

OPINION &gt; EDITORIALS

**It could have been us****By Robert Lee Long**

Published: Wednesday, May 4, 2011 11:07 PM CDT

[Print Page](#)

During the tornadoes last week, my wife, child and I hunkered down in our master bedroom walk-in closet, which is just large enough for three human beings and two small pets.

Occasionally, the door was left ajar so that we could keep up with the tornado's latest path.

Above us, we could hear the swirling winds and pounding rain.

We have taken shelter many times before in the same fashion. Having grown up in "Tornado Alley," I am well acquainted with the power and potential devastation of each storm.

Each time we have been mercifully spared from harm, and for that we are grateful.

However, for hundreds of people in the small Mississippi town of Smithville, and later in towns across Alabama and four other states, the storm ripped apart their lives.

The town of Smithville exists no more. The police station, supermarket, city hall and scores of homes are literally gone with the wind.

Many residents are pondering whether they should return and rebuild or pull up stakes and move elsewhere.

Hopefully, they will return and begin the slow process of rebuilding their shattered lives and homes.

In true Mississippi tradition, shelters set up around Smithville are empty because so many friends and neighbors have opened up their own homes as a place where these storm weary victims can find shelter.

Many readers have asked if there is a way they can help these victims in Smithville and those individuals who are suffering in Alabama.

Alyssa Caligaris, a 2009 graduate of Hernando High School and a sophomore at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, has spent the past few days collecting items for victims in that state.

Area churches and schools have donated items which will be distributed to those in need.

The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi and Volunteer Northwest Mississippi officials are also helping to spearhead the effort to assist victims of the tornadoes.

Hernando City Hall, 475 West Commerce Street, has been designated as a drop-off location for donations for the Town of Smithville.

Residents are in dire need of such items as duct tape, Gatorade, work gloves, baby wipes, permanent markers, school supplies, laundry detergent, tarps, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, paper napkins, sunscreen, large garbage bags, sugar free juices, bath towels and cloths.

Items may be dropped off this week between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Additionally, items may be donated at Southaven City Hall, 8710 Northwest Drive in Southaven.

As I write this column, the sky is as blue as a robin's egg.

However, as with much of the storms in life it can all turn on a dime.

With every passing day, I am reminded it could have been us.

Robert Lee Long is community editor for the DeSoto Times-Tribune.

Copyright © 2011 - DeSoto Times Tribune

[\[x\] Close Window](#)