

Supriya Jindal urges sharing



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LAFAYETTE — Supriya Jindal appealed to residents Wednesday to give of food, time and money to local food banks following her tours of community-based food banks in Lafayette, Shreveport and Monroe.

Jindal and Dolores Landreneau, wife of Louisiana National Guard Major General Bennett Landreneau made a stop Wednesday afternoon in Lafayette at Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana's warehouse in Lafayette.

The stop was part of Jindal's assessment of needs across the state.

"The pantries are starting to run a little bare," Jindal said after her tour of the nonprofit's Lafayette warehouse.

The food banks have stepped in to feed communities when supplies have run short or in recent cases when residents had difficulty applying for disaster food stamps because of the demand for the resource.

“It’s time that we try to help them,” Jindal said of the food banks’ needs.

Since Hurricane Gustav, Second Harvest has supplied 600,000 pounds of food for relief efforts, said Natalie Jayroe, president of Second Harvest of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana.

Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, area food banks were able to rely on a steady flow of resources from food banks across the country, however with the downward economy, national food banks are already struggling.

“The reality is right now food banks are low on food,” Jayroe said. “We don’t have the same stockpile of food this time around.”

Jayroe said that the national food bank network, Feeding America, has played a role in assisting Second Harvest’s disaster response. At least 10 to 12 tractor-trailers with food have been sent by the organization, she said.

Second Harvest supplies 217 nonprofit and faith-based agencies with food for needy families in 23 parishes. Its Acadiana outreach includes all of southwestern Louisiana.

On any given day, the nonprofit estimates it feeds at least 62,800 people each week.

About a year after Hurricane Rita devastated southwestern Louisiana, the New Orleans based organization opened warehouse space in Lafayette at the United Way of Acadiana’s nonprofit complex.

The warehouse space held pallets of canned vegetables: corn, green beans, Blue Runner cream style red beans; rice, and water.

The United Way of Acadiana’s nonprofit complex includes multiple warehouses and provides space for other nonprofits.

The warehouse space became a hub for volunteer mobilization following Gustav, said Margaret Trahan, executive director of the United Way.

The nonprofit’s volunteer center matched volunteers with area agency needs and its warehouse also housed the nonprofit, Louisiana Emergency Medical Unit’s mobile medical units deployed to local hospitals.

The space where the units were stored was then used as a packaging center where volunteers filled boxes with food for delivery to parts of Acadiana that still had no power, Trahan told Jindal and Landreneau.

“The boxes that went to Pine Prairie (in Evangeline Parish) were delivered by boat because they were still flooded out,” Trahan said.

During her tours of communities’ recovery, Jindal said she’s been overwhelmed by communities’ response to their neighbors, as well as the out-of-state support from National Guard troops, Salvation Army and the American Red Cross.

“It’s been heart warming for me to see families helping families and communities helping communities,” she said.