

The Middlebury Campus

Editorial Katrina relief right on

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The cumulative reaction of the Middlebury College community to a natural disaster more than 1,500 miles away has proven extraordinary. As national criticism centers on government response to Hurricane Katrina, the willingness of Middlebury students, faculty, staff and administration to take prompt action in a variety of capacities is a refreshing contrast to the negative portrayals of government emergency response that have dominated the national media.

Within days of Katrina's attack on the Gulf Coast, a prominent link appeared on the Middlebury College home page that connected viewers to the Web sites of charity organizations. Although the link has recently been replaced with a press release about the visiting students from Tulane and Dillard Universities, the College community's efforts to provide assistance continue to multiply.

Despite a rumored shortage in housing, Middlebury College opened its doors to students that were enrolled in colleges and universities in the New Orleans area, joining the important initiative pioneered by several hundred institutions around the country. President Ronald D. Liebowitz approved the expedited admissions plan for students affected by the hurricane just four days after Katrina made landfall, and accepted students that ultimately enrolled at the College will study for the semester free of charge. The unusual circumstances certainly warranted the prompt actions taken and little doubt remains that the visiting students deserve to be at Middlebury 100 percent.

The number of students eager to host the visiting students from New Orleans far exceeded necessity. The Dean of Student Affairs Office received 200 host applications from Middlebury students offering to accommodate the nine visiting students that ultimately matriculated at the College. Through various collection efforts, the faculty, staff and students have raised more than \$14,000 for organizations such as The American Red Cross.

The contributions from the College community have been ideological as well as material. A meeting uniting various student leaders was held Tuesday afternoon to consolidate the large volume of ideas pertaining to Hurricane relief floating around campus.

Dean of the College Tim Spears' assertion that the College takes pride in participating in "a larger national drama" proves that when it comes to assisting those in need, Middlebury College does not stay inside a bubble.

As the national media's focus gradually drifts away from Katrina relief, it can only be hoped that the College will continue to remember the lives that have been disrupted and will remain proactive. Yet, the College must also strive to make life for students from Tulane and Dillard as comfortable as possible. Providing a normal educational experience should be top priority, and the students should never be made to feel like visitors.