

## Help for Punta Gorda

It is a wonderful -- and very fitting -- way to honor the associates of Life Care Center of Punta Gorda.

As announced by Life Care's president, Don Giardina, after consultation with Cathy Murray, chief operating officer, the decision was made to designate the American Red Cross as the "conduit" for contributions to assist residents of Punta Gorda in the wake of Hurricane Charley.

We have had many calls from around the country from Life Care associates who wish to do something to help. The procedure outlined by President Giardina allows those who donate to have a tax-deductible benefit, as well as being assured that the money is being spent judiciously.

Checks should be made payable to the American Red Cross and mailed to Terry Henry, Life Care Centers of America, P.O. Box 3480, Cleveland, Tennessee 37320-3480. "Any amount you feel appropriate will be greatly appreciated and put to good use," Giardina said. Henry will arrange for an accounting of the contributions, which will be delivered to the associates of Life Care Center of Punta Gorda. They, in turn, will present those funds to the local Red Cross chapter, advising the community that these monies were donated by Life Care associates from around the country in their honor.

The Red Cross advises that this is the preferred method of assistance, instead of sending food, clothing or bulk goods of various kinds. The reasons are:

1. It is always difficult to know exactly what the needs of the individuals and families so adversely affected may be, and oftentimes goods that cannot be used wind up in stacks or piles in warehouses.
2. With money that is donated, the Red Cross issues "client assistance cards," which are similar to debit cards, with certain limitations. For example, the cards cannot be used to buy tobacco or alcohol. Generally, the purchases are for food, shelter and clothing.
3. This approach helps rebuild the local economy, because the money that is spent goes to businesses in the affected area. Food, materials and other supplies purchased elsewhere and sent into the community have a negative impact on local merchants.

So, if you wish to reach out to the victims of Hurricane Charley, giving in the manner described will honor our associates, provide financial assistance to those of them in need, but also lend a helping hand to others in the community who are suffering from the destruction of the storm.

--Beecher Hunter