

C-B-I

TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR CUSTOMERS

I don't know why I'm cooking all day. I'm just doing it. It would be no fun to just cook for me and my husband while everybody else in the building goes hungry.

—MARIBEL FERNANDEZ-DILLON, Bay Park Tower resident

key fryer," Beth Van Houtteghem said. Szozda organizes. With the phones out, she yells across the lake. "What do you have thawed?"

OPEN HOUSE

When Debbie Bloch, a middle-school teacher who lives in South Dade got her power back Wednesday, she cranked up an open house for friends who need showers and laundry time. She also is watching over four young family friends, age 11 to 15, in addition to tending to her daughters, 11 and 14. The youngsters have been preoccupied with video games and board games, but "today is home work day," Bloch said. "So I've had to crack the whip. But I'm used to it, and I've known these kids for a long time."

At Davie's Forest Ridge development, meeting on the street for a meal is not unusual, especially for residents of Greenbrier Court. Since some of the teenagers were toddlers, the families have held holiday potlucks, usually in front of the house of tennis pro Dennis DeRome and his wife, Jean, a teacher. Wilma altered the ambience but not the tradition.

Every night now a few folks gather to grill thawing meat, make salads, eat the last of a pre-storm pumpkin pie. "We've been together in good times and hard times," Jean DeRome said. "To share with the people we care about makes the tough times more bearable. . . ."

Employees at Cheney Brothers, a food-distribution company, shared by working yeoman's hours and risking road hazards to deliver food to about 60 frail and ill elderly residents at A Loving Care Inn in Hollywood.

"We were running out of food and water; one of our

generators was down. We were in desperate shape," said Sam J. Sugar, owner of the assisted-living facility. Sugar said he called Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials to report that he was running out of the required 72 hours of food. "The only thing FEMA was doing was answering the phone and giving out 800 numbers," he said.

FOOD DELIVERED

But then Cheney Brothers cut through the chaos, snaked around tree-clogged streets and downed power lines and delivered food Wednesday.

"That," Sugar said, "was miraculous."

And, finally this: Every night since the storm, residents of the area around 16th Avenue and Jackson Street in Hollywood have been gathering at the corner for community suppers and jam sessions with guitars, congas, a big upright bass, even an electric piano plugged in at a house with power.

"Just talking to people, meeting people, meeting your neighbors," Jim Maher said. "And we call them neighbors, but they're not neighbors until you really meet and talk with them. I've seen you in the store. I've seen you in the corner. I've seen you mowing your lawn. Do I ever talk to you? Never. Now we're talking."

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