

**Student Loan Consolidation** - If you have \$10,000 or more in student loan debt and have started student loan repayment or are in your grace period, you may qualify for the Federal Student Consolidation Loan. Consolidation can save you up to 54% a month and could possibly lower your interest rate to 1.6%. [Click here for more info](#)

- Our Local Channels » [News](#) » [Business](#) » [Sports](#) » [Entertainment](#) » [Living](#) » [Classifieds](#) »

[Help](#) [Contact Us](#) [Archives](#) [Newspaper Subscriptions](#)

Search Last 7 Days

» [Search Archives](#)

**The News-Sentinel**

- [News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Prep Sports Weekly](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Editorials](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Ticket!](#)
- [Anniversaries](#)
- [Engagements](#)
- [Weddings](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Heartland](#)
- [Projects](#)
- [Staff](#)

**NEWS-SENTINEL**

- » [Photos](#)
- » [News-Sentinel forms](#)
- » [PrepStats](#)
- » [Daily poll](#)
- » [Daily poll results](#)
- » [Tell us your story ideas](#)
- » [Weather](#)
- » [Maps and Directions](#)

[Back to News-Sentinel Home](#) >

## Sandbagging, packing supplies, preparing food all part of effort

By **Kevin Kilbane**  
of *The News-Sentinel*

### RELATED PHOTOS

► [Slideshow of the flood of 2003](#)

It was supposed to be just another Monday for Brad Payton. It turned out to be anything but that. By the evening of Monday, July 7, Payton had waded waist-deep into the Flood of '03, using his company's Rooter Express dump truck to haul sand and deliver sandbags to Fort Wayne residents scrambling to hold back a record flood on the St. Marys River.

"It was the right thing to do," said Payton, 24, Rooter Express' owner. "It was about getting help to the people."

He and three employees worked almost round-the-clock for the next four days. They were among the hundreds of people who turned out in Fort Wayne to help friends, neighbors and people they didn't know or see.

The same was true in Decatur and Bluffton, where people took off work or were sent home by employers to battle severe flooding in those communities.

"I don't know what we would have done without the volunteers," said Mayor Ted Ellis of Bluffton. "We would have been underwater."

Officials have no idea how many volunteers helped in Fort Wayne. Estimates total about 1,300 in Decatur and about 1,000 in Bluffton.

Some people came one day or two. Others helped every day. Volunteers ranged from individuals with a pickup truck or willingness to shovel sand to families and entire high-school football teams.

"It was a massive undertaking that would have been impossible without all the volunteers who turned out," said Charlie Heiny, neighborhood association



News-Sentinel photo by [Eugene Harding](#)

### Helpful hands

Volunteers toss sandbags on Tuesday, July 8, to keep water out of the Hiday auto dealership on Indiana 1 in Bluffton.

### Employment:

- careerbuilder**<sup>®</sup>
- [Find a Job](#)
  - [Post a Résumé](#)
  - [Post a Job](#)

### Automotive:

- [Find a Car](#)
  - [Sell a Car](#)
- 

### Real Estate:

- [Find a Home](#)
- [Find an Apartment](#)

### Local Shopper:

- [Search Classifieds](#)
- [See This Week's Sales](#)
- [Online Coupons](#)
- [Place an Ad](#)

### Featured Services:

- [Find a Date](#)
- [Find a Hotel](#)

president in Woodhurst subdivision, one of Fort Wayne's hardest-hit areas.

Some volunteers found themselves on the frontlines, standing in waist-high water to pass sandbags to people building dikes around homes, businesses and places of worship. Some scooped sand into the combined total of more than 500,000 sandbags filled in Fort Wayne, Bluffton and Decatur. Others toiled on the periphery, preparing or serving food to volunteers and packing emergency supplies for people displaced by the floods.

"There were people who helped in big ways and small ways, but it all made a difference," said Stacey Stumpf, public information director for the city of Fort Wayne.

While the floods damaged hundreds of homes and uprooted lives, good can come from it, Payton said.

"Hopefully, this will bring this community tighter (together)," he said. "That's what it's all about -- being a neighbor."

---

---

### Stocks

Enter symbol/company name



© 2003 Knight Ridder  
All rights reserved.  
Real Cities is a service of Knight Ridder

[Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Archives](#) | [Newspaper Subscriptions](#)  
[About FortWayne.com](#) | [About Realcities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [About Knight Ridder](#) | [Copyright](#)