

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

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\$200 million

Total of hurricane relief donations by Friday

\$10.5 billion

Aid package rushed through by Congress

\$50 billion

Rough estimate of cost of Hurricane Katrina

HELP IS COMING, BUSH ASSURES

In KC, mercy for young patients

Children airlifted from New Orleans

By LYNN FRANEY
The Kansas City Star

Lanelle Whatley's 5-month-old son lay in bed Friday at Children's Mercy Hospital battling a rare immune disease, the same one that killed another infant son.

Her life was already upended by her son's illness. Now the hurricane has thrown it into chaos.

Her home in New Orleans is gone. Friday was her daughter's 5th birthday, but Whatley couldn't give her a hug or bake her a cake, because she's in Baton Rouge.

But she vows to build a new life here, in Kansas City. Her new home.

Two days after her son and 23 other patients from Children's Hospital in New Orleans were airlifted to Kansas City, their families told their stories and took a step toward normal life with a shopping trip at Wal-Mart.

"God's going to bless me," Whatley said before hopping a shuttle bus at Children's Mercy. They picked up clothes and shoes and much-needed personal items thanks to donations from the hospital and Wal-Mart.

Shopping was a welcome break from the stress, depression and disorientation that has plagued the families since the hurricane slammed into the Gulf Coast.

"I haven't been to a store in so long," Whatley said as she slipped her feet into tennis shoes for the first time in months. She had lived in a pair of blue mesh slippers at Children's Hospital for a long time. "I've had so many difficult challenges."

See CHILDREN, A-7



TIM ISBELL/Biloxi Sun Herald

President Bush comforted Kim Bassier (left) and Bronwynne Bassier as he toured Howard Avenue Friday in Biloxi, Miss. Bronwynne Bassier told the president that she didn't have anything other than the clothes on her back. Story, A-6

7,000 troops arrive to set up security

Star News Services

President Bush waded through the wreckage of Hurricane Katrina Friday as the anger level over the federal response continued to rise.

Hop-scotching his way across the chaos and desperation of the Gulf Coast by helicopter, the optimistic president agreed that "the results are not acceptable" but assured frustrated residents and local officials that help was on the way.

In Washington, Congress approved \$10.5 billion in emergency relief. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, meanwhile, reported spending \$500 million a day on relief. ■ **More Katrina news, A-4 to A-8**

In New Orleans, however, another day of misery began early with explosions in a chemical facility. Fires broke out, spreading a physical pall.

Then, the first military convoy of supplies rolled through the water-covered streets to the chaotic scene at the convention center. Soldiers were shocked by the desperation and hostility they faced.

About 7,000 National Guardsmen, many of them just back from Iraq and "highly proficient in the use of lethal force" one commander noted, were beginning to establish security in areas. Police officers said they had shot at least one looter Friday.

Meanwhile, displaced persons were being bused or flown out of the swamped city. Many arrived at the airport aboard helicopters that served as airborne ferries. There, medical workers struggled to cope with thousands of sick and frail patients. Some eventually were sent to distant hospitals, but hundreds remained on the floor. Concourse D, meanwhile, was converted into a makeshift morgue.

The president's words and Congress' actions did not immediately silence the critics.

"It's too little too late," New Orleans Councilwoman Jackie Clarkson said. "This is our 9/11. Where's the world? C'mon, world."

IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

■ More than 100,000 huddled in nearly 300 shelters in nine states, according to the American Red Cross, not including the multitudes still at the Superdome and the Astrodome in Houston.

■ Federal officials mobilized airlines to deliver food and airlift up to 25,000 evacuees to a San Antonio air base.
■ A bus overturned on Interstate 49, killing one evacuee and injuring many.

■ Federal officials prepared to release nearly a million barrels of oil a day from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and allies pledged to release at least 60 million barrels of their own reserves.

■ Experts predicted unemployment of up to 25 percent along the coast.
■ Farm damages will cost more than \$2 billion and could trigger higher food prices, the American Farm Bureau said.

FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON HURRICANE KATRINA'S AFTERMATH, GO TO KANSASCITY.COM.

Branson extends a hand of hospitality

Town offers vacant rooms to victims of Gulf Coast disaster

By KEVIN MURPHY
The Kansas City Star

BRANSON — They pulled in at midnight Thursday, 700 miles from their hurricane-ravaged house, stressed and exhausted but grateful to call Room 301 at the Branson Econo Lodge home.

Matt and Luanne Marchand are not alone.

The road out of New Orleans and other areas devastated by Hurri-

cane Katrina is gradually leading more people to Branson, which is offering its bounty of hotels, restaurants, entertainment and even jobs to refugees.

"I feel bad for them," Econo Lodge general manager Jim Jeschke said Friday. "They are put in a position where they have nowhere to turn and no one to turn to."

Branson, population 6,000, is in a unique position to roll out the wel-

come mat to hurricane victims. As one of the nation's top tourism draws, Branson has about 21,000 hotel rooms in addition to condominiums and campgrounds. And it has something else that may prove enticing down the road: jobs in its many hotels, restaurants and theaters.

Many businesses have contacted the city's economic development

See REFUGE, A-8



Stranded survivors of Hurricane Katrina waited in line Friday for National Guard troops to distribute food and water at the New Orleans convention center. Troops poured into the city to help with security and delivery of supplies.

MARIO TAMA
Getty Images

TODAY IN THE STAR

LeBrun confession OK'd for trial

A federal judge is satisfied that prosecutors can corroborate Michael LeBrun's confession independently in the 1968 death of his Navy shipmate.

Story, B-1

Disaster tempers unemployment news

U.S. joblessness in August dipped to 4.9 percent, the lowest rate since before 9/11. But Hurricane Katrina casts a cloud over the report.

Story, C-1

GAS PRICES DROP FROM RECORD-HIGH LEVELS, BUT RELIEF COULD BE TEMPORARY

\$3.00 at the pump — now you see it, now you don't

By STEVE EVERLY
The Kansas City Star

Wholesale gas prices dropped sharply Friday, and by late evening prices at most area pumps were following suit.

The drop brought a gallon of unleaded down to \$2.99 and nine-tenths at many stations on the Missouri side of the metropolitan area,

■ **Gas prices** could keep would-be travelers at home this Labor Day weekend. **Story, C-1**
■ **Fuel costs** are straining local government budgets. **Story, B-1**

heralding a break from record-high prices for motorists.

Prices generally run a few cents more on the Kansas side, where gas taxes are higher.

The swing in wholesale gas prices earlier in the day came after the Paris-based International Energy Agency announced it would release 60 million barrels of oil and gasoline to help replace production lost after Hurricane Katrina.

The average wholesale price of gasoline in the Midwest declined 32 cents per gallon Friday, according to Bloomberg Business News. The

price decline in each market can vary, but the wholesale price of gas in the Kansas City area was expected to go down Friday evening.

Besides the decline in gas prices, crude oil was down \$1.90, closing at \$67.57 for a barrel of West Texas Intermediate.

"We got a little relief today," said

See PRICES, A-12

125th year
No. 351
11 sections

WEATHER



High 89, Low 65
Isolated storm early
Forecast, D-10

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