

## 2008 EXCELLENCE AWARDS Director's Choice Award

### Columbia County Flood Relief



On December 3, 2007, a storm dumped over 11 inches of rain in less than 24 hours over Vernonia. Vernonia, a town of 2,200 and surrounding communities were flooded, damaging or destroying over 800 homes. This was the second 500-year flood to hit the area in 11 years.

Before flood waters could even recede, a group of volunteers had already gathered at the Vernonia City Hall with a desire and passion to help the flood victims put their lives and homes back together. The group became known as CCFUNC or Columbia County Flood Relief.

CCFUNC immediately took steps to identify the residents affected by the storm by creating a database to gather information. The data gathered indicated that only 25 percent of the residents had flood insurance, leaving 600 households in need of repair and assistance with only the money in their pockets and donations to affect repairs.

Over 1,000 volunteers arrived on the first Saturday after the flood. Volunteer coordinators directed and supervised the volunteers to complete the tasks most needed. All in all, through figures gathered through December 25, 2007 and based on information provided by FEMA, volunteer hours have been calculated at a value of over \$1.2 million.

To help coordinate the effort, the Community Action Team funded a flood recovery director position for 2-years. Organizations and individuals stepped up to meet the challenge by providing assistance through services and products including sheetrock, cell phones, household and personal items, vehicles, furniture, trailers for office space, and funding.

According to Susan Wagner, Columbia County Flood Relief, "We expect to be here until the last house is fixed. How long will that take? Who knows? But I do know that this group of dedicated volunteers will be here till we lock the doors on them. They deserve recognition for coming forward and staying the course day in and day out."