

Altrusa Helps Baton Rouge School Recovery after the flood.

In perusing the social media sites for Altrusa, we read a story posted on Facebook by Altrusa District 11 (California and Arizona and far western states) about a school in Baton Rouge damaged in their recent flood. At the same time we received two large donations of children's books that we couldn't see using locally nor did they fit into our children's literacy projects for this year. We contacted Trey Veasey, the literacy specialist (librarian) of Glenn Oaks Park Elementary School in Baton Rouge to see if he would be interested in them for his school. On the third day of school with everything in place and ready for the new



Altrusans Michele Oakley, Gay Kiker, Gail Cowden, Valerie Katz, Katy Henkel, Jenny Montgomery, and Carole Gile, help Connie Brown, far right, load the books for transfer to Baton Rouge.

school year, the devastating floods hit Baton Rouge. Books from the library and all the classroom materials were floating in water. Several days later they were molded and mildewed and ruined. Several days later the school was cleaned out of all debris. Five hundred children Pre-K through 5th grade and an entire school were displaced and the school closed. Several weeks later the school reopened at the old Banks Elementary which had been closed for some time and had been built in 1932. The school reopened with many children and staff having suffered personal damage and loss in the floods. They returned to school to resume a new normalcy in their lives and there was nothing there. Our hearts went out to these children and this school. Many schools received flood damage but this school was one of six in Baton Rouge that was totally flooded out and closed.

We had books – they needed books!!! We boxed up books – lots of books – 8 hundred to be exact!!! We wanted to honor Altrusa District 8 with this donation during Altrusa's Centennial year!! We wanted to get them a ride to Baton Rouge, but we are 10 hours and 600miles away from them. We discovered there was an Altrusa Club in Baton Rouge. We were able to find a contact number and talked with them. Their Club as well as the town was in disarray. Members had sustained flood damage and three of their officers had lost their homes. We worked in Northwest Arkansas and Baton Rouge to find our books a ride. They work closely with Kiwanis in Baton Rouge and they shared our story. We received a phone call from Mike Baker, a longtime member of Red Stick Kiwanis in Baton Rouge. He was coming to Northwest Arkansas on vacation and was excited to transport our books back to his hometown. Kiwanis, dedicated to improving the world, one child and one community at a time, was a perfect partner for us.

We rendezvoused with Mike and Carol Baker and transferred our books to them and they are on the way to Baton Rouge. Altrusa International encourages service for disaster relief and also has a focus of literacy. Our club focus is on children's literacy. It began with Altrusa District 11, Altrusa Intl. of Bentonville/Bella Vista in District 8 picked up the ball, contacted Altrusa Intl. of Baton Rouge in District 4, who networked with Red Stick Kiwanis of Baton Rouge to make a difference to children in Glenn Oaks Park Elementary School in Baton Rouge. This is Altrusa at its best – Making a Difference in our Community and the community of a neighboring state in need!!! The books arrived just in time for National Make a Difference Day on October 22!!! Altrusa Intl. of Bentonville/Bella Vista proud to Make a Difference!!!!