



Louisiana Restaurant Association

The Louisiana Restaurant Association (LRA) went to great lengths to **preserve its 7,500 members, 2,500 of those in the Greater New Orleans area** following Katrina. Within two weeks, we opened a **temporary headquarters in Baton Rouge** and began working with the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) and communicating with our affected members in the New Orleans area on how to reopen their restaurants safely. Immediately following Hurricane Rita, we extended communications to the Southwest region.

Members Helping Members

The LRA saw an **overwhelming response from statewide members** wanting to help those affected by the storms, and we created the **Members Helping Members program** which allowed people to pay the annual dues for affected members, so they would continue to have access to the LRA services. The LRA did not cancel any memberships during the period following the storms.

Restaurant Employee Relief Fund

To reopen a restaurant takes employees, and the situation was dire. There were people scattered across the country. If they considered coming back to New Orleans, they eight times out of 10 needed a place to live and needed financial support to make it happen. The Restaurant Employee Relief Fund provided grants to restaurant employees to cover relocation costs and housing.

As of May 1, 2007, the RERF distributed \$201,600 to 618 applicants. The program was extended when the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington Board of Directors voted to disperse a portion of the proceeds from their Restaurant Awards Gala, "The Rammys," to French Quarter restaurants and their employees affected by Hurricane Katrina. To be eligible, a restaurant must: have been open at least six months prior to Hurricane Katrina, have reopened or demonstrate the potential to reopen and be located in the French Quarter. The LRA is no longer taking applications for this program.

LRA Website

The Website was a major communication tool for the LRA pre-Katrina/Rita with an average of 109,000 hits a month. The number of hits exceeded 900,000 each month in Fall 2005. People around the world were tuned into the LRA Website to find out what the situation was, which restaurants were reopening and how the Association was helping in the recovery process.