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STATE & LOCAL | 9/27/2005

SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR SAYS EVACUEES NEED GUIDANCE

By Zachary Posner

While charitable organizations have provided Hurricane Katrina victims with essentials, such as food, clothes and shelter, the Art of Living Foundation and the International Association for Human Values offered emotional support.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the spiritual leader and founder of both organizations, along with city Councilman Raul Alvarez, described the group's mission at City Hall early Monday afternoon.

"Aid, housing and food simply do not work," Shankar said. "We need to address [the evacuees'] stress and trauma."

Shankar made a plea for more volunteers to help support his organization The Art of Living Foundation, which was founded in 1982, has active members in 146 countries.

"The purpose of this visit is to meet with the people who are trying to help," said Alvarez. "We are at a state where we need to develop long-term plans."

Trained leaders teach groups of children breathing techniques and guided relaxation processes to help calm them down, said Patti Montella, a spokeswoman from the International Association for Human Values. Montella said this helps children cope better with trauma-induced stress, as well as helping cure other problems, such as insomnia.

Trained counselors are conducting classes in Austin, as well as in shelters in San Antonio, Baton Rouge and Houston - cities Shankar plans to visit in the near future.

The counselors "teach several breathing exercises that help them sleep and simply feel better," said Shankar.



Media Credit: Greg Elliott
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar speaks at Austin City Hall on Monday before he travels to Houston and New Orleans. Shankar discussed the necessity of humanitarian relief in the affected regions.

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