

news release

For further information:
Jennifer Bonham
636-349-2508
jennifer_bonham@unigroupinc.com

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THE SUDDATH COMPANIES PROVIDES RELIEF FOR ITS STORM-BATTERED EMPLOYEES

ST. LOUIS – October 13, 2004 – In the aftermath of Hurricane Jeanne, Mike Zulon opened the door of his home in Melbourne, Fla. and found five executives of the company he works for standing in his lawn. The “Suddath Disaster Recovery Team” headed by Robert Thomas, vice president of Suddath Transportation Services, explained that they were there to repair the damaged roof, offer supplies such as food and water and provide electricity through means of a generator. For most employees of corporate America, this gesture of goodwill would probably seem highly unlikely. But for Zulon and his colleagues at The Suddath Companies, it became reality. Suddath is an agent for United Van Lines, the nation’s largest household goods transportation company

“I just couldn’t believe it,” said Zulon, who is a van operator with Suddath. “With the way America is today, you never expect a company to go out of its way and help its employees like this. Our company’s executives were literally on top of my house hammering nails and fixing the flashing on my roof.”

The Suddath Companies, based in Jacksonville, Fla., has eight warehouse distribution centers in Florida. As the hurricane season heated up, the executives developed a recovery plan to restore the warehouses and their employees’ homes quickly. An emergency response team was formed and sent to the Melbourne, Orlando, Ft. Lauderdale and Pensacola warehouses to repair the structures, deliver supplies and help employees with their homes.

To accomplish its goals, the company transformed its 48-foot training van into an “emergency response team unit” and loaded it with relief supplies such as plywood, roofing felt, roofing nails, generators, water, food, electric cords, work

glasses, tarps and lumber. The van was stationed at the warehouses, which served as the headquarters for the response team.

Immediately following each storm, a phone tree system was activated to check on employees and let them know when to report to work. Employees were encouraged to visit the branch and collect supplies for their families. The response team made house calls to employees who could not be reached by phone; it also identified those employees who had structural damage to their homes and sent a team to assist with repairs.

Suddath's Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Elizabeth Spradley, was a member of the emergency response team. She said the company's relief efforts were two-fold.

"First of all, our employees are our greatest asset," Spradley said. "We needed to have our business up and running as soon as possible after the storm. By taking care of our employees, their families and their homes, they were then in a position to concentrate on helping our customers meet their needs."

The company also offered child-care for employees' children who were out of school due to the storms. Suddath hired babysitters and transformed its multi-purpose room into a child friendly zone. Children attending "Fun Daze 4 Suddath Kidz" were kept busy with activities, games and art projects. The service was free of charge to employees who said it gave them the comfort they needed to know their child was safe.

"This hurricane season was overwhelming for all of us," Spradley said. "We pulled together as a company and helped each other through this tough time. Over the past few weeks, the response from employees has been overwhelming. Several have asked, 'why are you doing this?' My response has been, 'why not?' Our employees take care of us everyday. It was our turn to take care of them, and we did."

United Van Lines transports electronic equipment, trade show exhibits and displays, works of art, and specialized freight, in addition to household goods. United, with headquarters located in suburban St. Louis, maintains a network of 1,000 affiliated agencies in 135 countries around the world. More information about United and its services can be obtained through the company's Web site at www.unitedvanlines.com.