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Big Lots adds associate aid to hurricane relief effort

COLUMBUS, OH (Sept. 7, 2005) — Big Lots (NYSE: BLI) announced today that it will provide cash relief to associates whose employment has been affected by store closings in the battered Gulf Coast area.

“Thousands of our associates in the hardest-hit communities suffered a storm-related loss — which in many cases, included their paycheck,” said CEO Steve Fishman. “As we considered ways we could make a difference, we turned our attention to the members of our own family. We believe this is one way we can help them begin to put the pieces back together.”

Hurricane Katrina damaged dozens of Big Lots stores in coastal Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. Some stores were up and running within a few days and associates were back on the clock. Others have yet to reopen.

Associates at stores that have been closed for more than a week are eligible for the economic relief, according to Executive Vice President Brad Waite. “Many of our associates face a long and difficult recovery. This is something we can do to help them with their immediate needs.” Waite said the company is also encouraging associates who’ve evacuated to other cities to seek employment at local Big Lots stores. “We’re making every attempt to employ displaced associates and offer them work where we can.”

In addition to economic aid, Big Lots established a 24-hour emergency hotline for the 1,200+ sales associates who were affected by the hurricane. Associates can call 1.866.834.7325 to get current information about the status of their store, ask questions, or share concerns.

Big Lots has also made a significant contribution to the American Red Cross disaster relief fund and has been providing merchandise donations such as water and emergency supplies directly to relief workers in the affected areas. Company leaders expect the associate aid package and charitable donations to reach approximately a half-million dollars.

As of today, Big Lots still had 15 stores closed in the Gulf Coast area due to storm damage, flooding, or power outages. Company officials have started the process of working with insurance companies and contractors to assess damages and begin repairs.

In areas where stores have been reopened, the company is expediting emergency product to assist customers. "We're working with our vendors to get our hands on everything from batteries to cleaning supplies," said Fishman. "We're dedicated to offering the products and low prices that can help the communities we serve begin to rebuild."

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Big Lots, Inc. (NYSE: BLI) is a Fortune 500 company headquartered in Columbus, Ohio. As the nation's largest broadline closeout retailer, Big Lots operates more than 1,500 retail stores in 47 states. Five regional closeout distribution centers ranging in size from 1 million to 3 million square feet and two furniture distribution centers provide the company's stores with brand-name products from more than 3,000 manufacturers. Big Lots offers merchandise on average at 20 to 40 percent below most discount retailers and up to 70 percent below conventional retailers. Founded in 1967, the company employs more than 45,000 associates across the U.S. Big Lots offers consumers a unique shopping experience and wide range of bargain-priced merchandise, including brand-name closeouts, one-of-a-kind deals, seasonal products, consumables, furniture, housewares, toys, and gifts. For more information, visit www.biglots.com.