

Containers of school supplies ready to ship to Haiti

As part of a relief and response plan to victims of the devastating storms this fall, two huge containers packed with clothing, backpacks, and school supplies are ready to be shipped to Gonaives in January through Food for the Poor.

The Holy Childhood Association (HCA) of the archdiocese's missions office had appealed to a handful of archdiocesan schools for help in collecting supplies to help students who have lost everything, "down to their backpacks," said Deacon Rodrigue Mortel, director. "The response was overwhelming."

A drive organized at Archbishop Spalding High School, Severn, in itself filled a 19-foot truck.

"If I had cast my net even wider, I would have filled this whole place," said Deacon Mortel with a sweep of his arm around the first floor of The Catholic Center.

The director has set up committees in Haiti for the distribution process; 90 percent of the schools have reopened.

To date, almost \$92,000 has been collected by archdiocesan parishioners and will be allocated to 37 affected schools in the city of Gonaives and surrounding areas.

"Some places were still digging out of the mud," said Dr. Mortel in a Dec. 18 interview with The Catholic Review. "There's still a lot to be done."

As crews continue to clean up and repair, steps have been taken to assure prevention of major damage during the next round of hurricanes, such as reforestation to hold back furious flows of water into the city.

In spite of the many hardships Haitians have endured, they remain happy people. "Residing in comfort is not what makes you happy," said Deacon Mortel. "It's their spirituality and relationship with God that makes them happy."

To donate to clean-up efforts in Haiti, mail checks to Missions Office, Archdiocese of Baltimore, 320 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.