

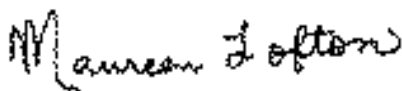
postscript

As we were preparing this report, a number of residents were called and asked if they would agree to have their pictures taken because they had contributed in some way to the relief effort. All were gracious and friendly, but a number of them made comments like "I really didn't do much" or "I only gave a few dollars" or "I wish I could have done more."

The result of all those seemingly small donations was overwhelming. Blood donors in record numbers headed to United Blood Services and rolled up their sleeves to give. The Red Cross organized a road-block in Meridian and raised \$38,000 in one day. Other donations kept pouring in, and the total ultimately reached more than \$120,000 from a six-county area. All of that money went to the Liberty Fund for victims and families.

Our people streamed into Red Cross headquarters bringing steel-toed boots, medical supplies, safety glasses, flashlights, stuffed bears for frightened children and even dog food and foot pads for the specially trained dogs searching at Ground Zero. The supplies filled 130 large boxes, which were loaded on an Amtrak car and shipped at no cost to New York. Several weeks later, a delegation of Meridian firefighters went to New York with an additional \$25,000 raised from their own barbecue and another one held by a local motorcycle association. They also delivered a banner signed by area residents and sponsored by a local radio station, along with a flag made and signed by the students at a local school. The flag was hung on a wall near Ground Zero, spreading a poignant message of unity with our fellow Americans.

No act of giving was insignificant. None was too small. The cumulative effort showed us to be part of a great community, a great nation and a great people.



Maureen Lofton
Editor



Photo: Marianne Todd, *The Meridian Star*

Eight-year-old Mackenzie Ortlepp greets her father Patrick on his homecoming from deployment with the Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing.

Brent McCarty dressed as Uncle Sam during the Flags Across America rally. James Rowell and Stephen Sanborn chipped in with fellow fourth graders at Oakland Heights to raise money. Frances M. Burrage donated money and sent work gloves to New York. Jessica Brown's hand is among hundreds making up a giant flag at Poplar Springs Elementary School.



Uncle Sam



James Rowell



Stephen Sanborn



Frances M. Burrage



Jessica Brown