

Angelina's sends aid to victims

By CAROL KOVACH
Editor, West Group

It started with an e-mail from a son asking his dad for help.

Within days, the plea for supplies to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina mushroomed into a major relief effort, thanks to the grit of a local pizza shop owner.

Jim Reichle of North Ridgeville, who owns Angelina's Pizza in North Olmsted, set up a sign asking for donations from customers and passersby late last week. He also called his suppliers.

"The response was overwhelming," said Reichle. "I could never have imagined the generosity."

His son, James, a 2002 graduate of North Ridgeville High School, joined the Navy after graduation and is based at the Naval Station in Jacksonville, Fla. The younger Reichle's unit was assigned to assist the hurricane victims.

"His commanding officer asked the guys if they could collect supplies to help the people. So my son forwarded the e-mail to me and I immediately started calling my suppliers. As usual, the restaurant suppliers responded very generously," Reichle said.

"I called my son and asked him how much we could send. The answer was, 'If you can get it here by Sept. 6, the Navy will

get it there.' So, we got to work. And when the commanding officer found out how much we were collecting, he authorized emergency leave for my son to come home and help with the effort," Reichle added.

It wasn't long before cases of water, Gatorade, toilet paper, paper towels, trash bags, soft drinks, antibacterial wipes, soap, diapers and baby formula and more started piling up at the tiny Lorain Road pizzeria.

Then the generosity started spreading.

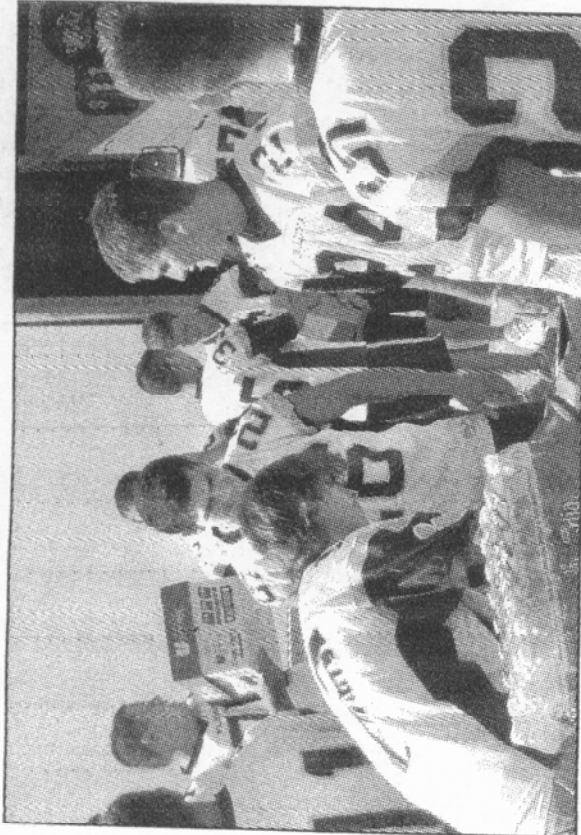
Reichle said the owners of Uncle John's Plant Farm in Olmsted Township let him use their dock as a staging area to load and store the trucks until they left for Jacksonville early Sunday morning.

Premier Truck, Green Circle Growers and Uncle John's donated trucks for the trip. Zannoni's, Sysco, Coca Cola, Distillata and Ohio Farmers were among the firms that donated supplies.

"If they didn't know what to give, some gave us cash donations to help pay for fuel," Reichle said.

And some younger folks lent their brawn to the effort as well. Members of the Olmsted Falls High School football team helped load the trucks on Saturday.

"My wife, Ann, runs Angelina's in Olmsted Falls and we've been very involved with the schools for years," he said.



SUN PHOTO BY CAROL KOVACH

Members of the Olmsted Falls High School football team help load trucks with donated food, water, paper products, clothing and cleaning supplies.

The athletes seemed to enjoy themselves as they hoisted cases of paper products, water and other supplies, passing them into a truck where they were stacked and organized.

Each had the same comment: "It's for a good cause."

Reichle wasn't sure how much was collected, but he estimated it could reach 100,000 pounds of supplies.

"We ended up with three semis, a 24-foot box truck as well as Jim's car stuffed to the gills," said Anne Reichle. She said one truck traveled empty and was filled by a family

friend in Fort Mill, S.C., who organized a similar drive.

"Jim called Monday morning and said the commander said he had never seen a private group of people raise so many donations so fast. He was blown away and he handed Jim a handful of medals to hand out to the appropriate people."

The Reichles said this could become an ongoing flow of donations.

And the sign that solicited donations at the North Olmsted shop now thanks donors and advertises a donor appreciation day on Saturday.

Firemen head south for hurricane relief