CHAPTER NAME: Junior Auxiliary of Houma

POSTMARK ON OR BEFORE: MARCH 15

U.S. MAIL ADDRESS TO:
NAJA HEADQUARTERS
P.O. BOX 1873
GREENVILLE, MS 38702-1873
OR
U.P.S. ADDRESS TO:
845 SOUTH MAIN
GREENVILLE, MS 38701
OR
najanet@bellsouth.net

CHAPTER ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 8031
Houma, LA 70361

POPULATION CATEGORY: 30,000

NAME OF PROJECT: JA Helping Hands - Flood Relief

CATEGORY: (Check One) (A) (B) ✓

TOTAL HOURS OF SERVICE GIVEN BY MEMBERS: 600 hours

ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP OF CHAPTER: 42

NUMBER OF MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: 20

PURPOSE OF PROJECT: This project was started 3 years ago to address the needs of those who were affected by unexpected tragedy such as floods, tornadoes & flooding, etc.

COST OF PROJECT: $100

NUMBER OF PERSONS SERVED: According to Church - over 100 families

DESCRIBE THE PROJECT IN NARRATIVE FORM INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION (1000 WORDS OR LESS, DOUBLE SPACED; WRITTEN IN THE SEQUENCE AS LISTED BELOW): Send one digital photo per entry either email or on disc.

1. HOW YOUR CHAPTER DISCOVERED THE NEED FOR THIS PROJECT
2. PLANNING AND PREPARATION INVOLVED IN ORGANIZING THIS PROJECT
3. HOW AND WHEN PROJECT WAS BEGUN/AMOUNT OF TIME TO COMPLETE PROJECT
4. HOW MEMBERS WERE INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT
5. WHAT THE PROJECT ACHIEVED/ DID IT MEET THE NEED
6. PLANS FOR FUTURE WORK WITH THIS PROJECT

IT IS UNNECESSARY TO SUBMIT ANY SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL. THE AWARD WILL BE JUDGED ON THE NARRATIVE ONLY.

RECEIVED MAR 15 2017
N. A. J. A.
Chapter Name: Junior Auxiliary of Houma

Chapter Address: P.O. Box 8031

Houma, LA 70360

Population: Over 30,000

JA Helping Hands- Denham Springs Flood Relief

It was the beginning of August 2016. The beginning of the new school year was upon us and we were super busy planning for our 2nd Annual Masquerade Fundraiser...and then came the rain. So much rain that the prolonged rainfall in southern parts of Louisiana resulted in catastrophic flooding that submerged thousands of homes and businesses. Our immediate area was fortunate and did not suffer any of the damaging effects of rain and the local river flooding. However, as we watched the news and talked to family and friends we realized that many were not as fortunate as us. As close as 45 minutes away many people had several feet of water in their homes and their workplaces. As a chapter we knew we had to do something to help and we knew that our newly organized JA Helping Hands Service Project would fit the need. We made several phone calls and contacted several shelters, organizations and churches. According to the organizations that were on the front line they were no longer in need of clothes but were in desperate need of perishable items. There was, however, one photo that touched our hearts so deeply that it caused many of our members to have tears. It was a photo of a toddler sitting in a small clear Rubbermaid container floating in the flood waters looking disheveled, worn out and scared. And right next to that toddler was a mother with flood water up to her waist looking even more terrified. At that moment we knew exactly what we as a chapter needed to do. After the first week of August we began collecting baby items, such as diapers, formula, wipes, baby food, and any other perishable items that we could collect. We placed collecting bins at several local businesses and we also placed bins out at the entry of our 2nd Annual Moonlight Masquerade Fundraiser. And the donations started flowing in. We were so amazed by the support of our local community and also the support of our sister Junior Auxiliary Chapters and some of our National Board Members that heard about our efforts and joined in to collect with us. After the collection drive was completed we decided to bring the baby items to the most devastated area, Denham Springs, LA. According to the reports over 90% of the homes and businesses were affected by the floods in that particular area. As a Chapter we decided that instead of just donating the items to the local American Red Cross or some other organization, we wanted to make the delivery in person. We wanted to drop the items off and share some personal warmth, love and support to those who may need some of our southern JA compassion. On the morning of August 26th we contacted the First United Methodist Church of Denham Springs and let them know we were headed their way. It took us 2 large extended SUVs and some special “Tetris” skills (and maybe a husband or two) to get everything loaded and transported there. We barely had room for our own two feet once we were all loaded up for our journey. Within 2 minutes of
Exiting off the interstate we began to see piles of sheetrock, flooring, rugs, furniture and other personal items stacked in large piles along the streets. We had seen images on the news, but it was so much more heart wrenching to see in person. As we drove up to the Distribution Center located in the back of the church we backed in by the door and started to unload the supplies. Several other volunteers came out with rolling carts and started to help us unload. As we spoke to the individuals we realized that they were not only volunteers but they were also victims of the flooding, many of them having their homes and businesses with several feet of flood water. It was amazing to see this community come together during a time of such uncertainty and distress. It was apparent that the local people of the area were all exhausted and tired but they all expressed hope for their future and said that they knew that God would lead them through it. They were so very gracious and thankful for all of the supplies that were delivered and also enjoyed visiting with us for a few minutes. As we left the Church we were silent for a couple of minutes. It was such an indescribable experience to see the devastation, deliver much needed supplies, but want to do so much more. We all knew that the delivery was going to be an emotional journey, but what we didn’t realize was that it was also going to be an experience that taught us more about faith, hope and perseverance. A few weeks after our delivery, we received a donation from JA of Gulfport. As our collection drive had ended and our delivery had already been made we decided to contact the Church again and ask if they were in need of any additional help. The Church expressed concerns about their upcoming longstanding Christmas Project and stated that as of that day they were looking at suspending the Program for 2016 due to lack of funds. She explained that because so many residents in the area were affected by the flooding the list for those in need was substantially longer than it had been in the past. And also their donors were unable to assist because many of them were also affected by the floods. After contacting JA of Gulfport, both the Houma Chapter and Gulfport Chapter decided that we would donate that additional money to the First United Methodist Church of Denham Springs specifically for their Children’s Christmas Program. When our Chapter contacted the Program Director about the donation she began crying on the phone and stated that the money will allow them to continue their program and they would be able to buy a gift for each child signed up in the Program. At first this project was developed to help the residents who were affected by the devastating floods and we definitely achieved our goal of meeting the needs of those victims of the flood. However, after spending less than $100 and 60 service hours from 20 of our chapter members the project achieved so much more than planned, as it showed the effectiveness of teamwork and it showed the uniting compassion of our Junior Auxiliary Family. We are so proud to belong to this family and realize the huge difference we can make when you put together a group of compassionate women. And of course, working together can only make those jewels on our crown shine even brighter.