

Flood displaces residents of Gracewood campus in southwest Houston

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HOUSTON—Floodwaters forced clients at Gracewood—a Texas Baptist residential ministry for single mothers and their children—to evacuate their homes on the southwest Houston campus.



Employees of a Houston-area restoration company work to remove water, mildew and damage caused by a flood that hit the Gracewood campus in southwest Houston. (PHOTO/Debbie MacKellar) No residents reported injuries, but most lost all their possessions, said Debbie Rippstein, executive director of Gracewood, part of Round Rock-based [Children at Heart Ministries](#).

Heavy rain began to fall on Memorial Day evening, and it continued throughout the night and the next morning, swamping the Gracewood

campus.

“Three mothers and three children were trapped in a one-story house,” Rippstein said. “As the waters rose up to the adults’ thighs, they climbed on top of kitchen cabinets with their children and were stranded there about seven-and-a-half hours. It was quite harrowing for them.”

Other residents and staff were trapped upstairs overnight in a two-story building, she added.

Houston Fire and Rescue personnel were overwhelmed with calls from people trapped on rooftops, in vehicles and in other life-threatening situations, so they were unable to respond at Gracewood, she noted.



Heavy rain that began to fall on Memorial Day evening and continued throughout the night and the next morning swamping the Gracewood campus in southwest Houston, flooding the homes of more than a half-dozen single mothers and their children. (PHOTO/Debbie MacKellar) Eventually, mid-afternoon on May 26, the water on the Gracewood campus receded enough to allow staff to move the stranded residents to safety in vans.

Children at Heart Ministries arranged temporary housing for the displaced residents in a hotel.

“We are working out a housing plan going forward,” Rippstein said. Some may be relocated to Gracewood’s other campus in Houston’s Spring Branch area.

Six mothers with children need to be relocated. A seventh mother and her family already were in the process of moving before the flood. Gracewood also is seeking space for two other families who had been accepted into the residential program but had not arrived yet.

“We are looking at possibly renting a house for six months that could house two or three families,” she added.



Workers moved outdoors what was left of the possessions of single mothers and their children after a flood swamped the Gracewood campus in southwest Houston. (PHOTO/Debbie MacKellar)Community-based counseling and

mentoring programs for the Gracewood clients will continue, wherever the families are located.

“However, these clients—who were making great progress in recovering from past trauma and difficulty—again find themselves in need of help,” Todd Roberson, president and chief executive officer of Children at Heart Ministries, wrote in an email to his agency’s supporters.

Insurance will cover structural damages to cottages on the campus, but most residents lost everything they owned, including several whose vehicles were destroyed, he noted.

Children at Heart Ministries established the Gracewood Emergency Client Fund to help clients replace clothing, computers, toys, vehicles and other possessions destroyed by the flood. To donate, [click here](#).