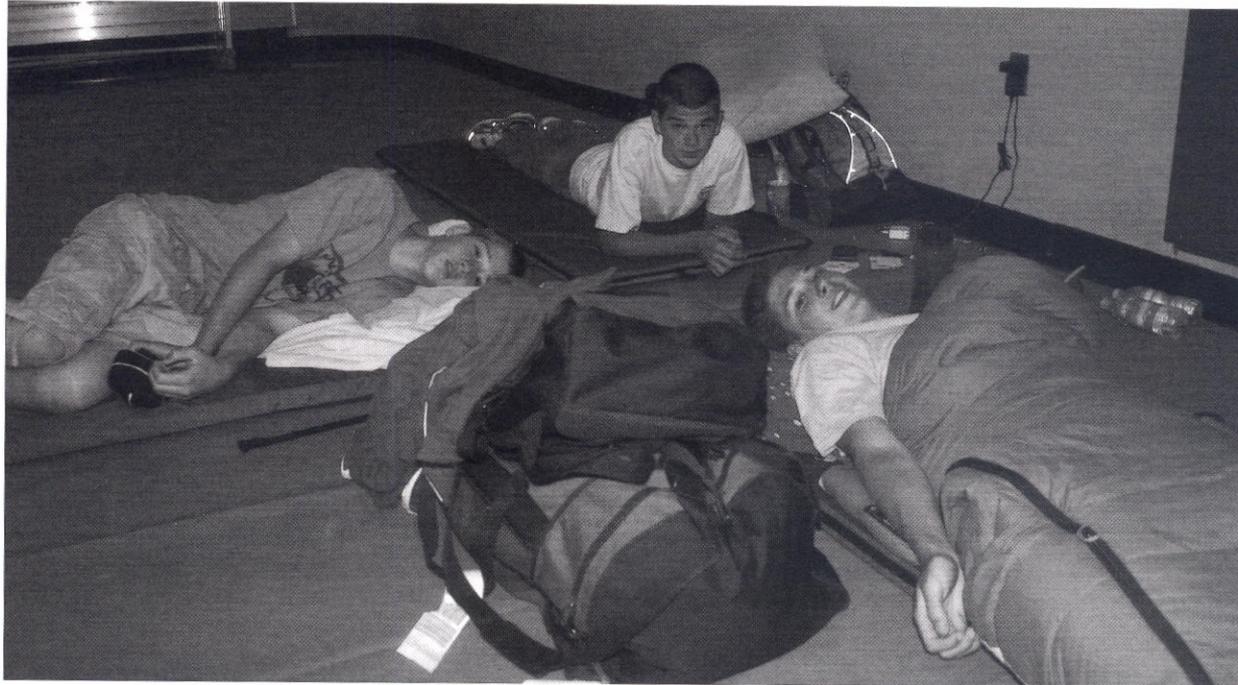


When Fay threatens, Boy Scouts do 'what we do'

Minnesota troop helps Keys special-needs residents

By **KEVIN WADLOW**

Posted - Wednesday, August 20, 2008 06:01 AM EDT



After leaving the Florida Sea Base camp, Scouts Matthew Frank, Tyler Welch and Weston Birnbaum were among a contingent from Minnesota's Troop 283 that took shelter at Monroe County's mainland evacuation site during Tropical Storm Fay.

The oldest Boy Scout troop in Minnesota wrote a new chapter Sunday, forced to flee the Keys in the approach of Tropical Storm Fay. After the Boy Scouts' Florida Sea Base adventure camp on Lower Matecumbe Key closed, the 11 Minnesota Scouts from Troop 283 and four adult troop leaders spent Sunday night in Monroe County's mainland shelter.

And when special-needs patients from the Keys arrived at the shelter at Florida International University, the Scouts pitched in to help carry luggage and medical supplies up to the second floor.

"We were happy to help," said Brent Kellum, scoutmaster of the troop from Wayzata, Minn. "We're Scouts; it's what we do."

The FIU shelter took in 14 special-needs patients from the Keys. They were attended by Monroe County Fire Rescue staff, said shelter director Ted Cudnick, a Red Cross volunteer from Tavernier. Aside from the medical patients, the Minnesota Scouts were the only Keys evacuees at the shelter by mid-day Monday.

The Scouts made six scuba dives from Sea Base before being told by camp staff that the camp had to close before Fay's arrival.

"They were busy buttoning up Sea Base and securing the boats," Kellum said. "They told us 5,000 groups had been through the base since the last time they had to close for a storm, but unfortunately we were 5,001."

The Scouts missed three scheduled dives but will receive credit for future visits. They also will receive a special "storm badge," considered a Scout collectible.

"Now we can say we've been through a hurricane," grinned Scout Weston Birnbaum, tucked into his sleeping bag on the floor of the FIU center's gym.