

# News Release



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## **Leon County and Tallahassee Open Doors to Evacuees**

This weekend will usher in a convergence of visitors to Tallahassee and Leon County -- including Hurricane Katrina refugees from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, summer vacationers, and Florida State University and FAMU alumni and football fans.

The Leon County Tourist Development Council (TDC) fully supports the proactive efforts put forth by the County, City, Universities and hotel operators to ensure that no one is without a place to stay this weekend.

The TDC/CVB has put in place a "Hotel Hotline" (850) 488-BEDS (2337) that personally provides research assistance for lodging availability. A complete listing of availability is on [www.seetallahassee.com](http://www.seetallahassee.com).

A Red Cross Shelter is also open for Hurricane Katrina refugees located at: Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, 3717 Thomasville Rd. Six additional Red Cross Shelters are also on standby. The local shelter hotline is (850) 894-6741.

Leon County Board of County Commissioners Chairman Cliff Thael said, "Leon County welcomes evacuees with open arms and continues to offer every support and relief available. We are working with our partners, including the Capital Area Chapter of the Red Cross, to provide food and shelter to our neighbors, the victims of this catastrophe."

Tallahassee Mayor John Marks also welcomed evacuees and visitors to the area, saying, "The city of Tallahassee has a long history of offering hospitality to our neighbors and our visitors. We will continue that tradition, and I know our residents and local businesses will join with us to rise to the occasion, and assist our neighbors and the victims of Hurricane Katrina."

Many local businesses have already joined government agencies in offering their support for evacuees. At the Hancock Bank Downtown Getdown this Friday night, vendors will provide free food for any evacuees showing a driver's license from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Donations for hurricane relief efforts will be collected at the Downtown Getdown, as well as at the FSU and FAMU football games this weekend.

Rick Bhula, director of operations for the Regency Inn and Quality Inn & Suites in Tallahassee, said his company is calling people who have reservations and asking them to voluntarily give them up so people displaced by Katrina can stay. In addition, his

hotels are offering 20 percent room discounts to people fleeing hurricane-ravaged areas. So far, many of those with reservations have willingly given them up, and no storm victims have been asked to leave.

"We want to make sure that every family who can't return home because of Katrina has a place to stay," Bhula said. "We all have a responsibility to take care of our fellow human beings in times of crisis. We will continue working to make accommodations and help these families stay as long as they need to."

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