

# Gateway Continues To Serve Despite Flood Damage

By Theresa Flers

Gateway Industries is an organization devoted to its employees on an everyday basis, but on June 24, Executive Director Phyllis Cantrell and staff members were faced with the task of getting employees back to work quickly, despite damaged equipment, soggy office furniture and ruined product that were destroyed when approximately 2-1/2 feet of mud and water swirled throughout the building the night before.

Gateway Industries Inc., in Ronceverte, is a nonprofit, community rehabilitation program that provides job opportunities and skills training for individuals with disabilities. The group's "primary mission is to assist individuals and help [people] prepare themselves for the competitive employment world."

Cheryl Schmidt was working at Gateway as the super storm dumped torrential rains onto the area.

"Everybody's phones kept going off with weather warnings," Schmidt said, noting the warnings prompted the facility to close around 2:30 PM.

Floor drains inside the building and storm drains outside near the driveway began to fill with water, Cantrell said. Before leaving the area, employees began moving company vehicles and a forklift to higher ground. This saved the vehicles from damage, but by the next morning, valuable items inside were ruined.

When Cantrell returned after the waters receded, she discovered that furniture, computers, office equipment, telephone and electrical systems, walls and flooring were seriously damaged. Filing cabinets containing work orders, policies and procedures were saturated, leaving documents soggy and stuck together. Kitchen appliances and food were unsalvageable.

Raw materials used to manufacture vinyl kitchen aprons, rubber lab aprons, stainless steel framed mirrors, cutlery kits, vinyl drop cloths and wooden shipping crates, as well as unfinished assembly jobs in various stages of completion, all needed to be replaced. Finished product waiting to be shipped to clients had to be rebuilt.

Anthony Benedetto, the administrative consultant at Gateway, said Cantrell was concerned over the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of damage to the industry's infrastructure and product, but was even more worried about the loss of paychecks for employees.

Under Cantrell's guidance, everyone who was able to help clean up received a tetanus shot and began do-

"Phyllis was trying to make sure people had a place to come back to," Benedetto said.

"If Phyllis hadn't jumped through hoops to get things done, we'd still be under two feet of mud," said Christopher Reeves, who has worked for Gateway for nine years. "Phyllis, Becky [Meriwether, the organization's bookkeeper] and [the] staff helped us through times I didn't think we could get through. This job is all I've got."

Gateway staff and employees adamantly credit Cantrell for production beginning again within 10 days of the flood, but Cantrell modestly dismisses their praise.

Cantrell instead acknowledges that the quick recovery was a group effort, and she includes licensed contractors, the city of Ronceverte and City Administrator Reba Mohler in her reasons behind getting the workplace back on its feet.

Work may have begun again, but production continues despite employees working in a construction zone. Floor tiles and carpeting were removed and needed to be replaced. New four-foot sections of drywall and insulation were installed on the lower half of walls in every room and fresh paint applied.

Various contractors enlisted to reconstruct the building formed a great team with a wonderful sense of community spirit, according to Cantrell.

"They are taking care of us very well," Cantrell said.

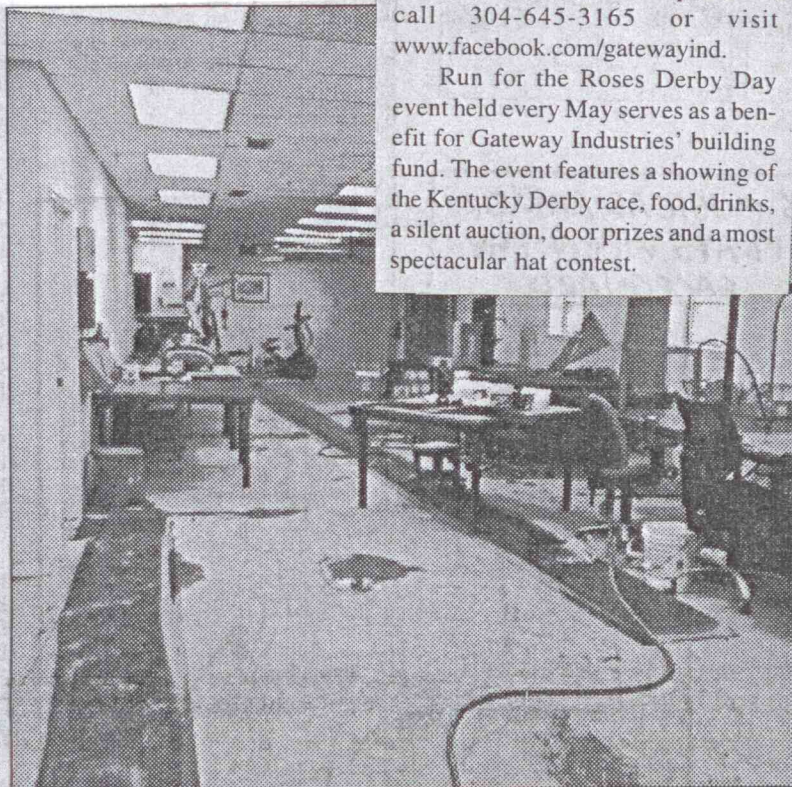
This is actually the third flooding event that Cantrell and Gateway have experienced. Gateway was once housed in another building in Ronceverte that suffered damage from water overflowing the banks of the Greenbrier River. The difference in the recovery effort between those two floods and the most recent one is a current flood insurance policy.

An insurance settlement helps with peace of mind, but in Cantrell and Benedetto's heartfelt opinions, it isn't the most important blessing following this historic weather event.

"We are all alive; we can deal with things," Cantrell said referring to her staff and employees of Gateway.

For more information on Gateway Industries' services and products, call 304-645-3165 or visit [www.facebook.com/gatewayind](http://www.facebook.com/gatewayind).

Run for the Roses Derby Day event held every May serves as a benefit for Gateway Industries' building fund. The event features a showing of the Kentucky Derby race, food, drinks, a silent auction, door prizes and a most spectacular hat contest.



Despite ongoing construction to repair flood damaged flooring and walls within Gateway Industries, staff and employees continued producing products to best serve the needs of clients

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