

AMERICAN RED CROSS AND AMERICAN AIRLINES REUNITES  
MOTHER AND BABY SEPARATED DURING HURRICANES  
15-Month-Old Baby in Texas Flown Home to Mother in Louisiana

With the help of the American Red Cross and American Airlines, Victoria and daughter Xiva, who were separated during Hurricane Katrina and have been living in different states ever since, were reconnected at the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport Saturday, October 8.

The mother, who was overjoyed to see her baby girl, explained that she had been in a different area of New Orleans at the time the city was evacuating and couldn't reach her daughter. Xiva was evacuated to a Red Cross shelter in Houston, Texas, while Victoria ended up at the Red Cross' Lamar Dixon shelter in Gonzalez, Louisiana.

Kim Abraham Day, a volunteer with the Mercer County Chapter of the Red Cross in Princeton, New Jersey, and a staff shelter manager in Gonzalez, met Victoria in mid-September and immediately began to help her look for Xiva using the Red Cross' Family Links Registry on [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).



Photo: (l. to r.) Rockesy Fernandez, Xiva, Victoria Fernandez, Kim Abraham Day, Jenny Loucks

“I heard about her dilemma and wanted to do something,” said Abraham Day, who is an attorney and used her knowledge of the court system help Victoria navigate the legal process and cut through what could have been months of red tape. After learning Xiva was in the custody of child protective services, she worked closely with Jenny Loucks, who had been appointed the baby's attorney by the Texas courts. “We showed the court that the Red Cross' shelter was a safe and secure place for the baby to return with Mom.”

“Kim did a lot of the work,” said Loucks, who accompanied Xiva on her flight home, which was provided by American Airlines free of charge, from Houston to Louisiana. “Thanks to the Red Cross, United Way and American Airlines, we were able to do this.”

Loucks said that there was no documentation to go by, so she had her staff take several photos of Xiva to make sure she had found the right family.

“We had to go with our hearts on this one. We knew she came from a loving home. She's happy, healthy – just a wonderful baby,” said Loucks. “You can already tell this is where she belongs.”

Victoria and her sister Rockesy, who also came to the airport to welcome her niece home, took turns giving Xiva continuous hugs and kisses.

“I was so stressed out. I didn't think I would ever see her again,” said the grateful mother. “There were so many people that helped; I can't even remember their names.”

Loucks, who was spending the day with the reunited family and then flying back to Texas later that evening, noted that she went into law for this very reason.

“I wanted to make a difference in someone else’s life,” said the Texas attorney.

Happily reunited, Victoria and Xiva, along with aunt Rockesy, returned to the Red Cross’ Lamar Dixon shelter where they will stay until more permanent housing is available.

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Shannon Rolf is a public affairs volunteer with the Palo Alto Chapter (California) of the American Red Cross.

Christa Lentz is a public affairs volunteer with the Catawba Valley Chapter (North Carolina) of the American Red Cross.

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Photo courtesy of Cindy Hadley, a volunteer with the Central Maryland Chapter of the American Red Cross.

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