

Katrina impetus for MANA arm

BY MICHELLE PARKS
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

FAYETTEVILLE — If the MANA Charitable Foundation had been in place nearly two years ago when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, things might have been different for those who fled to Northwest Arkansas.

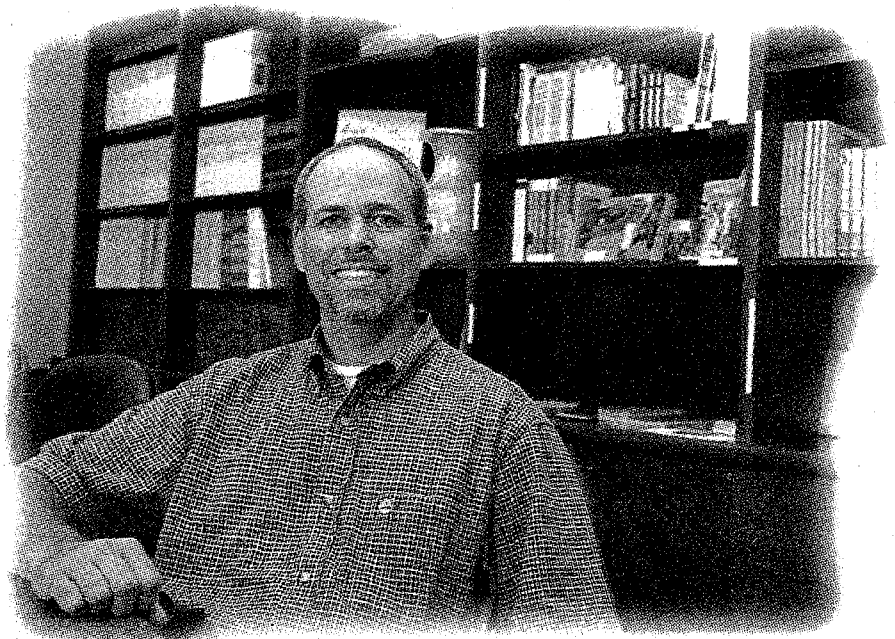
As it was, some 1,500 evacuees, many from New Orleans, arrived at the Arkansas Baptist Assembly campgrounds in Siloam Springs after the late August 2005 hurricane.

A local pastor phoned Larry Shackelford, chief executive officer of MANA (Medical Associates of Northwest Arkansas), requesting help for acute medical needs. On a Sunday, he started recruiting others to gather supplies and medical personnel. They set everything up in a space on Monday and were seeing patients on Tuesday. The volunteers operated daily clinics for several weeks.

Participating in that hurricane relief prompted folks at MANA, an independent network of more than 80 physicians in 15 clinic locations, to talk about setting up an emergency response structure so they could be prepared for catastrophes.

Shackelford, 43, says that if such a structure had been in place before Katrina, the response would have been even quicker and stronger.

"The infrastructure would have been there when the acute need was



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Larry Shackelford, chief executive officer of MANA (Medical Associates of Northwest Arkansas), sits in the reference library at The Breast Center in Fayetteville. The library's books and DVDs were paid for by a grant obtained by the year-old MANA Charitable Foundation.

there," he says.

MANA members represent varied medical specialties, such as urgent care, general practice and neurology. About 520 employees are in the network, which was formed 15 years ago with just three doctors. The for-profit company coordinates retirement,

health care and other services for its members.

"We try to manage the business side of the practice," he says, so the physicians and their staff can focus on the care aspect of their jobs.

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Besides wanting to form an emergency response structure, MANA officials were also aware of people falling through the cracks in their routine practices. They realized they needed a nonprofit charitable arm to accomplish what they wanted to do in the community. So they established the MANA Charitable Foundation, which began operating last July.

The charitable foundation partnered with the Fayetteville Community Foundation, so it didn't have to get its own federal tax identification number. Grants and fundraisers are the foundation's main funding sources.

Though the network now in place could better handle a disaster relief situation, Shackelford says the year-old foundation's daily work is more focused on life's more ordinary crises. For example, the foundation has an endowed

scholarship fund that gives money to students pursuing careers that are needed in the health-care profession, such as radiology and nursing.

The health-care workers benevolence fund gave out \$4,500 in the past year to employees who'd experienced catastrophic events like a house fire, helping with needs not covered by insurance. And, as part of the health and wellness awareness education fund, a reference library has been established at The Breast Center in Fayetteville. That collection of books and DVDs, including materials for adults and children, came through a grant from the Ozark affiliate of Komen for the Cure.

Another program focuses on children's health, specifically childhood obesity. But insurance policies rarely cover a dietitian or other related specialties, and parents don't have the resources to fight the problem on their own, he says. So the MANA Charitable Foundation recently applied for a \$140,000 grant to fund a research program addressing the issue.

The 50 children in the program would be given the services of a child psychologist, registered dietitian, nurse and pediatrician. The program would also include family Boys and Girls Club memberships for participants.

The children would be measured before and after they participate in the program, and foundation officials hope to use the data to show the effectiveness of these health specialties and why insurance should cover them.

"This is an idea that's been around for a while," Shackelford says.

Just like the for-profit MANA, the charitable arm has found there is power in numbers.

The new foundation handed out about \$25,000 in its first year, helping such agencies as Arkansas Children's Hospital, Children's House and the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program. MANA employees have taken advantage of the foundation's employee giving program and donated \$1,000 to a different charity every month in the past year. The

foundation has built up a \$60,000 endowment for scholarships and has saved \$40,000 for future funding requests.

"I'm pleased to see where we've come," Shackelford says. Still, "there are so many opportunities."

The foundation is open to anyone in the health-care field — not just members of the MANA network. All money raised goes toward the mission, other than administrative costs paid to the Fayetteville Community Foundation. A 15-member, all-volunteer board oversees the work and fundraising. They're looking for a minister to fill a spot vacated by a retiring pastor.

The foundation's work satisfies Shackelford.

"It makes you feel like you're making a difference in people's lives," he says.

More information on MANA (Medical Associates of Northwest Arkansas) Charitable Foundation is available by calling Larry Shackelford at (479) 571-6780 or at

www.mana.md