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DELTA DISASTER



FULL TANK, EMPTY WALLET: Jeff Siegel fills up — for \$4.19 a gallon — at an Exxon in Bayside yesterday.

9/11 kin reach out to assist

With the fourth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks a week away, New York families of victims of the nation's worst terrorism strike are organizing efforts to relieve the heart break for Hurricane Katrina refugees.

"We realize that our pain is something that we can help heal by giving back," said Valerie McGee, a 9/11 widow.

"It's time to give back." McGee, who lost her husband, Brian, on 9/11, is among 400 families that belong to the WTC Family Center in Rockville Centre, L.I.

Relatives of firefighter Stephen Siller plan to create the 9/11 Families for Katrina Relief Fund this week, said Siller's brother, Frank.

Stephen's widow, Sarah, has already donated two 40-foot trailers full of water to send to the Gulf Coast, Frank said.

Another group, the Coalition of 9/11 Families may join with one or two charitable institutions to start another relief drive.

"We're going to address this with the same force and intensity as we addressed 9/11," said Edie Lutnick, whose brother Gary, died in the World Trade Center.

She is the director of the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund, which represents more than 800 families of people who worked at the Cantor Fitzgerald brokerage in the trade center, as well as some smaller firms. *Post Wire Service.*

N.Y. plea for surviving pets

A Long Island animal shelter is preparing for the arrival of hundreds of homeless pets within the next few weeks as rescuers begin to pull them out of Hurricane Katrina's rubble.

The first batch of 53 dogs and cats arrived yesterday at the North Shore Animal League in Port Washington from an Alabama shelter trying to make room for those still pouring in.

"As soon as they saw that they were going to be loved their tails started wagging," North Shore director Paul Greene said. "All they ask for is a home and some affection. All they want is to be loved."

North Shore has pledged to put 1,000 up for adoption in a temporary shelter.

Joseph Mollica and Heidi Singer

Gotham gas tops \$4

By GEORGETT ROBERTS, STACEY SZEWCZYK and JENNIFER LESZKIEWICZ
Driving in New York costs a four-tune.

Skyrocketing fuel prices reached another milestone as a Queens gas station broke the \$4-a-gallon barrier yesterday, while costs at stations around the city fluctuated hour to hour.

One Exxon station in Bayside, Queens, charged \$4.09 a gallon for regular gas early yesterday morning — \$4.19 if customers paid by credit card.

However, by 10:30 a.m., cash-paying customers only had to shell out \$3.59.

A motorist who stopped

at the Queens station on Friday night refused to pay the high prices.

"They are just ripping you off, getting all they can get from you," said a Flushing man who identified himself only as Ken.

"We are in a state of national emergency, and this is what they are doing — price gouging," he said. "People can't afford these prices."

A handful of stations raised their prices above the \$4 mark, only to lower them soon after, according to newyorkgasprices.com, a Web site that tracks gas rates.

According to data released by AAA on Friday,

city gas prices averaged \$2.89 a gallon for regular and \$3.16 for premium.

A month ago, regular sold for \$2.59 a gallon; and \$2.13 a year ago.

Westchester DA Jeanine Pirro, the presumptive Republican candidate for Senate, today will announce a plan calling for the suspension of the federal gas tax for 90 days or until regular prices fall back below \$2.50 per gallon.

The high gas prices have left some New Yorkers searching for cheaper transportation.

Schoolteacher Gwen Mays, 43, who was back-to-school shopping with her three kids, stopped at an

Exxon station on Vanderbilt Avenue in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, yesterday.

After paying \$45 to fill up her minivan, she vowed to take her kids to school on the bus.

But Bill Oler, who owns the Fort Greene Exxon station charging \$3.99 for regular and \$4.29 for premium, was optimistic that the eye-popping prices would come back down to earth in the next few weeks.

"Political and natural forces" affect the shipping and availability of gas, Oler said. "So much volatility spooks the market."

7 in 10 say oil giants ripping us off

An overwhelming majority of Americans believe oil and gas companies are gouging consumers in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

But they offer mixed reviews of President Bush and the government's initial response to the deadly storm, according to the latest Washington Post-ABC News poll.

The survey conducted Friday night found 72 percent of the respondents say oil companies and gas suppliers have taken advantage of the storm emergency by raising gasoline prices, which spiked virtually overnight last week to \$3 a gallon or more in many areas.

Eight in 10 fault the federal government's response to surging gas prices, the survey found.

The survey also found Americans were sharply divided over the performance of Bush and local, state and federal governments in the aftermath of Monday's storm.

Slightly less than half — 46 percent — approve of the way Bush has handled relief efforts while 47 percent disapprove.

The government's early response got equally

mixed reviews, with 48 percent rating the federal effort as excellent or good and 51 percent saying it was "not so good" or "poor."

According to the poll, 68 percent of Democrats rated the government's performance as "not so good" or "poor," while 66 percent of Republicans judged it to be "excellent" or "good."

Washington Post