Goins, 3, Rainsville
Kenneth Graham, 56, Valley Head
Linda Graham, 61, Valley Head
Ruth "Violet" Hairston, 90, Henagar
Harold Harcrow, 74, Rainsville
Patricia Harcrow, 75, Rainsville
Jody Huizenga, 28, Sylvania
Lethel Izell, 86, Rainsville
Jimmy Michael Kilgore, 48, Sylvania
Courtney McGaha, 15, Rainsville
William "Buddy" Michaels, 70, Higdon
Martha Michaels, 72, Higdon
Eula Miller, 80, Fyffe
Ida Ott, 87, Henagar
Timothy Ott, 53, Henagar
Ester Rosson, 81, Rainsville
Peggy Sparks, 55, Rainsville
Terry Tinker, 50, Higdon
Daniel Vermillion, 42, Rainsville
Jidal Vermillion, 44, Rainsville
Hubert Wooten, 70, Rainsville
Juanita Wooten, 70, Rainsville
Judith White, 63, Ider
Wayne White, 68, Ider

JACKSON COUNTY

Kathy Gray Haney, 46, Pisgah
Herbert Satterfield, 90, Pisgah
Ann Satterfield, 81, Pisgah
Janie Shannon, 80, Higdon
Shelby Jean Shannon, 58, Flat Rock
Elease Whited, 75, Flat Rock
John Whited, 77, Flat Rock
Branen Warren, 13, Bridgeport

TUSCALOOSA STUDENTS

Scott Atterton, Bryant
Blake Peek, Pisgah
Morgan Sigler, Bryant

Alabama Tornado Facts

According to an official statement by the Alabama EMA, **238 people** were killed in the tornadoes that ravaged the state on April 27, 2011.

About **65% of the state** was affected, with damage spreading over **42 counties**.

Army Corps of Engineers estimate the debris in the state would fill a football field stacked One Mile high.

Insurance estimates, according to Alabama's insurance commissioner Jim Ridling, will total **\$2 to 5 billion in damages** to insured properties across the state. If it exceeds \$4 billion, it will be the worst disaster in the state's history, economically. In 2004, Hurricane Ivan set the record that may be broken by April 27th's activity of violent tornadoes. One of the hardest hit areas was Tuscaloosa where Mayor Walt Maddox said that clean-up cost alone could exceed **\$100 million**.



53 Tornado tracks were identified across the state for a combined **length of 640 miles**, and a combined **width of over 10 miles**. An area that is the size of the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut combined. *Source: AEMA*



NOTABLE ALABAMA TORNADOES

- **April 20, 1920:** 219 killed in Mississippi and Alabama.
- **March 21, 1932:** 268 killed in Alabama and 315 total in Alabama, Texas and South Carolina.
- **March 27, 1994:** 42 die in tornadoes that hit Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, including 20 during a worship service at Goshen United Methodist Church in Piedmont.
- **April 8, 1998:** 32 die in Oak Grove, Rock Creek, Concord, Pleasant Grove, Pratt City and other areas.
- **April 27, 2011:** 238 killed as tornadoes swept through Alabama.

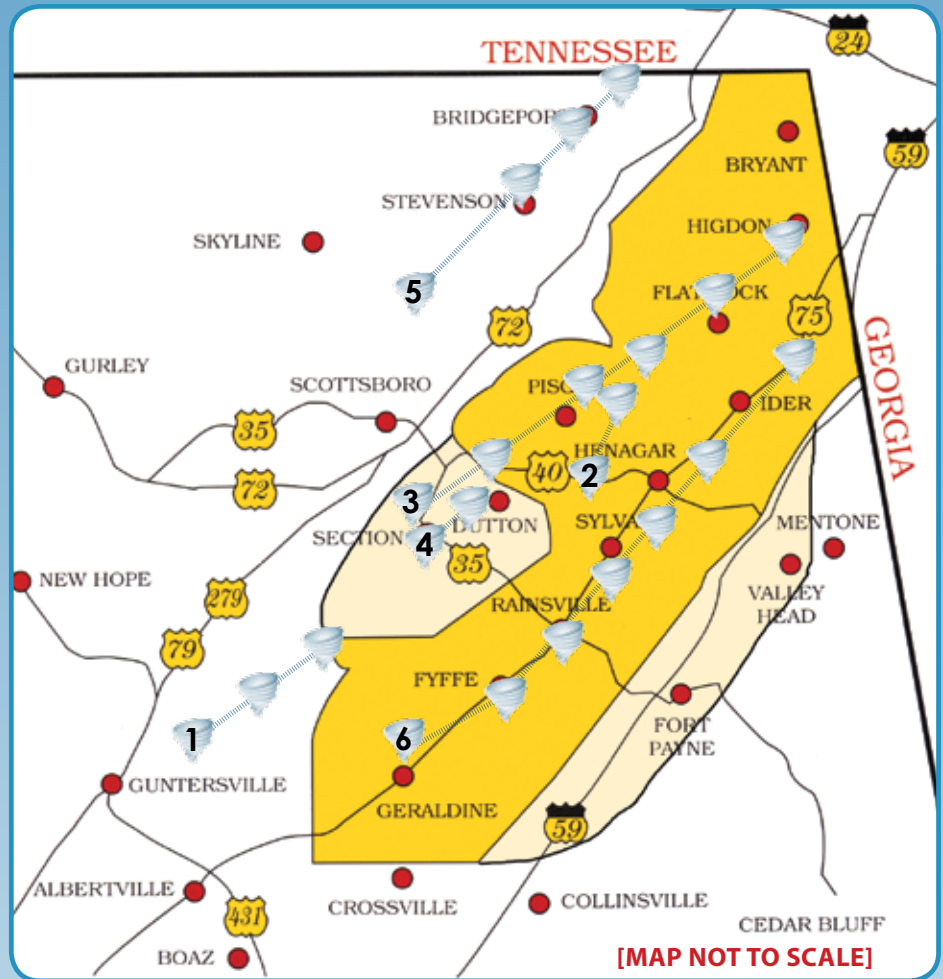
ENHANCED FUJITA SCALE	EF5	> 200mph	Total destruction of buildings. Strong framed, well built houses leveled off foundations and swept away; steel-reinforced concrete structures are critically damaged; tall buildings collapse or have severe structural deformations.
	EF4	166-200mph	Extreme damage. Well-constructed and whole frame houses completely leveled; cars and other large objects thrown and small missiles generated.
	EF3	136-165mph	Severe damage. Entire stories of well-constructed houses destroyed; severe damage to large buildings such as shopping malls; trains overturned; trees debarked; heavy cars lifted off the ground and thrown; structures with weak foundations are badly damaged.
	EF2	111-135mph	Considerable damage. Roofs torn off well-constructed houses; foundations of frame homes shifted; mobile homes completely destroyed; large trees snapped or uprooted; light-object missiles generated; cars lifted off ground.
	EF1	86-110mph	Moderate damage. Roofs severely stripped; mobile homes overturned or badly damaged; loss of exterior doors; windows and other glass broken.
	EF0	65-85mph	Minor or no damage. Peels surface off some roofs; some damage to gutters or siding; branches broken off trees; shallow-rooted trees pushed over.

IN DEKALB COUNTY

- **1,002 houses** were damaged in some way and, of those, **301** were completely destroyed.
- **154 mobile homes** were damaged and, of those, **78** were completely destroyed.
- **46 businesses** were damaged and, of those, **19** were completely destroyed.
- **538 barns, sheds or other outbuildings** were damaged and, of those, **267** were completely destroyed.
- **63** chicken houses were damaged and, of those, **37** were completely destroyed.

IN JACKSON COUNTY

- Bridgeport had **93 homes** damaged, **9** of those completely destroyed.
- Fabius had **39 homes** heavily damaged.
- Bryant had **28 homes** damaged with **4** of those completely destroyed.
- Hidgon had **76 homes** heavily damaged with **46** of those homes completely destroyed.
- No statistics were available for Flat Rock or Pisgah at the time.



- Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative Service Area
- Farmers Telecommunications Corporation Service Area

SIZE	TIME	COUNTY LOCATION	WIDTH OF PATH	LENGTH OF PATH	DESCRIPTION
1 EF2 120 mph	6:30 a.m. - 6:55 a.m.	DeKalb	1/2 mile	20 miles	Began west of Guntersville Lake in Marshall County travelling to Co. Rd. 544 between Grove Oak and Bucks Pocket State Park.
2 EF2 120 mph	7:10 a.m. - 7:18 a.m.	Jackson/ DeKalb	200 yards	6.6 miles	Henagar to Rosalie
3 EF4 190 mph	4:01 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.	Jackson/ DeKalb	1/2 to 1 mile	28 miles	Northeast of Section to northeast of Shiloh Crossing on the Georgia state line.
4 EF1 90 mph	unclear	Jackson	300 yards	unclear	Travelled along and near Hwy. 71 corridor from near Section to the south side of Pisgah where it is believed to have merged into the EF4 already in progress.
5 EF4 180 mph	5:05 p.m.- 5:25 p.m.	Jackson	3/4 mile	20.5 miles	Began near Co. Rd. 42 northeast of Fackler travelling to Co. Rd. 91 near the Tennessee River then entered Tennessee.
6 EF4 175 mph	6:19 p.m.- 6:56 p.m.	DeKalb	3/4 mile	33.8 miles	Lakeview to near Rising Fawn, Ga.

On Wednesday, April 27, 2011, several tornadoes swept a path of destruction across Alabama, leaving 238 dead. The death toll stood at 34 in DeKalb County and eight in Jackson County. It was the deadliest tornado outbreak on record in Alabama since 1932, when 268 were killed statewide.

Across Sand Mountain, almost every town in both DeKalb and Jackson counties suffered extensive damage.

The terrifying power of the tornadoes wiped homes and businesses from the landscape as if they had never been there. Utility poles lay snapped with miles of power and phone lines on the ground. Thousands were without power. Telephone service was significantly impaired. Even cell phone service was unreliable.

Engineer Tony Bowman of FTC went out to survey the area and assess the damage suffered by the devastated

cooperative. "In all of my years here," Bowman says, "I have never, ever seen anything like this. I know FTC's coverage area like the back of my hand, but there was so much devastation, I couldn't tell where I was."

These facts only tell part of the story. The real impact of Wednesday, April 27, can best be understood through the voices of the people across the Sand Mountain region who suffered great loss during this day of killer storms.

VOICES FROM THE STORM

Like the landscape itself, the lives of Sand Mountain's residents have been irrevocably altered by the most damaging tornado activity in the state's history.



Henagar Baptist Church Pastor David Hairston and his wife, Deborah stand in front of their home. Hairston's mother was killed when a tornado struck her home.

A mother at rest

David Hairston had only minutes to warn his 90-year-old mother, Violet, of the impending storm raging toward her home. As the pastor of Henagar Baptist Church, David had just returned from the funeral home when he heard a noise like thunder from his front porch. "I told my wife, Deborah, that I didn't like the looks of things," he says. "That's when I saw the tornado coming. I told Deborah to get in the bathtub."

Violet Hairston's home was behind her son's. With the storm visible on the horizon, David knew he had no time to get his mother to safety. His only choice was to call and warn her. As he and his wife sought refuge in the bathtub, their home was literally torn to pieces all around them. When the storm was over, David saw that his home was a total loss. To his shock, his mother's home was gone. "Her house was about 150 yards away in the field," David says through tears. "That is where I found my momma. Her little body was laying in front of her couch, partially under the floor of the house. I took her out and carried her to my house."

To those who knew her, Violet will be remembered for her strength and her love of the outdoors. "She loved her flowers and would rather mow grass and weed the garden I planted for her than anything," David says. "She was loved for her fried apple pies and chicken and dumplings. At Christmas she'd make peanut brittle to give as gifts to everyone. She was a very special lady."

David is certain his mother is with God at rest. "I miss her terribly but I know without a doubt she is in heaven," he says. "My dad and brother are with the Lord; I believe they probably had a big party when Momma got there."

"I haven't lost my momma," he adds. "Because if you've lost something you don't know where it's at. I know right where she is, and I know I'll see her again."

A close call

The Wing House in Rainsville had only been in business for seven months and was already a popular spot with people of all ages. Owners Robert and Janice Keef were hard at work in their restaurant on April 27, and many of their customers were worried about the weather. "Just about everyone wanted their food to go," Janice says. "All day there were storm warnings and it looked really bad outside."

"That particular day," Robert says, "I walked in and said 'Let's go to the house.' Janice asked 'Don't we need to clean up?' and I said 'No.' If we had taken the time to clean up, we'd have been in there when it hit."

Fifteen minutes after the Keefs, their son Chris and their employees left, the tornado slammed into the Wing House, ripping it to shreds along with the adjacent businesses. Where folks once enjoyed friendly rivalry in the Iron Bowl Room with its Roll Tide and War Eagle murals, there was only a tangle of wood, metal and debris.

"We were watched over that day," Robert says. "We could have made a decision to stay there, but I just had a feeling we needed to get out."

The Keefs went to their home in Rainsville and hid in the hallway, clinging to each other. "I was never so terrified in all of

Although the roof was ripped from Robert Bethune's home in Shiloh Crossing, he was still able to make calls from the home phone.



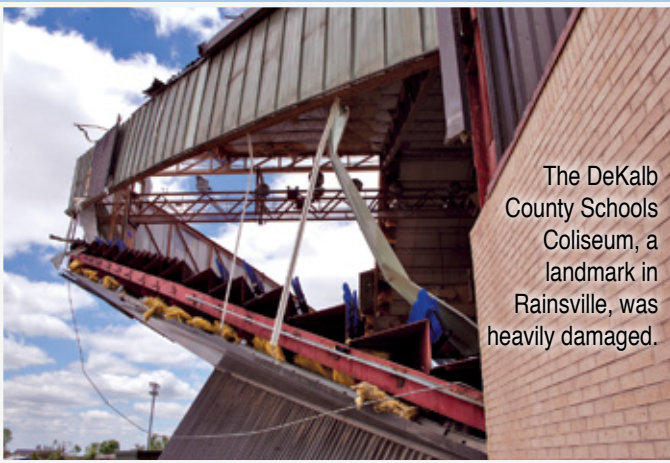
Plainview School received extensive damage; it could be a year or longer before the campus is completely restored.



Mountain View Baptist Church on County Road 27 in Sylvania was one of several on Sand Mountain that was damaged or destroyed.



Robert, Janice and Chris Keef plan to rebuild the Wing House in Rainsville. The Alabama mural in their Iron Bowl room survived the storm.



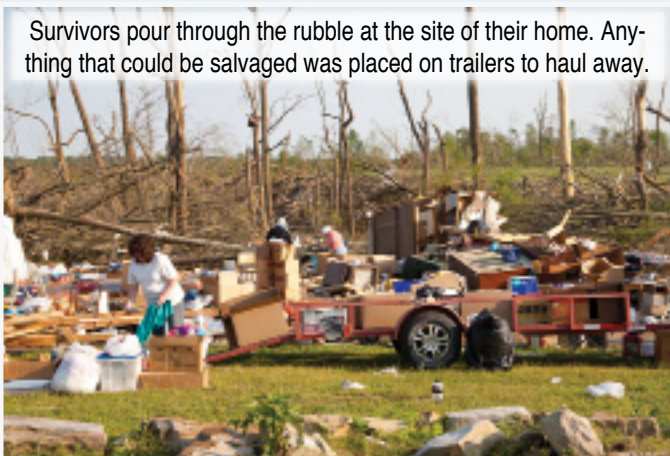
The DeKalb County Schools Coliseum, a landmark in Rainsville, was heavily damaged.



Aerial view of Lingerfelt Road in Rainsville showing some of the destruction left in the wake of the deadly EF-4 tornado.



The remains of Ina Fraiser's home in Lakeview have been piled at the roadside for removal. The rebuilding of her new home is well underway.



Survivors pour through the rubble at the site of their home. Anything that could be salvaged was placed on trailers to haul away.

my life," Janice says. "We held each other and just prayed."

More than 100 trees crashed to the ground and into their home within seconds. Their vehicles were buried under debris. The devastation in their neighborhood was shocking to the Keefs.

Janice soon learned that her first cousin, Marcella Bullock, and her husband, Gene, had been killed in the storm. "They were childhood sweethearts," Janice says through tears. "They were really in love. It has been very hard for our family losing them."

Robert, who pastors New Life Baptist Church in Shiloh, looks to God for peace in the midst of the tragedy.

"These are just material things that we've lost," Robert says. "To see the destruction all across this county is humbling, but if we can all work together and pray together, we can build our county back better than it ever was." The Keefs plan to rebuild the Wing House in the coming months.

In the blink of an eye

Pisgah couple King and Terry Boking thought their family was safe from the storms that ripped through Jackson County. They had already bypassed the first round of early morning tornadoes as well as those in the early afternoon. However, the storm that had tracked from Cullman and into parts of Marshall County was headed for Sand Mountain, bringing destruction on a level they could not have imagined.

"We heard it coming and ran into the basement," says Terry.

The basement, left over from an abandoned home in the front of their property, is the one thing that saved her family. "We all ran in there and pulled down the metal door as it was hitting," she says.

Her husband King watched from the basement as the brand new mobile home they purchased just two months earlier toppled over. "It was as if the storm just picked it up and turned it on its side," says King, who described the sound of the storm as a whirlwind of rain pounding heavily as it passed through.

The Bokings have found bits and pieces of their own family's belongings as well as items from the house across the street that was also destroyed. Their son Sidney, a third-grader at Rosalie, has collected baseball cards from their yard among other things. He has been keeping a box of those items in case someone comes to collect them.

"At this point, I can't tell what's mine and what belonged to someone else," says Terry.

The Bokings lost their first home to a fire a few months earlier, and used the insurance settlement to purchase the mobile home. "It's the nicest thing my husband and I had owned," says Terry, choking back tears. "Now I can't even recognize it."

There are similar stories throughout the Boking's town, with residents describing it as a 'war zone.' Terry agrees. "It looks like a bomb went off," she says.

Salvaging memories

Willis and Pat Shavers of Pisgah are survivors. They are taking care of themselves after the storm, waiting until they can be moved into an assisted living home. Their son James and daughter-in-law Lorie flew in from Texas to help.

Willis, who is in a wheelchair, and Pat had just pulled their

van into the garage when the tornado ripped their entire house apart. The couple was stuck in their vehicle throughout the storm until help arrived.

"Looking at the car with the roof on top of it looks scary," says Lorie. "I can't believe they survived through it all."

James and Lorie, as well as other family members, spent the days following the tornado digging through the remains of the home Willis built some 50 years ago.

"It's amazing to find items that they've kept, like a napkin from my wedding," says Lorie. The family has created a treasure pile of intact items salvaged from the rain and wind.

"Up in that tree is a couch and a piano," Lorie says, pointing to the bare remains of an old tree. Personal items and mementos in the tree blow in the wind like leaves.

For Lorie, the sight is too much, but she is thankful nonetheless.

"Look at those boots, still sitting by what would have been the stairs," she says. "They are untouched. It's strange how tornados pick and choose what they pick up."

Grateful hearts

Like many others across the service area, Ricky and Charlotte Fraiser of Lakeview were without electricity on the evening of April 27. Their daughter Misty, her husband, Brad, and their children were at the Fraiser's home to grill hamburgers and hot dogs for dinner. Ricky's mother, Iva, also joined them.

"We had a weather radio, but the power was off and the batteries had run down," says Charlotte. "My daughter Shelly had been calling us with weather reports, but we didn't know what was about to happen."

"It was around 6:20 when my daughter Misty noticed something happening in the sky," recalls Ricky. "She stood

up and shouted for us all to head to the bathtub as quickly as we could."

The family of eight hurried down the hall to the bathroom. Brad made sure everyone else was safely inside before joining the rest of his family, but was caught by flying debris. "Brad didn't make it back there to us; the storm hit too quickly," says Charlotte. "We were happy he was alright when we finally came out of the bathroom."

"It seems like we were in that room for hours," says Ricky. "But really, they tell us it was only 15 seconds. I never heard a train, or anything like that. I just heard a whole lot of creaking and popping — then the roof came off."

Immediately after the storm, the family struggled to make their way out of the bathroom and out of their destroyed home. "We were all covered in insulation," says Charlotte. "We made sure everyone was safe, then we looked around the house and saw that the bathroom walls were still standing along with a cross that hung on one of the walls. Everything else was completely destroyed."

Soon after, some young men had pulled up in pickup trucks to see if the family needed help. "I have no idea who they were, but I'm so grateful they came by," says Charlotte. The men helped the family get down from the destroyed porch and safely out of the house.

Outside, Brad and Misty's trailer was lying across the street from where it had been. It was completely destroyed. Four vehicles in the driveway were totaled, and Iva's house was also demolished. "Brad lost his pet boxer bulldog, and a lot of what he owned. If they had stayed over there, they would have lost a whole lot more," says Ricky.

In the week that followed, the community came to the aid of the Fraisers. "We had all sorts of help," says Ricky. "People brought by food, water and any other supplies. Churches came to help clean up the rubble. At one point, we had five tractors here, helping. We're very grateful." ■

Chickens wander in a field after this chicken house was destroyed in Shiloh.



Shiloh Crossing: a community devastated

At the northernmost tip of DeKalb County, near the Georgia state line and a short drive from Jackson County, sits the Shiloh Crossing community. The people of this remote mountain settlement believe in hard work and taking care of their families, and everyone knows their neighbors.

On April 27, Shiloh Crossing was slammed in the early morning hours by a storm that brought high winds. Trees lay on the ground throughout the community, but no one was injured.

C.W. Higdon lost some trees, and a truck suffered damage. He thought the storm was rough enough, but he also knew from watching TV that the worst was yet to come. "They said the first one was just a toy compared to what the other one would be," he says. "And they were right."

That afternoon, Higdon and his wife drove to Trenton for supper. They had a front row seat as the tornado roared down the mountain. "We were in the parking lot at Bi-Lo's, and it nearly flipped our truck over," he says. Minutes later, they saw law enforcement and rescue vehicles racing up the mountain. Higdon followed.

He was not prepared for what he saw. The crossroads that leads into the community was blocked with trees, forcing him to find another way in. His home was standing, but damaged bad-

ly. The barn was gone. A 50' x 80' metal building gone, its roof system having plowed over a fence and landed in a pond. From trucks and equipment to barrels and bee hives, everything he owned was impacted.

Just down the road neighbor Gene Edgeworth had hunkered over his wife in the floor of the hall as the tornado shook their home. The sound of wood cracking and glass breaking lasted only a few seconds and it was over.

Gene walked outside to see if the storm had hit the home of their son, Wayne, who lived across the road. "I looked over there and saw that house down and I said 'Oh me, Lord,'" Gene says. "We lost a boy in '86, and Wayne's the only one we have left.

"I said 'Lord, please let them be alright,'" he adds. "I don't know if I could stand to lose another kid."

Wayne Edgeworth and his wife had no time to get scared. "It was on top of us, and the house just exploded," he says. He suffered a cracked rib and a punctured lung. Bricks from the mantle covered the lower half of his wife's body. But they survived, dug their way out and headed across the street to check on Wayne's parents.

"I looked back across, and here they came," remembers Gene. "I threw my hands up and said 'thank you Lord.'"

The celebration was bittersweet as

they learned others in the community were not spared.

"We lost my cousin and his wife, Buddy and Martha Michaels," says Wayne. "And my aunt and first cousin, Jewell Ewing and Terry Tinker."

They also lost friends nearby, Belinda Boatner and Chelsie Boatner Black.

C.W. Higdon knew them all, too. He was sad for their loss, but thankful that his sons who live just up the road had survived the damage to their homes.

How does a community come back from such tragedy? "It's gonna take a long time," says Gene Edgeworth. "We've been here a long time, and I think we'll all pull together and make it." He says in the hours and days following the tornado people have been so good to come by and check on his family to see how they can help — "just like brothers and sisters," he says.

But some scars will surely remain. "This community won't ever be the same," Higdon says.

In the aftermath, there is something Gene still struggles with because of his love for his neighbors. "What made me so sad about it," he says, "is that I had some (things) left, and my neighbors didn't have nothing. That hurt me, that hurt me way down deep." ■

Finding grace in the storms

(Editor's Note: Three weeks after the tornadoes, Rainsville's Debby Wooten shared on Facebook about the storm that claimed the lives of her in-laws, Hubert and Juanita Wooten, and Juanita's mother, Lethel Izell. Following is an excerpt from her story.)

By Debby Wooten

Sid said, "Debby, it got Mama and Daddy's house." Across the pasture, there was nothing standing. I took off. They were bound to be under some rubble and needed to get out. We would dust them off and stand them up, and they'd be okay. Right?

My heart sank when I realized there was nothing left of their house but some scattered concrete blocks. I began to realize the magnitude of this thing but still thought we'd find them. Sid had gone to the woods. I started calling them. They wouldn't be in the woods. The winds went in a different direction. That's when I went to the field again, and I found Mr. Hubert. I

finally got Sid back, who then found Granny and Mrs. Nita. I'll never forget it. It was a horrible way to find your loved ones.

As I looked around, there was devastation everywhere. Mrs. Rosson, my in-laws' neighbor for years who had just lost her husband 12 days earlier, was dying. Her brick house with 11 people in it was destroyed. One wall standing. Her son's trailer next door was gone. The Grenados' home was gone next to them, and their children were badly hurt. The next home past – it was gone. They survived by getting in their vehicle. The next home, another brick home, was totalled, but they all survived. Help couldn't get in because the roads were impassable. It seemed like an eternity.

Less than an hour ago, my mother-in-law had been in our house. Now, she's laying in the field. They're all gone. My mind still has a hard time wrapping around it. We still have time, right? Time to learn how to make Mr. Hubert's soups, time to plant more flowers, time to.... What will we do without them?

I want to share God's grace and mercy. He began by helping us to realize that Sid's parents, having been happily married for almost 52 years, left this world together. They did everything together. As we've reflected on their lives, and as other people have told us, they were just GOOD people. Which one would have wanted to be here without the other? Neither. Mr. Hubert told me a long time ago that when he and Mrs. Nita married,

he told her if she decided to leave, she might as well pack his bag, too. He was going with her! That he did.

Granny was getting older and feeble, and requiring more care. Would she have wanted to be here without her daughter? No. They say losing a child is one of the hardest things a parent could ever endure.

Sid's dad had always been sick. Polio when he was young, skin cancer, bone cancer, arthritis (the doctor told him years ago that most people like him shouldn't even be walking, let alone still working), heart attack, etc. He was tired of being sick.

I guess we thought we'd have Mrs. Nita longer. I'm glad, though, she didn't have to suffer the heartache of losing her husband, or her mama.

Bringing me to another example of God's mercy. They didn't suffer. I want to believe that God had His angels ready to scoop them up and guide them to their heavenly homes before they knew any pain or fear.

On the way home from the funeral, I told Sid that we were blessed, too, because we found them. How awful it must be to have missing loved ones. We were blessed that we had found our family.

And we had been blessed all along because they were ours. Everyone who knew them loved them, but they were OURS. We were loved by them. We were fed by them. We were comforted by them.

Are we blessed? The Lord has helped me to see that He was here in the storm. He answered my prayer for protection. It was His will to bring our loved ones Home. Honoring their lives of sacrifice and love, He showed them mercy. We don't have their things to hold, or their home to visit, but we have a heritage of a life lived, with integrity, in service to God and to others. Yes, we are blessed. ■

The front steps are all that remain intact of Hubert and Juanita Wooten's home on County Road 515 in Rainsville. Sid and Debby Wooten hold a photo of Sid's parents that was found in Lenoir City, Tenn.



FTC crews restore service

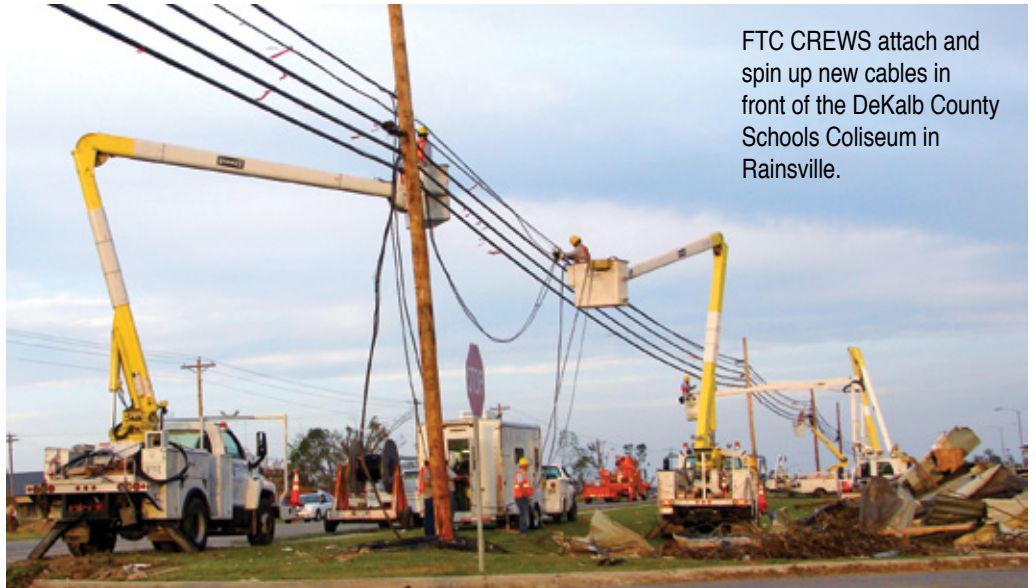
During the storms, FTC lost 33 of their main lines, leaving just two standing after the tornadoes had passed. Thirty-five miles of telephone line was left heavily damaged or completely destroyed. FTC immediately moved into action, sending crews throughout the service area. Within two weeks of the storm, less than 300 members were without phone service.

“Our emergency plan worked,” says Fred Johnson, FTC general manager. “It worked because of our people. Whatever it took they did it. Whether it was repairing a line or cooking and delivering a meal to the person doing the repair, it happened. Our folks rolled up their sleeves and did what had to be done. That’s the type of people they are and it’s a true honor to be associated with them,” says Johnson.

SCOTTY PRESLEY removing cables from a damaged pole to attach them to a new pole.



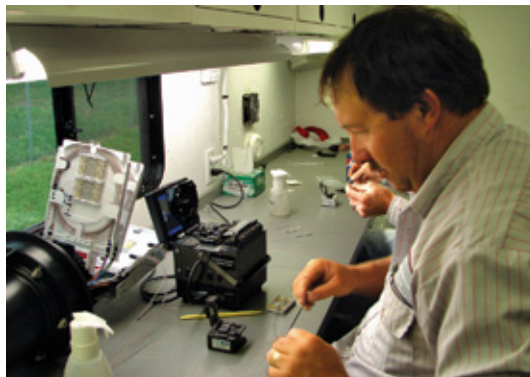
ABOVE LEFT: RANDALL BERRY cutting limbs off a line in the Fyffe area. ABOVE RIGHT: In true cooperative spirit, several other cooperatives helped FTC restore service to their members. From Tennessee: Ben Lomand Telephone Cooperative, McMinnville and Tracy City; North Central Telephone Cooperative, LaFayette; Twin Lakes Telephone Cooperative, Gainsboro. From Kentucky: West Kentucky & Tennessee Telephone Cooperative, Mayfield; Peoples Rural Telephone Cooperative, McKee; Mountain Telephone Cooperative, West Liberty. From North Carolina: Skyline Telephone Membership Cooperative, West Jefferson. From Alabama: New Hope Telephone Cooperative, New Hope; Camelia Communications, Greenville.



FTC CREWS attach and spin up new cables in front of the DeKalb County Schools Coliseum in Rainsville.



JUNIOR MATTOX, SCOTTY PRESLEY, SAMMY THOMPSON AND BARRY ELLIS replacing a pole in Ider.



BILLY CRANFIELD AND KERRY WESTBROOK splicing fiber at Shiloh Crossing.



RYAN HIGDON changing cable pairs in Flat Rock.

LEFT: JOEY GRAHAM, SCOTTY PRESLEY AND SAMMY THOMPSON drag a cable across a field.



Volunteers serve food at Rainsville Fire Hall.

A MOUNTAIN RESPONDS

Until a package has been torn open, it is almost impossible to know what it really contains. The same can be said for communities and counties. When disaster strikes and they are torn open, what they are truly made of is laid bare for all to see.

Alabamians can be proud of what others saw take place in Jackson and DeKalb counties in the days following April 27, 2011. In the midst of their grief and pain, the people of both counties displayed remarkable strength, courage and compassion for one another.

A sense of brotherhood and cooperation spread across every sector of society. Emergency personnel, law enforcement and government officials worked alongside volunteers from churches, relief organizations and even local jail inmates to bring aid to the injured and support to every person in need.

In case of emergency

The Emergency Management Agency (EMA) assists public safety agencies by finding the resources they need during times of disaster. "Our job at state EMA is two-fold," says Alabama EMA Director Art Faulkner. "The first part is to coordinate state resources to put them in the areas where they are needed the most. The second part is to take requests from the local EMAs when they become overwhelmed beyond their capability, and figure out where we can find first responders to help augment at the local level."

DeKalb County EMA Director Mike Leath had nothing but praise for the people who helped. "Most of our emergency response folks are volunteers. Those guys, along with local law enforcement, the Sheriff's Office, our fire de-

partments and the whole emergency response community, have been fantastic. From the county commission to local municipalities and ordinary citizens of this county – never have I been in another place where people came together like they did in DeKalb County.

"During this disaster," Leath continues, "there were so many times we heard people say, 'I'm doing fine, someone down the street needs help worse than I do.' Even hurt and in bad shape, they were still worried about their neighbor – and that's what life is all about."

In Jackson County, EMA Director Victor Manning called for the National Guard to help. "We requested the Guard units in Jackson County on Thursday morning and they showed up Thursday evening," he says. "FEMA has been here the whole time, they've certainly helped and provided a lot of aid."

Like Leath, Manning praises the emergency response personnel of Jackson County for a job well done. "Our sheriff's department, fire departments, ambulance service and emergency workers did an outstanding job," he says. "But to go a little further, the church groups, the volunteer groups and the civic groups have been amazing, as well. That is why we've had the success we've had. Everybody worked together toward the same common goal."

Protectors who serve

Chief Deputy Michael Edmondson of the DeKalb Sheriff's Office was in the north DeKalb community of Shiloh Crossing on the afternoon of April 27. Houses were scattered. People were dead. It was a terrible scene. "Then dispatch gets on the radio to tell us that we had another

storm system moving in," he recalls, "and that it was worse than the one we were already dealing with."

DeKalb's final twister of April 27 — though designated the Rainsville Tornado by the National Weather Service — touched down in the Lakeview community, south of Fyffe.

Sammy Ledbetter, a volunteer with Geraldine's fire and rescue departments, had been watching a threatening storm system as it built strength across Highway 75 from Geraldine city hall. As he and coworkers looked on, a smaller dark cloud came from the south and was drawn into the larger cell. "It's like it was sitting there waiting for it," Ledbetter says. When the two storms collided, the north-northeast track began.

Ledbetter and others within the departments immediately responded, following the storm and staying a safe distance back as it moved along the west side of Alabama Highway 75.

When the tornado formed and

hit the ground in Lakeview, Ledbetter began stopping along the way to check on people whose homes had been hit. He soon received a call of injuries and a confirmed fatality in the Beulah Baptist Church community, the first death of the storm that eventually claimed many lives before crossing the state line at Sulphur Springs.

Following the tornadoes that devastated the area, things were hectic. "No one is ever prepared to see that much death in one night," says Edmondson. "Every

deputy and patrol officer we had was out in the county and calling for anyone else who could get here."



HANDS TO HELP: The Alabama Baptist Convention and Red Cross estimate they served over 100,000 meals from their command center at Broadway Baptist Church in Rainsville and from their trucks throughout the stricken area. Here, volunteers help provide food, water and ice from the Broadway Baptist Church location.

Continued on next page

Dealing with Mass Casualties



Photo courtesy of Bruce Wilson

Tom Wilson has been to many conferences where sessions were taught on dealing with mass casualties. But as the coroner for DeKalb County, he never expected to put that knowledge to use. "I thought a plane falling out of the sky would be about the only way we'd see that kind of event here," he says.

He was wrong. By the time April 27 had ended, he and his deputy coroners had established a temporary morgue at the Rainsville Fire Hall and were working by flashlight to receive and document the bodies of 32 citizens.

Bruce Wilson is Tom Wilson's brother. Retired from the Fort Payne Fire Department, Bruce is also a deputy coroner. "We had Tom and four deputy coroners going in all directions, and the EMA calling us with more and more addresses," Bruce says.

As the number of confirmed deaths rose through the teens and hit 20, Bruce knew DeKalb County needed help. He had dealt with mass casualties before, and he understood what was involved.

Bruce is a member of a national Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, or DMORT. Activated by presidential

order, these teams respond to mass casualty events with forensic anthropologists, odontologists, X-ray technicians, funeral directors, embalmers, chaplains and more, plus any necessary equipment. As part of such a team Bruce worked in Guam after a Korean passenger plane crashed, in New York after the September 11 terrorist attacks, and in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina.

The job of identifying mass casualties seems daunting. With great care the team documented each body coming into the morgue. Hair color and length. Braces and dentures. Scars. Tattoos. Rings or other jewelry. Items in their pockets. The address or general area where they were found. "You have to be so careful," says Tom. "You have to make sure you get it right for the families."

"We didn't let anyone actually see a body to identify them," Bruce explains. "We would go over a questionnaire with them." His team would then compare their answers against the documentation they had collected on each body. After checking and double checking, Bruce would finally present the family with a photograph of the face of their loved one.

"I had to be sure before I showed them a photo," he says.

One man later told Bruce how much he appreciated the way identification was handled. "He said he thought it might be like something you see on TV," Bruce says, "where he would have to look at all the bodies and pick out his family member. We would never do anything like that, we have more respect for the families than that."

Through careful documentation and adhering to a system, all of the bodies were identified by the afternoon following the storms. Both Tom and Bruce credit the spirit of cooperation among all county agencies, as well as the work of volunteers, for the success of the operation. "Everybody fell in and did what needed to be done," Tom says. ■

Officers from Escambia, Baldwin and Clarke counties, just to name a few, were among the scores of police who arrived to answer the call for help. The Mobile Sheriff's Dept. and the Poarch Creek Tribal Police camped out in portable trailers after being briefed by Homeland Security in Montgomery. The Alabama Marine Police and the Department of Game & Fish, as well as the Alabama State Troopers, were also out in full force to assist.

"At one time, we probably had 200 officers here," says DeKalb Sheriff Jimmy Harris. "People would call looking for loved ones and we would go to follow up. But we'd get out there and most times there were no road signs or mailboxes with the address. Nothing looked the same — places I had patrolled for 22 years, I didn't even recognize."

In Jackson County, Sheriff Chuck Phillips said for the first few days following the storms it seemed like his county had been cut off from the rest of the world. "It was unreal," says Phillips. "It literally looked like a war zone."

A 9 p.m. curfew was imposed in the area to help the police and firefighters protect survivors and their property. The image of a war zone was heightened as members of the National Guard in military Humvees patrolled the streets of both counties.

"The primary



VOLUNTEERING FOR SERVICE: Eight-year-old Brody Gifford mans the grill at the Rainsville Fire Department.



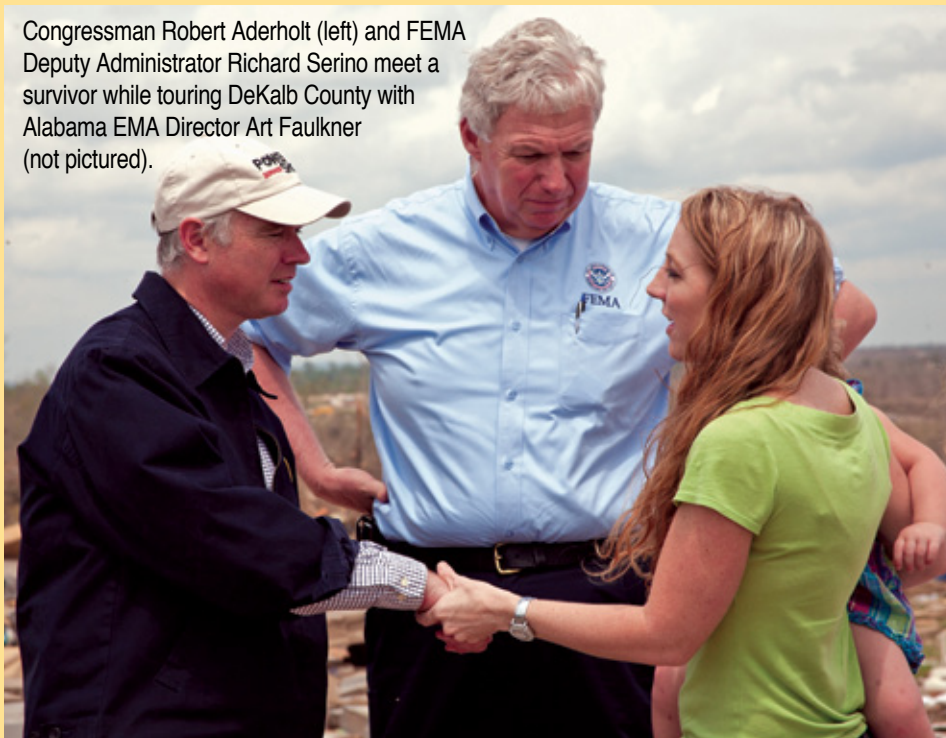
DISTRIBUTING HOPE: Survivors find food and supplies in abundance at the temporary distribution center in Rainsville.

thing we did was patrol the area and watch for looters or anyone that was somewhere they shouldn't be," says Major Brian Allen, training officer for the special troops battalion of the National Guard 167th TSC out of Ft. McClellan.

As the days passed, a distribution center to help victims was organized in Rainsville by the Sheriff's Office. "Chief of Corrections Mitchell Dendy coordinated the volunteers who collected and sorted supplies," Michael

Area storm victims focus of federal assistance

Congressman Robert Aderholt (left) and FEMA Deputy Administrator Richard Serino meet a survivor while touring DeKalb County with Alabama EMA Director Art Faulkner (not pictured).



Congressman Robert Aderholt arrived in DeKalb County within days of the storms to survey the damage with FEMA Deputy Administrator Richard Serino. "If this had been the only part of the storms that hit on Wednesday, this would have been enough to declare it a real disaster," says Aderholt. "But when you couple it with all the different parts of the state that were covered, it's just unbelievable."

Aderholt recognizes that with so much devastation across the state, smaller towns can sometimes be overlooked. "These smaller towns got hit just as hard, if not harder, than some of the larger areas, but sometimes they don't get the attention. I want to make sure that FEMA stays on top of things, that they've got the resources available and do what we can to make sure that everything is available for the local and state officials here in this area." ■

Edmondson says. "He did a great job. He even had the inmates helping."

Heroic efforts

Local fire departments in every town on Sand Mountain actively participated in every phase of the emergency efforts to help. Besides fighting fires, these courageous, mostly volunteer men and women also assisted police and medical personnel in search and rescue efforts.

Firefighters used chainsaws to cut through trees and debris to get to victims trapped underneath. "You couldn't keep from crying when you saw people like that," says Cartersville Assistant Fire Chief Greg Chapman.

After initial efforts, most fire departments throughout Jackson and DeKalb counties set up distribution centers for food and clothing. "We're all in this together and we'll get through this together," Chapman says.

Moved by faith

The goodness of people continued to show as churches on Sand Mountain, along with other faith-based organizations, took on the task of helping their communities. Congregations and volunteers across the mountain gathered supplies, food and clothing to distribute to anyone in need.

Fyffe Church of God served over 9,000 meals throughout DeKalb County. "When we ran out of food, the schools brought us their lunchroom food," says church secretary Marla Fairley. "And the Red Cross brought us food to give out. Everyone pitched in."

"The Salvation Army did a great job of helping in Jackson County," says Sheriff Chuck Phillips. "I don't know what we'd have done without them." Several larger church organizations also sent aid. From Montgomery, the Alabama Baptist State Convention had volunteers organize kitchens, cleanup crews and even portable showers throughout the area.

The Upper Sand Mountain Parish, a cooperative of eight United Method

Continued on next page



Wanda Lyda proudly displays items at FRCC.

Flat Rock Community Center still reaching out to help

At the Flat Rock Community Center (FRCC), Director Wanda Lyda gathered crayons and coloring books for a small girl who had lost her home in the storm. Almost as an afterthought, Lyda picked up a soft, pink bear. She was taken aback when the child told her she could not take the bear with her. When Lyda asked why not, the child's answer told of the trauma she had suffered in one sentence – "Because it might get blown away."

"I told her if she held onto the bear really tightly, it would not go away," Lyda says. "She took the bear, but what she said just broke my heart."

Working with a broken heart has become the new normal for the scores of tireless volunteers who have manned the center seven days a week since the storm hit. "Sometimes people have needed a meal, or groceries when they came in," she continues, "and sometimes they have just wanted someone to talk to. They want to share their story. If it helps them to talk about it, it is a small price to pay."

Hot meals were provided to over 3,000 people a day by the Flat Rock Community Club, FEMA and the Salvation Army at the centrally located

area between the FRCC food bank and the Community Club.

For the towns of Flat Rock, Bryant, Higdon and Ider, the existing FRCC and the expansive new facility which is not yet complete have been a lifeline. "We've had to use the new facility as a warehouse to store all of the things people have donated to help the storm victims because our current facility is full," Lyda says.

Trucked in on practically anything with wheels, load after load of food, diapers, household supplies and even pet food continues to arrive daily.

"People have been so wonderful," she says. "We have had food and supplies coming from everywhere. The Scottsboro Post Office sent over three loads of food in one day. Some people from Florida even loaded their car with stuff and drove here to deliver it. We've had volunteers working nonstop just categorizing things so people can come in and get what they need easily."

Thanks to a donation of shopping carts, the center offers people the convenience of coming in and just shopping for the things they need. "Only it doesn't cost them anything," Lyda says. ■

ist churches in Jackson and DeKalb counties, rallied their parishioners for service. "After the initial shock of the storms, we realized that we needed to start focusing on the long term recovery of our communities," says Director Tayna Rains. "We started to gather pots, pans and furniture and rally volunteers to help rebuild homes."

At the Rainsville Fire Department, volunteers from several different churches served over 4,500 meals a day to storm victims and emergency personnel. Karen Caldwell of Fyffe, who started the effort, was amazed by the turnout of the faith community. "The willingness to help and the need to do something is here," Caldwell says. "You hear about it all of your life, but when you actually see it, you won't ever forget it. This is true Southern hospitality."



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Looking ahead

Although the landscape is devastated, the indomitable spirit that so defines the people of Sand Mountain is as enduring as ever. Their faith in God and their relentless determination to overcome any circumstance remains solid.

The ones who lost their lives will live on in the memories of those who loved them and in the stories they will hand down to their children and their children's children. They will always remain a part of the places where they lived and died.

For the people of Sand Mountain who now stand in the aftermath of unthinkable tragedy, there is still hope in tomorrow. They will rebuild, they will remember and one

day, they will once again rejoice. ■

If you are interested in volunteering contact one of the following organizations. They are coordinating with other agencies and organizations to provide all types of aid.

DeKalb County:
Rainsville First Baptist
256-638-1660

Broadway Baptist
256-638-7372

Jackson & DeKalb County:
Upper Sand Mountain Parrish
Ministry Center
256-638-2126

State Park System heavily damaged by storms

Buck's Pocket State Park was hit by an EF-2 tornado in the early morning hours of April 27, 2011. Park Manager Bruce Aldridge was already in the park to monitor the area and check on visitors who were camping in the area.

A veteran employee with more than twenty years on the job, Aldridge was concerned about the odd weather conditions. "He knew something was wrong," says Tim Whitehead, assistant chief of operations and maintenance for the Alabama State Park system.

Aldridge alerted campers and led them to safety in the building which houses the park's office. Minutes later, the tornado touched down, taking out thousands of trees and destroying the park's wooden boardwalk which leads to the area called Point Rock. The park's camping area sustained tree loss, but thanks to Aldridge, the visitors were unharmed.

The two state parks which received the brunt of the damage were Buck's Pocket and Lake Guntersville. "The company we are looking at right now will go in and do debris removal and clean-up. They are talking about it taking 120 days," says Whitehead. "The clean-up will have to be done in stages. Debris and tree removal is first, then the buildings and the boardwalk will be the secondary thing." ■



Falling trees crushed sections of the boardwalk leading to Point Rock in Buck's Pocket State Park. The trees will be cleaned up as part of the contract that clears Lake Guntersville State Park's trees. Repair to the boardwalk will come in a later project.

Photo courtesy of Carolyn Worley

FTC office becomes Command Center

In the back of the FTC headquarters in Rainsville is a large open room, often used as an auditorium for training and employee meetings. In the hours following the tornadoes, it was converted into a unified command center, the central location for DeKalb County's official response to the disaster.

"It was an ideal setup," says Mike Leath, director of the DeKalb Emergency Management Agency (EMA). "Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative allowed us to put all department heads in one location. We divided the overall operation into three divisions, but each department head was located at their building in Rainsville."

Positioned around an array of tables were representatives from several agencies, including the DeKalb Sheriff's Office, DeKalb EMA, the Alabama State Troopers, the Department of Conservation (Game & Fish) and the National Guard. There was even a person on site to coordinate the assignment of the many volunteers flowing into the county.

In addition to providing the space to operate, FTC provided phone lines, phones and Internet service for each representative. Leath says this enabled the group to make decisions much faster regarding where supplies and manpower needed to be moved to help those affected by the storms.

"FTC did a fine job for us," Leath says. "It worked out very well for everyone involved."

Because it had the staff, equipment and plans in place to carry out such a response, FTC was able to establish the command center soon after the storms rolled through. "It would have taken two or three days to get something like that set up somewhere else," says DeKalb Sheriff Jimmy Harris. "Not only did the cooperative provide us the space to work, Internet and plenty of phone lines, but they provided food for those working there and those of us coming in and out. I don't know what we would have done without Fred Johnson, Chris Bryant and all the people at FTC who did whatever they could to help. I can't brag enough about them."

Accommodating the unified command center was a natural extension of FTC's emergency response plan. "As we secured enough generators to bring critical equipment back online, it just



COMMANDING PRESENCE: Officers from several branches of law enforcement worked from the auditorium at FTC where communications equipment was set up. In the chaos following the storms, the command center was a huge asset.

made sense for the command center to be located here," explains Fred Johnson, FTC general manager. "Having the coordinators for all these agencies under our roof enabled us to best provision communications services to the unified response effort.

"I am thankful we had the space available, the plans in place and — most of all — the dedicated employees willing to do whatever it took to support the vital work of these agencies," Johnson adds.

FTC also provided space to accommodate the region's Red Cross relief efforts. "Fred Johnson came into the Fort Payne Red Cross the day after the tornadoes," says Carol Laney, Disaster Volunteer Coordinator for the organization. "He said 'If there is anything you need, just let me know.' When we found out the power wasn't going to be back on for quite a while, we called him and said we needed a place to set up headquarters.

"He told us to come to FTC," she continues. "We immediately started getting our national people and our local volunteers in and working out of FTC. They gave us phone and Internet service, access to copiers and fax machines — they even fed us. We honestly couldn't have made it without their help."

The director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), Art Faulkner, says FTC tackled an additional challenge for officials. A tower was erected near the FTC office to help the AEMA communicate through its SouthernLINC network, but Faulkner says "we couldn't figure out how to get that traffic back to Birmingham."

FTC assigned its personnel to the challenge. "The engineers at FTC," says Faulkner, "working in conjunction with my communications people and the engineers with SouthernLINC, figured out a way that's never been done, to transmit traffic from that tower back to Birmingham.

"They may be a small independent phone company," Faulkner adds, "but the caliber of people they had working with us to get that problem mitigated as quickly as possible, was absolutely phenomenal."

The project benefited more than just local residents. "FTC not only helped the people in DeKalb and Jackson counties," Faulkner says, "they helped the state of Alabama and the federal government to be able to come in and help the citizens, to respond to them and help in the recovery efforts." ■



HELPING HANDS: Red Cross Volunteers Vera Berry and Carol Laney coordinate the delivery of supplies.



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SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2011 - 3 P.M.
RAINSVILLE CITY PARK

Performances by Area Talent
FREE Kids Zone & Swimming

Presentation by H.O.P.E. Puppet Team

Burgers, Hot Dogs, BBQ Sandwiches, Fresh Lemonade, Homemade Ice Cream

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Sponsored by Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative & the City of Rainsville

**Saturday
June 25
8 a.m.**

10K & 5K RUN

Register online at rainsvillefreedomfest.racesonline.com
First 400 to enter receive a free T-shirt and cinch bag with goodies

**Saturday
June 25
3 p.m.**

CRUISE-IN CAR SHOW

First Bank of the South • Main Street • Rainsville

Sand Mtn. Potato Festival

Monday, July 4th • Henagar Park

People from across the region fill Henagar Park each year to celebrate Independence Day at the Sand Mountain Potato Festival. Enjoy activities such as live music, arts and crafts, entertainment and games. The fun begins at 10 a.m. with a parade. When the sun goes down, enjoy a fireworks display with the entire family. For more information, call 256-657-6282 or visit the city's website at www.cityofhenagar.com.

NACC Theatre Presents...

Sylvia

July 15-17 & 22-24 • All tickets \$5
Fri.-Sat. 7 p.m. • Sun. matinee 2 p.m.

Some people prefer cats, others are dog lovers. In a lighthearted comedy, Sylvia will explore what makes these creatures such key members of our families. You are sure to fall in love with Sylvia, as this precious K-9 will be winning hearts this season! Call 256-638-4418 ext. 218 for more information.

Picnic in the Park

July 16 • Beginning at 9 a.m.
Geraldine City Park
Admission \$2 per carload

Bring the family and head to Geraldine for their summer celebration. Activities include a car show from 9 to 11 a.m., arts and crafts throughout the day and the Splash Pad will be open. Food Plates will be available for \$8 a plate.