

Call Me Hero!

The release of this book also coincides with the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Based on true stories of heroism and service in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Call Me Hero includes lively text and captivating illustrations by Mississippi artist Kym W. Garraway.

Told through the compelling, endearing voice of the mischievous mutt "Hero" in the catastrophic days before, during and after Hurricane Katrina, Call Me Hero follows his journey as he is rescued from the flood waters and given a new life. Hero has lost his home, his family and, worst of all, his name. Yet, as he searches for his owner, he discovers the true meaning of "hero" and learns through touching adventures how it is much more than just a name.

The story takes the reader from the drowned city of New Orleans, the rescue shelters in Baton Rouge, to the devastation in Cameron Parish on the western coast of Louisiana, and touches on the rescue efforts along the Mississippi and Texas Coasts and, ultimately, encourages readers to discover the hero in themselves.

Bateman's story was inspired by her experiences of watching her beloved Baton Rouge community become an epicenter of service and compassion. She saw her husband and his friends pulling boats to New Orleans to aid in the rescue effort. They were among countless individuals from across the state and nation who performed selfless, heroic rescues - pulling people from hot attics, bringing helpless animals to safety and encouraging frightened but relieved survivors to shimmy down their roofs into the boats. Her neighbors opened their homes and hearts while area schools took displaced students into their crowded classrooms. The city swelled with evacuees and imported volunteers.

"This story is for them," Bateman said. "I have friends throughout the Gulf Coast Region who, four years after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, still don't know who secured their property or saved their cherished pets. 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'm hoping these unknown heroes will go online and tell their stories."

As a way for readers to share their experiences, you can visit www.callmehero.com, where you can post rescue stories and photos. Ten percent of the cost of each book will be donated to non-profit organizations who currently aid in disaster relief. Or if you have purchased a book you can use the website to identify your favorite organizations - not just those along the Gulf Coast - and bring aid wherever there is need. **\$29.99 includes a plush toy.**

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Never, ever buy a puppy—or any animal—from a pet store. Tempting as it may be to rescue a pathetic pet shop puppy, the money you would spend would just perpetuate the cycle of suffering.
- Urge pet stores to sell only supplies, not living animals. Ask them to team up with the local animal shelter and display animals who are up for adoption. Until they do, let them know that you will purchase supplies ONLY from stores that don't sell animals.
- Save a life. If you have the time and resources to care for a dog or cat, adopt a homeless animal (or two) from the shelter. Millions of healthy, friendly animals are killed in shelters every year for lack of good homes.

If you buy, a pound puppy will die.

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