

California courts send more equipment to hurricane damaged Gulf Coast

December 15, 2005

A California judge who delivered a truckload of donated office furniture and equipment to Hancock and Jackson County courts last month is returning with a bigger load to help more public agencies as well as the courts.

A load of furniture and computers donated by California courts and other agencies is leaving San Diego, Calif., today, Dec. 15, and is expected to arrive in Bay St. Louis on Sunday evening, Dec. 18. The truck is expected to be unloaded at temporary government facilities at the Hancock County Civic Center on Longfellow Drive Monday morning, Dec. 19.

San Diego County Superior Court Judge William C. Pate has spearheaded California courts' efforts to assist Mississippi courts damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Judge Pate and his wife, San Diego County Superior Court Judge Christine Pate, will meet with Mississippi court officials and supervise the unloading Monday morning, Dec. 19. An exact time hasn't been set.

The San Diego County Superior Court in November donated furniture and equipment. Judge Pate and a court staff member drove a moving van to Bay St. Louis, arriving on Nov. 3.

Judge Pate wanted to see the area's needs first-hand. He said, "My impressions from the first trip are that the Gulf area we visited has an enormous task ahead in keeping government operations going while rebuilding. The economic and emotional issues confronting local agencies in that region are going to be long-term. I felt that whatever help we could provide at this time would have a long-term positive impact on the restoration of this region of Mississippi. The people I met on my visit to the Gulf region impressed me as being dedicated, conscientious and brave. All they needed was a hand in meeting the challenges that lie ahead."

He enlisted help from other courts and private companies. The second shipment is expected to include goods from the Riverside Superior Court, the Fourth District Court of Appeals, the San Diego County District Attorney's office, the County of San Diego, and the Corky McMillin Companies, in addition to goods from the San Diego County Superior Court.

Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at Cuyamaca College in El Cajon donated books and asked to include them in the shipment. They include children's books, text books, reference books and novels. Recipients for those materials have not been determined.

The second load is much larger than the first. Judge Pate said, "The truck is a tractor trailer that can carry up to three times what we delivered before."

James Pierce of J.P. Trucking in El Cajon, a suburb of San Diego, agreed to deliver the donated goods at a reduced rate. The Rescue Task Force donated \$2,000 toward the freight expenses. The San Diego County Bar offered to cover the balance.

Circuit and Chancery judges and court staff who met Judge Pate during his first trip to Mississippi helped put other entities needing assistance in touch with him.

In Gulfport, the Gulf Coast Mental Health Crisis Stabilization Unit and Live Oaks Treatment Center, which are agencies of the Department of Mental Health, will receive furnishings for mobile homes that replaced storm damaged facilities. The Crisis Stabilization

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Unit temporarily houses persons who have been involuntarily committed for treatment of mental illness. Live Oaks is an alcohol and drug abuse treatment facility.

In Bay St. Louis, the Hancock County Circuit Clerk's Office, the Hancock County Chancery Court, Hancock County Youth Court and the Hancock County District Attorney's Office will receive furniture and equipment. The chancery and circuit courts and the district attorney have moved their operations into mobile homes at the Hancock County Civic Center. The Youth Court is working to restore its former office adjacent to the Hancock County Courthouse.

Senior Chancery Judge Margaret Alfonso said, "Judge Pate is returning with yet another load of court and office furniture. His generosity is in keeping with the best of the holiday season. We deeply appreciate his coming across country with equipment we need so much."

Senior Circuit Judge Kosta Vlahos said, "It's heartwarming to know that our neighbors in California are here to help us, because the United States is one great big neighborhood."

The Mississippi Supreme Court on Dec. 15 adopted a resolution expressing gratitude for the California courts' help. The resolution, signed by Chief Justice James W. Smith Jr. on behalf of the court, says, in part:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Supreme Court of the State of Mississippi, that the efforts of Judge William Pate and the Superior Court of California, San Diego County, are appreciated beyond the ability of words to express, and that the Mississippi Supreme Court counts the moral and tangible support of our California colleagues as a premier example for the dedication of the judiciary of our nation to the rule of law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Court further recognizes associated California agencies, businesses and individuals who assisted in the San Diego initiative, including San Diego Superior Court Property Administrator who accompanied Judge Pate, Riverside Superior Court, the Fourth District Court of Appeals, the San Diego County District Attorney's office, the County of San Diego, the Corky McMillin Companies, James Pierce of J.P. Trucking Company and the Rescue Task Force.

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Media Contact: Beverly Pettigrew Kraft, Administrative Office of Courts, 601-354-7452

