

Book celebrates the Baton Rougeans who stepped up to serve

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- Published: Sep 27, 2009

Claire Boudreaux Bateman watched the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in awe. Like everyone else, she saw heart-rending destruction and incredible flooding and damage. She saw something else from her perspective in Baton Rouge: an opportunity to serve. The city as a whole took opportunity with gusto. The local response so moved Bateman that she decided to write a children's book to show how it happened. That book is Call Me Hero.

"The perspective is our perspective that we have here in Baton Rouge, which is one of service and opportunity to serve," she said. Bateman is a Lake Charles native who lives in Baton Rouge with her husband and two children. This is her third children's book. During the Katrina aftermath, Bateman watched her husband head out to help. "My husband went off to New Orleans with the 'Cajun Coast Guard,'" she said. An incident that occurred while he was there inspired Bateman's book. "One of the guys on the trip did rescue a dog and did name it Santos," she said. Her book features a dog rescued from New Orleans who winds up in Baton Rouge.

Bateman has her own publishing company, Shell Beach Publishing, which publishes her children's books which include This Little Light of Mine and How Christmas Began. Because she is her own publisher, Bateman has to tend to little details like choosing paper, cover and shipping. When she gets the book in hand, she has to sell them.

"It's way worse (than writing), marketing. It takes up a lot of my time." Bateman says she doesn't follow a traditional marketing strategy. "I don't solicit Barnes & Nobles or Borders. These books are sold in independent book stores and boutiques." A list of places that stock the book is posted on Bateman's Web site, <http://www.clairebatemanbooks.com>.

This book is a labor of love. "This (Baton Rouge) was the epicenter of kindness and compassion. We had a chance to teach our children how wonderful it feels to serve," Bateman said. They did serve. Bateman watched as her husband and his friends took off, pulling boats, to pull people from flooded houses and off rooftops in New Orleans. The volunteers also rescued pets and brought food and drink to those cut off from food and water. Bateman saw her neighbors open their homes and hearts to those displaced by the storm.

"This is my 'thank you' to those people," Bateman said. She hopes to bring some recognition to the many volunteers who anonymously donated time and resources to help storm victims, some of whom

were Bateman's friends. "The rescuers didn't take credit for their sacrifices, so my friends will probably never know their names or be able to thank them. I hoping these unknown heroes will go online and tell their stories."

The Web site for the book, <http://www.callmehero.com>, will have a place where the volunteers can post their stories and photos, she said.

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