



## MEDIA RELEASE

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**EMBARGO UNTIL 6 P.M.**

May 14, 2008

### **22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S HURRICANE CONFERENCE HONORS AWARD RECIPIENTS**

*~ Recognized for contributions to Preparedness and Response Efforts for Florida's Residents ~*

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL– Participants at the 22<sup>ND</sup> Annual Governor's Hurricane Conference gathered this evening in downtown Fort Lauderdale at the Broward County Convention Center to honor 15 award recipients for their various contributions towards preparedness and response efforts during 2007, at both the state and local level.

**The Governor's Award** - presented to Alex Amparo, director of emergency management for Volunteer Florida – The Governor's Commission on Community Service. Mr. Amparo's leadership skills and expertise in emergency management serve as a role model in meeting the needs of Florida's most vulnerable residents during times of disaster.

**The Distinguished Service Award** - presented to Thomas Belcuore, director of the Alachua County Health Department for his leadership in developing partnerships and collaborations in the health care professions to meet the needs of Florida's residents affected by disasters.

**The American Red Cross Award** - presented to William C "Rusty" Russ, disaster services volunteer chair to the Northeast Florida American Red Cross Chapter. Russ shows a commitment, dedication and professionalism in improving readiness and response to safeguard the Florida community in disasters, in both leadership and frontline roles.

- more -



## Governor's Hurricane Conference Awards, Page 2

**The American Red Cross Award** – presented to Mary M. O'Geary, client services lead to the Tampa Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross. O'Geary was honored for her exceptional personal leadership, dedication and perseverance resulting in more effective service delivery to disaster locally and throughout Florida.

**The Corporate Award** - presented to Leslie Chapman-Henderson, CEO and President of the Federal Alliance of Safe Homes. Ms. Chapman-Henderson was recognized for her ability to work with public policy makers in helping to minimize the impact of hurricanes through the creation of the "My Safe Florida Home" program, North America's most far-reaching mitigation initiative.

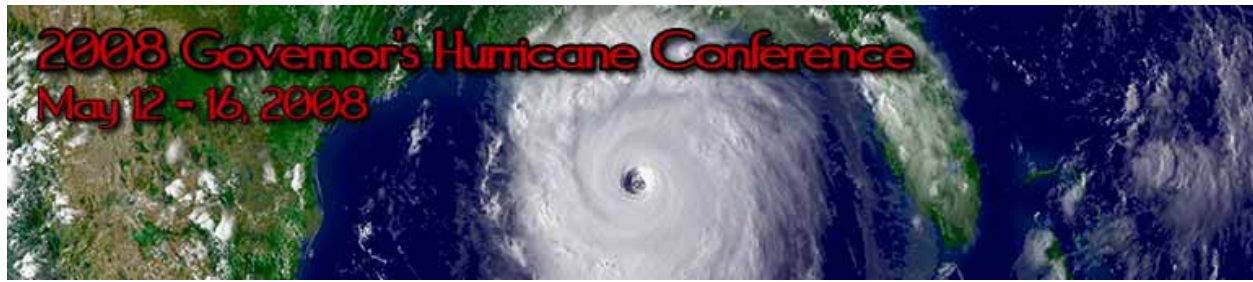
**The Media Award** - presented to the late Dick Fletcher, chief meteorologist with WTSP-TV Channel 10 in Tampa. For more than 28 years, Mr. Fletcher was dedicated to providing Floridians in the Tampa Bay region community hurricane education and preparedness information and supported area emergency management initiatives. WTSP-TV's Sherry Ray, meteorologist and Gene Yagle, photojournalist accepted the award on his behalf.

**The Public Education/Information Award** - presented to Pinellas County Communications Department, for organization and production of the "2007 Hurricane Season Public Education Campaign" that targeted special needs assistance, public shelter alternatives and storm surge awareness.

**The Public Education/Information Award** - presented to Collier County Emergency Management for implementation of a successful public information campaign to better promote emergency preparedness activities, education of residents about hurricane preparedness and improvement of the public's perception of county efforts in relaying timely and accurate hurricane event information.

**The Humanitarian Award** - presented to Laura Bevan, southeast director of the Humane Society of the United States. Bevan was recognized for her exemplary leadership, dedication and compassion in furthering disaster planning and response for animals at the local, community and statewide levels.

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## Governor's Hurricane Conference Awards, Page 3

**The Emergency Management Award** – presented to Jim von Rintel, emergency management coordinator, Collier County Emergency Management. Mr. von Rintel was honored for his expertise, leadership and team building with both the public and private sectors to help improve emergency management preparedness and response.

**The Legislative Award** – presented to Florida House of Representatives Dennis Ross and Donald Brown for solidifying Florida's reputation in disaster prevention, response and recovery through their leadership in enacting the "My Safe Florida Home" inspection program.

**The First Responder Award** – presented to Chief Natale J. Ippolito of San Carlos Fire and Rescue, for his outstanding leadership and contributions to improving Lee County's efforts to become better prepared for hurricane events.

**The Tropical Meteorology Award** – presented to Walt Zaleski, Southern Region Warning and Coordination Meteorologist with the National Weather Service, for exceptional accomplishments in advancing the knowledge of the hurricane forecast and warning process through the use of new products and services to improve hurricane preparedness, response and outcomes for Florida's residents.

**Special Achievement Award** - presented to Jim Blaney for many years of dedication, dependability and tireless commitment to the Governor's Hurricane Conference.

**Lifetime Achievement Award** - presented to Rick Zyvoloski, for a long career of service and leadership in the field of emergency management, and unending dedication to providing outstanding service to the community.

For more information about this year's conference, visit [www.flghc.org](http://www.flghc.org).