



CRAIG BROWN
COLUMBIANA COUNTY RECORDER

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County Official Volunteering To Help Katrina Survivors

County Recorder Craig Brown always wanted to vacation in the South: He just didn't know it would be as a volunteer helping in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Brown flew Wednesday to Baton Rouge, La., where he was to begin working as a volunteer with the American Red Cross for the next nine days. "I feel that anything I can do, it's all for the better. If it's packing boxes or serving meals, I'll do it," he said. Brown, like so many Americans, was moved to action by the devastation he saw played out on TV. After reading in the Morning Journal the Local Red Cross chapter was looking for volunteers to train and send south, he signed up and attended the required two training sessions in Salem.

The one training session focused on what to expect and how to deal with people who have lost everything to the hurricane and its aftermath. The other was about logistics since Brown will be assigned to helping track vehicles used to ship supplies.

Baton Rouge is just his starting point. Brown will find out where he's being assigned after arriving, "I don't know if I'll be staying in a shelter or in a hotel."

Brown spent the days before his departure stocking up on the type of supplies he said you would take camping, such as bottled water, a first-aid kit, towlettes, toilet paper, batteries and plenty of T-shirts since he assumes there is no laundry service. Brown said, "I might be going into an area that doesn't have electricity or water, so I have to be prepared to live out of my bag."

Brown conceded being his own boss as county recorder gives him the flexibility to do what other workers wouldn't necessarily be able to do because of their jobs. "I'm pretty excited about this. A lot of people would like to go ... but I'm in such a great position to do this," said Brown. Having a group of veteran employees helps. "I'm in a situation where I'm blessed with a staff, with years and years of experience, that can do the job without me," he said adding, "he plans to keep in contact by cell phone."

Brown recently became a father for the first time, so he and his wife never took a vacation this year. "I'm viewing this as my vacation," he said. Brown expects the hardest part will be "leaving my new baby boy. My wife was initially upset with me, but she saw those faces on TV," and told him to go.

So how does he think voters will react?

"I look at my job as serving people, period," Brown said. "I really think the people - who are my boss - will understand."