

Charities USA

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SPECIAL EDITION

DOUBLE
WHAMMY

SUPER STORMS DRAW
TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY
EVEN CLOSER

STANDING
TOGETHER IN
UNITY

THE 2017 ANNUAL
GATHERING SHIFTS
GEARS TO SUPPORT THE
PEOPLE OF TEXAS

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM:

THE CATHOLIC CHARITIES MINISTRY RESPONDS TO DISASTERS



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Catholic Charities USA is the national office for one of the nation's largest social service networks. Member agencies and institutions nationwide provide vital social services to almost nine million people in need, regardless of their religious, social or economic backgrounds. Catholic Charities USA supports and enhances the work of its members by providing networking opportunities, national advocacy, program development, training and consulting and financial benefits.

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EDITOR'S

COLUMN

The present issue provides for the reader a close look at the work and ministry of disaster recovery by the Catholic Charities network, including the national office (CCUSA), in the wake of the terrible destruction caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

Through the popular media, we have all been well-informed about many of the details: death tolls, numbers of homes and businesses lost, and the costs of damages and repairs. There have also been many stories shared about the responses of organizations and countless volunteers who provided aid and support to the impacted areas.

What may not be so widely known is the specific work of Catholic Charities, both at the national and the local level. As you read through the articles, you will discover a wonderful mosaic of experiences and responses in light of the aforementioned hurricanes that devastated Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Indeed, the response on the part of the agencies has been so generous that, if we were to provide the full version of each article, we would have a double issue. Therefore, we have decided to post the full versions of the articles on our website (www.CatholicCharitiesUSA.org) and to offer excerpts of those articles in this print edition, which allows us to remain within our space and budget constraints.

We hope that the stories herein will inform and inspire you. They reveal well the fruit of the Catholic Charities mission to serve people in need. One could also say that in the case of the recent – and ongoing – recovery efforts, Catholic Charities brings to life the famous prayer of St. Teresa of Avila:

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless his people.”

Amen.

David Werning, Managing Editor

To comment on this issue, please write to David Werning at dwerning@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

In this special “hurricane recovery” edition of *Charities USA*, we devote space to the experiences and work of those Catholic Charities agencies that weathered the hurricanes of last fall and that have labored since then at helping their communities rise again.

I have had the privilege to visit the areas impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. In Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, I was honored to deliver to the Catholic Charities agencies the immensely generous donations of the people who support our mission. At the time I am writing this column, the total amount given for hurricane relief so far is \$24,000,000. And the people are still giving.

Equally impressive has been the response of our Catholic Charities ministry: the CCUSA Disaster Response Team, the staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities agencies who travelled to the affected areas and, of course, the staff and volunteers of the Catholic Charities agencies that were directly hit by the hurricanes.

As you read about the experiences and work of these agencies on the “front lines,” you will get a glimpse of how each of them, while unique in terms of demographics and personalities, used the resources at hand and those supplied to get individuals, women and men, and families back on their feet.

The work of recovery that began even before the storms made landfall continues, and the work will continue for some time. Catholic Charities will be with the communities every step of the way, just as we share the journey of everyone we serve. ■



Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD

President & CEO



IN THE EYE OF THE STORM:

THE CATHOLIC CHARITIES MINISTRY RESPONDS TO DISASTERS

INTRODUCTION

By David Werning, Managing Editor

- ▶ Even as Hurricane Harvey was forming hundreds of miles off the coast of Texas, Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) was planning a multi-pronged response.

It didn't hurt that providence seemed to have a hand in the response as well. Just three days before Harvey made landfall, the Ford Motor Company was at the offices of CCUSA in Alexandria, Va. handing over a brand new Mobile Response Center (MRC). The MRC is a Ford truck outfitted specifically for disaster response work, and it would be on its way to Texas a week after Hurricane Harvey had run its course. When Harvey did reach the shore on Aug. 25, CCUSA launched, via social media, a text-to-give campaign across the United States, asking people to give in support of hurricane relief efforts.

Millions of dollars poured in from donors all over the country, and the giving continued as Hurricanes Irma and Maria hit Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). In fact, people are still giving to support the recovery efforts in the areas impacted by the various hurricanes. As the donations came in, CCUSA disbursed 100 percent of the funds at the first opportunity. Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD, president and CEO of CCUSA, personally hand-delivered checks to Catholic Charities agencies in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the USVI.

The CCUSA Disaster Operations team was on the scene in each of the areas affected as well. Kim Burgo, senior director for CCUSA Disaster Operations, went to Texas and Puerto Rico. In both places she provided assistance to local Catholic Charities agencies and helped to assess the particular needs. CCUSA has also deployed disaster teams consisting of staff from Catholic Charities agencies around the United States. The teams helped not only with immediate needs but also with long-term recovery and restoration.

In November (2017), as the communities in Texas, Florida, USVI, and Puerto Rico were busy with recovery, CCUSA hosted the Applied Institute for Disaster Excellence in Lake Junaluska, N.C.

Thirty-nine Catholic Charities agencies from 35 dioceses and 22 states were represented at the institute. The purpose was to help participants build capacity to respond to disasters and to train staff to be ready to deploy to other agencies in time of need.

Matt Zieger, who is CCUSA's senior director for impact investing and social enterprises, is an example of a staff member leaving his regular duties behind and volunteering for disaster relief work. He was scheduled to participate in the CCUSA Annual Gathering, but instead worked with Catholic Charities Beaumont, Texas to provide immediate supplies to victims of Hurricane Harvey. About his experience, he said:

"It reminded me of how important it is to be in community and that Catholic Charities USA and our network being able to deploy people from around the country to come in and wrap around people in a place and a time of need is a really important structure. It's a model of the Church; it's a model of a lot of things in community that are important for us to remember, just to have each other's back and to support each other."

The reaction by CCUSA and the entire Catholic Charities ministry to the disaster caused by the hurricanes of 2017 has been generous and inspiring. This includes the amazing efforts of all the staff and the thousands of volunteers and donors who did everything from disbursing water bottles to sending in cash donations.

Equally inspiring has been the hard work and determination of the agencies that suffered the disasters directly. *Charities USA* asked these agencies to relate their experiences in order to give readers an intimate look at the work of disaster recovery from their immediate perspective. The response was overwhelming, so much so that the full versions of the agencies' articles could not fit in the print version of the magazine. Instead, they have been posted to the CCUSA website (www.CatholicCharitiesUSA.org). Excerpts from those articles, organized in four sections – Texas, Florida, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico – are provided in the following pages. ■

CATHOLIC CHARITIES BEAUMONT

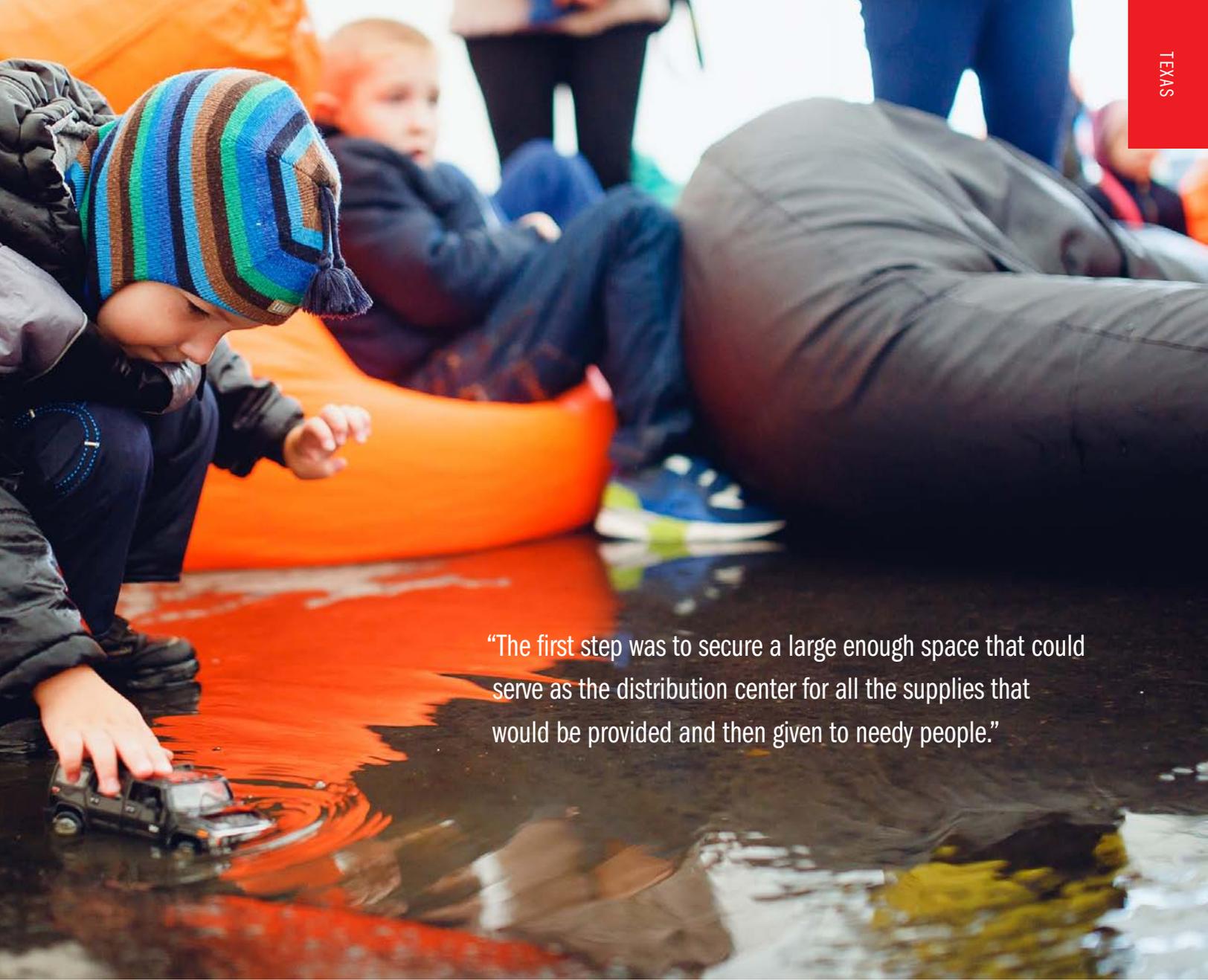
By David Werning, Managing Editor

- ▶ For Catholic Charities of Beaumont, the recovery process started before the rains from Harvey had finished. Executive Director Carol Fernandez and her team were already assessing the needs and setting the foundation for a plan that would get people both immediate supplies and long-term assistance.

The first step was to secure a large enough space that could serve as the distribution center for all the supplies that would be provided and then passed on to needy people. They did not have to wait long. A 28,000 square foot warehouse – along with fork lifts, pallet jacks, and fork lift drivers – was donated. Within a few weeks the warehouse had been filled with material donations, everything from cleaning supplies to pet food. The supplies were sent to Beaumont from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, New York, Illinois, Maryland, Georgia, and other parts of Texas.

A special memory for Fernandez was the group of youth (more than 100) from the Diocese of Biloxi, Miss. They traveled to Beaumont on Sept. 30 with a priest and their adult chaperones in order to spend the day distributing emergency relief supplies. Some of the youth worked at the warehouse and some went off site to help clean out homes. Fernandez said that the spirit of community and generosity that the youth brought with them continued throughout their visit: “At the end of the day the priest celebrated Mass at the warehouse for everyone and then the Biloxi youth even hosted a barbecue feast too!” ■





“The first step was to secure a large enough space that could serve as the distribution center for all the supplies that would be provided and then given to needy people.”



CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

By Cynthia Colbert, President and CEO

- ▶ Catholic Charities President and CEO Cynthia N. Colbert said, “When we learned of the widespread devastation of Hurricane Harvey and then the additional devastation that resulted from flooding when water was released from area dams, we knew we had to respond in a bigger way than we initially planned.”

Catholic Charities staff and volunteers opened disaster centers in three counties: At the main office in Houston, its three sites in Galveston County, and one site – the Mamie George Community Center – in Fort Bend County. Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Charities of Ft. Worth also helped with staffing and gift cards, and Catholic Charities in San Antonio sent 65 truckloads of donations. Other Catholic Charities agencies and organizations from around the country sent their support in the form of financial and in-kind donations. “The outpouring of support for Texas is nothing less than amazing,” said Natalie Wood, senior vice president of programs.

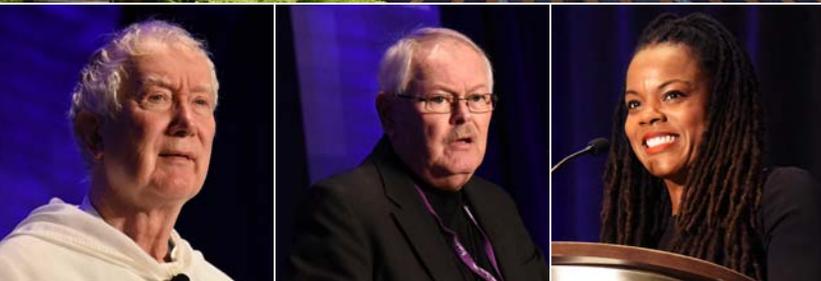
Thousands of people visited the relief centers for assistance and were provided gift cards, food and other basic needs items. In addition, attorneys from the St. Frances Cabrini Center for Immigration Legal Assistance helped people with FEMA applications, and the Counseling Program served those with mental health needs. “We were blessed to receive so many in-kind donations of food, cleaning supplies, clothes and other items that people needed,” said Colbert. “Although we saw some of the worst of Mother Nature, we saw the best in human nature. Everyone came forward to help.” ■



STANDING TOGETHER IN UNITY

THE 2017 ANNUAL GATHERING SHIFTS GEARS TO SUPPORT THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS!

Catholic Charities USA welcomed nearly 500 people in Houston for its Annual Gathering, which took place Sept. 28-30, 2017. In light of the devastation caused weeks before by Hurricane Harvey in and around Houston, a decision to cancel or to continue the event had to be made. The decision was to continue, but with a small change in focus. The agenda for the gathering was revised to offer attendees volunteer opportunities throughout the conference. Hundreds of Catholic Charities staff responded through various activities: going door to door in local communities assessing people's needs, assembling supply kits, and helping to pack and deliver goods from one of the warehouses being used as distribution centers. ■





CATHOLIC CHARITIES DIOCESE OF CORPUS CHRISTI

By Alfredo E. Cardenas, South Texas Catholic

- ▶ In order to deal most effectively with the recovery from Hurricane Harvey, Bishop Michael Mulvey of the Diocese of Corpus Christi named Deacon Mark Arnold to head the diocese's disaster relief efforts. He also named a committee to help in the effort. The members included Deacon Richard Longoria to coordinate volunteers; Linda McKamie with Catholic Charities; Stephanie Bonilla to help with the needs of families; Deacon Michael Mantz to coordinate efforts of deacons; Superintendent Rosemary Henry to help with displaced students; and Orlando Zepeda with the diocese to assist with buildings and grounds.

Two weeks after the hurricane struck, Bishop Mulvey led a holy hour of prayer at the Corpus Christi Cathedral and began celebrating Masses at parishes most severely affected. The bishop continues to visit parishes and schools during the ongoing recovery process.

Plans for rebuilding the most severely affected structures are already underway. Repairs are being done to every building affected. In addition to Catholic Charities, individual parishes are helping with day-to-day emergencies and needs. (To get a more complete look at the work being done in the Diocese of Corpus Christi to recover from Hurricane Harvey, visit southtexascatholic.com.) ■

CATHOLIC CHARITIES FORT WORTH

By Katelin Cortney, Communications & Creative Director

- ▶ Long before the storms rolled in to Houston, Texas, Catholic Charities Fort Worth had been laying the groundwork to be response-ready. We know that any disaster response program has to have a clear plan of engagement with disasters on a local, state, and national level. CCFW preparation is demonstrated in a few ways:

For our employees: we train staff and volunteers to be case workers and case managers for potential disasters, as well as preparing internally to keep staff safe if a disaster occurs on our premises.

For our responsiveness: we are ready to issue immediate financial assistance and handle disaster-affected intake and assessment for anyone who may come to us.

For our long-term ability to help: we train for the longevity of case management and recovery construction management.

For our preventative steps: We partner with Disaster Resiliency AmeriCorps VISTA, working to identify and increase disaster resilient behavior with populations that have limited English proficiency.

We have found that a disaster is an avenue to show your values, which for CCFW means first and foremost hospitality and compassion. We do this through case management because we believe in the power of relationships and the dignity of each person. We believe that helping a client recover requires a person-to-person connection and the gift of hope that comes from the gift of service.

Presently, we are working intensively with 43 families who have relocated to the Fort Worth area following Hurricane Harvey. We plan to be by their side for the long haul. Indeed, we were ready for them! ■



CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF CENTRAL TEXAS

By Sara Ramirez, Executive Director

- ▶ Catholic Charities of Central Texas has historically responded to a local disaster every three years. Since 2013, we have responded to an average of two to three disasters per year ranging from floods to wildfires to tornadoes. What had been an occasional response effort has become part of our day-to-day operations.

Each disaster requires a unique response to meet the needs of the specific community and event. Nevertheless, there are five phases of disaster that are constant: readiness, rescue, relief, recovery and review. Over the past four years we have come to recognize more fully how our strengths and efforts can be best utilized in each phase.

Readiness: In order to ready our community for potential danger and devastation, we need to stay informed. We monitor updates and alerts from the National Weather Service in our region as well as personal communications from local officials and disaster partners. By staying informed about the projections and risks, we are able to proactively reach out to those parts of our service region likely to be impacted.

Rescue: While emergency responders help to get individuals and families to immediate safety, we prepare for disaster relief deployment.

Relief: The primary goal of the relief phase is to ensure - through an assessment of the affected communities - that everyone impacted by disaster is safe and has their basic needs met. Then we determine where our efforts can be best utilized and we begin mobilization.

Recovery: When the disaster is out of the news, we are still helping families. After their resources have been exhausted through FEMA and insurance, we help to address unmet needs that have slipped through the cracks.

Review: When it's all said and done, we evaluate our response in order to ensure accountability. We debrief our volunteers and staff about their experiences. We report back to the community about what we have been able to accomplish through their support. And we begin preparing for the next time. ■





CATHOLIC CHARITIES ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO

By Lisa L. Ayres, Director of Mission Advancement

- ▶ Catholic Charities of San Antonio (CCAOSA) has become a hub for the collection and distribution of supplies, aid, and assistance for those in need throughout the state who have been affected by Hurricane Harvey.

The first wave of relief efforts sent five box trucks to the Diocese of Corpus Christi, and two box trucks to Victoria, Texas. Motivated to continue to work on behalf of so many who have lost so much, CCAOSA continued to collect cleaning supplies, diapers, and gift cards, along with food and bottled water, with the goal to fill 25 large box trucks for the benefit of storm victims in Houston and the surrounding area.

All of the aforementioned supplies were donated by our generous community so that we were able to fill 65 trucks and cars. The convoy headed to Houston and received a warm welcome at the offices of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston where the supplies were offloaded, inventoried, and readied for distribu-

tion. It took 531 volunteers and dozens of Catholic Charities' employees hundreds of hours to deliver this labor of love.

The following week, as staff from CCAOSA attended the Catholic Charities USA Annual Gathering in Houston, they received the opportunity to help distribute the supplies that had been sent. The process had come full circle. Darryl Greer, director of Senior Volunteer Services, reflected, "Imagine my surprise and amusement when I realized that the boxes we were unpacking and distributing were the very same we had shipped up the week before. I recognized my own handwriting on some of the boxes and knew exactly what had been placed inside."

CCAOSA will continue to provide for the needs of others, through selfless service, under the sign of love. It is more than just our mission statement. It is our responsibility. It is our honor. ■



CATHOLIC CHARITIES DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

By Janet Shelton, Executive Assistant

- ▶ Hurricane Irma's arrival to Florida's central-west coast surprised many locals. Despite numerous threats and its coastal vulnerability, the Tampa Bay area had not experienced a direct hit for 60 years. Residents' mildly interested attitude shifted to panic, however, as Irma's strength grew to a Category 5. Many tried to flee the storm's incomprehensible power.

Catholic Charities Executive Director Mark Dufva was nervous. He was there when Ivan and Dennis slammed into the Diocese of Pensacola. As Irma approached, preparation centered on the agency's most vulnerable clients and facilities.

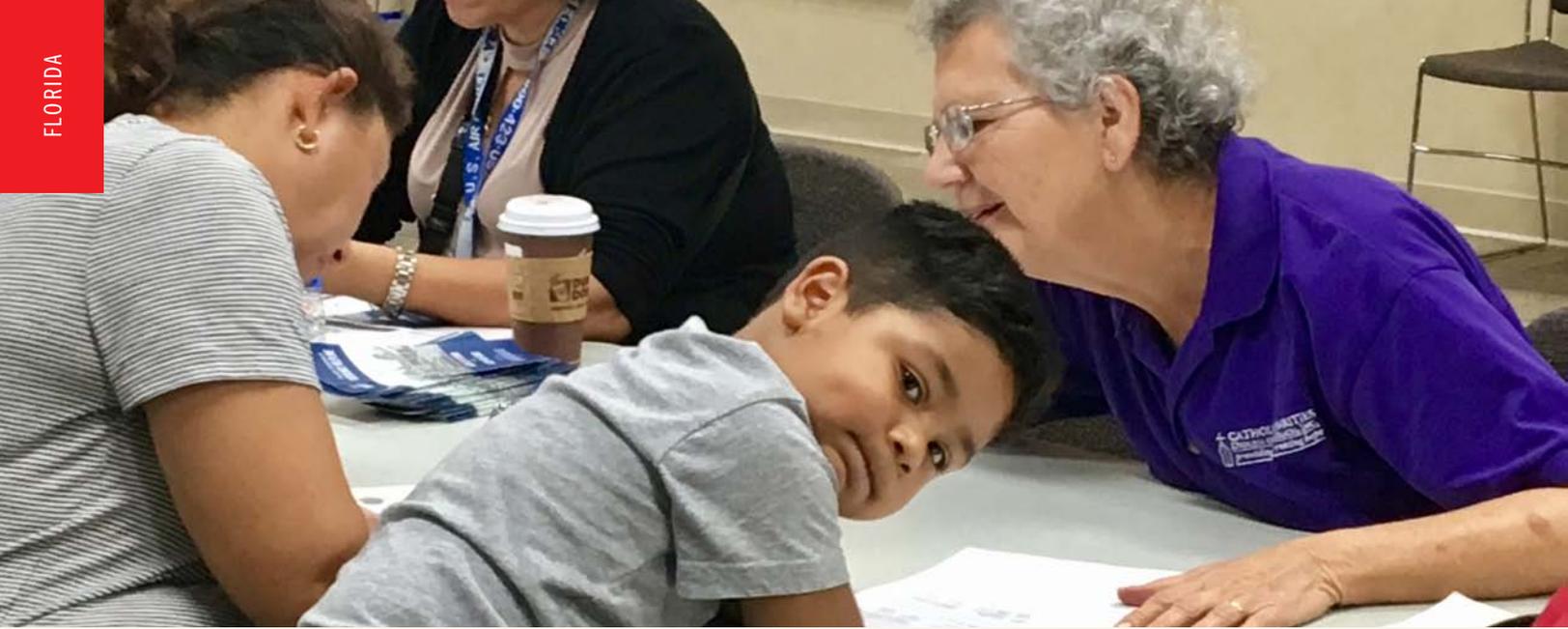
Hurricane Irma hit the Tampa Bay area in the early hours of Sept. 11. Most residents of the five coastal Florida counties making up the Diocese of St. Petersburg felt blessed as they made their way home. More than two million homes were without power, but the impact was not as significant or widespread as feared.

In the ensuing days, as Catholic Charities worked toward normalizing operations, people started calling for help.

Assistance sites were placed in four areas of the diocese, and Catholic Charities partnered with national and local governments and organizations. Most of the early calls were for food, furniture, clothing, and utility and rent/mortgage assistance for those who lost work or lost their homes due to damage. Many situations could not be resolved with one type of assistance, but Catholic Charities caseworkers found ways to respond to suffering, bewildered people who had no idea where to turn.

"Disaster response is on-the-job training," Dufva said. "People don't have a lot of understanding on how to respond or receive help. Catholic Charities has to be the lead long-term recovery responder. The Church is expected to respond to victims of disaster. That's our calling." ■





CATHOLIC CHARITIES DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH, INC.

By Janelle Hoffman, Development Director

- ▶ Because our agency had not experienced a hurricane in almost 10 years, our disaster program had been disbanded and replaced with an internal voluntary disaster team composed of disaster-trained staff and administration. We also had a fluid COOP (Continuity of Operations Plan) and a detailed Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Procedures Manual in place, which was followed in preparation for Irma.

Our disaster team met and delegated tasks for pre-disaster and immediate post-disaster response. The team met daily before Hurricane Irma struck and continued the daily meetings by telephone after the event. Our goal was to resume Catholic Charities operations as soon as possible and then to assist with the disaster's unmet needs.

After Hurricane Irma had passed, we organized our agency response to meet the immediate needs of the community. We collaborated with local emergency officials and other nonprofits in providing short-term assistance such as food and water distribution, needs assessments, Spanish and Creole interpreting services, FEMA applications and referrals.

We knew as well that we needed to launch our disaster program, hire a disaster coordinator and case managers. Many of the agency's employees were pulling double duty by covering their normal jobs plus helping with food/water distribution and assisting at disaster sites.

Catholic Charities USA reached out to us with the offer of disaster case managers, and we continue to be grateful for this assistance. CCUSA also reached out to us through Sister Donna Markham, the president and CEO, offering us much needed funding vital to establishing and operating a long-term disaster recovery program.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach currently has more than 650 long-term disaster recovery clients. Our program is now staffed by two full-time, experienced and bi-lingual case managers. We are also in the process of hiring a full-time disaster recovery program coordinator, and we will continue to assist those who suffered hurricane-related losses. ■

CATHOLIC CHARITIES ARCHDIOCESE OF MIAMI

By Tom Tracy, *Florida Catholic*

- ▶ Hurricane Irma's destructive winds blew wreckage and disruption throughout Florida on Sept. 10, 2017. A week later Deacon Richard Turcotte, the executive director of the Archdiocese of Miami's Catholic Charities, was particularly anxious about the devastation in Monroe County. The area reportedly sustained severe damage from Irma, including Marathon, Cudjoe Key, Big Pine Key and Key West.

"It looks like (news reports show) there is absolutely nothing left in Marathon," Deacon Turcotte said, noting that poor cell phone communication and transportation logistics slowed the flow of information several days after the hurricane.

He said his Charities staff have been working in three broad teams following the hurricane, with a goal of pulling together damage assessment to facilities, deciding on Charities' programming status and prioritizing future response efforts, which are expected to be long-term in focus.

"We are having daily conference calls with other state Charities agencies and Catholic Charities USA about available resources and stages of recovery," he said, adding that the seven Catholic Charities agencies of Florida spoke by phone Sept. 13 with the president of Catholic Charities USA, Dominican Sister Donna Markham. Sister Donna traveled to Clearwater, Fla. on Sept. 19 in order to personally deliver a check in the amount of \$ 2 million for the impacted agencies to provide immediate, emergency assistance to people affected by the hurricane.

With each hurricane comes lessons for emergency services providers, including Catholic Charities. Nonprofits here have organized themselves into regions and geographic sectors to share emergency resources. Hurricane Irma proved unique, Deacon Turcotte said, for having directly impacted almost every diocese in the state, including the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, which had the distinction of receiving many of the evacuees from other regions. ■



CATHOLIC CHARITIES DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE

By Lilla Ross

- ▶ The Diocese of St. Augustine stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, encompassing 17 North Florida counties that all felt the impact of Hurricane Irma.

The lessons learned from Hurricane Matthew a year earlier were put to good use by Catholic Charities, which operates from a central office in Jacksonville and three regional offices. During Matthew, the Jacksonville office was called on to help with case management in the four counties it serves.

“We’re experienced at case management, but disaster case management is a little different. We really didn’t know everything we needed to know,” said Lili High, director of emergency assistance. So, after Matthew, High and another case manager got additional training in disaster case management, and they in turn shared what they learned with the other case managers in Jacksonville. When Irma arrived, they were ready and well-versed in FEMA procedures.

Director Mary Kelley Kryzwick said the St. Augustine Office was prepared for Irma. “We knew that as soon as we opened, the phone would start ringing,” she said.

The pantry was stocked so that it could open five days a week, instead of the usual two days. Kryzwick distributed emergency funds to the three satellite offices, including one that serves Putnam, the poorest county in the state.

The costs and long-term needs are still being assessed, Kryzwick said. She added that her office is in it for the long haul. “When you work with people in disaster recovery, it’s not just one meeting. It’s several meetings, lots of calls, coordinating repairs, getting volunteers,” she said. “There’s a bond.” ■





CATHOLIC CHARITIES DIOCESE OF VENICE, INC.

By Judy Bokorney, Communications Manager

- ▶ Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice, Inc. encompasses 10 counties in Southwest Florida and is no stranger to being on the receiving end of hurricanes. During his tenure, CEO Peter Routsis-Arroyo has experienced the ravages of Hurricanes Charlie and Wilma—and other tropical storms—as direct hits. As a result, he has fine-tuned Catholic Charities’ disaster preparedness, response, and long-term recovery efforts.

“This is the most prepared we have been for a hurricane and we needed to be because Hurricane Irma was such a large storm that affected most of our diocese,” said Routsis-Arroyo. In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, Catholic Charities served more than 82,000 people in three weeks.

Organizations, churches, civic groups, and individual donors from all over the United States responded to the need for items and delivered non-perishable food, water, and other necessities. The call for monetary contributions also was charitably met by donors.

A month after the storm made landfall, Catholic Charities hired a program director and caseworker for long-term disaster recovery. Efforts began by identifying families who lost homes, needed help moving out of shelters, and required financial assistance with security deposits for rent and utilities.

Another concern for long-term recovery included the significant damage to crops, which has resulted in migrant workers having no employment until new crops are ready to harvest and process. “Without work, they cannot afford food, housing, and other necessities,” said Routsis-Arroyo.

It took thousands of people to aid the tens of thousands of people who suffered from the wrath of Hurricane Irma. The work is not over especially for those without resources. “Our long-term recovery efforts will continue for two to three years,” Routsis-Arroyo said. “We are so grateful for the overwhelming response we received to help people recover from this disaster. We could not do it alone.” ■

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

By Glenda Meekins

- ▶ Executive Director Gary Tester had a plan in place prior to Hurricanes Irma and Maria that admittedly “continues to evolve.” He shared how his organization worked to quickly meet the needs of so many people.

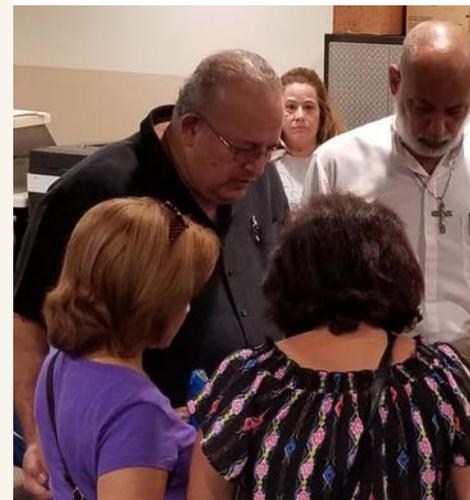
“We had a lot of notice on Irma so, a week before, we began to convene leadership to talk about the projected storm path; how we would address things internally at Catholic Charities; and then began to have conversations of what things might look like—based on Hurricane Matthew—what we knew we needed to do if this hurricane hits.”

Hurricane Irma hit Sunday, Sept. 10. For the next several days, much of the staff had no power. “The leadership team met Wednesday morning and began calling parishes around the diocese based on what we had heard on the news, of where the eye had hit,” Tester said. “We also used information from our phone tree contacts, giving us a geographical idea of hardest hit areas.”

What followed was the coordination and delivery of emergency supplies. “When we determined we needed emergency food and water distribution, we immediately began to contact parishes where we knew we had strong St. Vincent de Paul conferences. We ended up distributing in 13 parishes and one agency in the diocese, plus three parishes in the Diocese of Venice,” Tester said.

A week of food drops evolved into what Tester called “long term recovery support” using different parish offices to meet individuals impacted financially by Hurricane Irma. Catholic Charities of Central Florida also participated in an “airport ministry” to help people fleeing the devastation in Puerto Rico caused by Hurricane Maria in October.

Tester concluded, “There is no manual that tells you how to respond to a disaster. Be willing to step out and address whatever needs are identified. Understand that it will feel uncomfortable because it is essentially like assembling a bike, even as you ride it down the hill. And that’s okay.” ■





CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

DOUBLE WHAMMY SUPER STORMS DRAW TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY EVEN CLOSER

By Bernetia Akin

▶ It's easy to overlook the U.S. Virgin Islands. With a total land mass of just under 134 square miles and a population of little more than 100,000, this lush U.S. territory appears as three tiny dots just east of Puerto Rico, at the top of the island chain that separates the Caribbean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean.

Small as they are, they loom large as hurricane targets.

Virgin Islanders are well used to tropical cyclones. But in recorded history, they've never experienced the like of the 2017 storm season. In less than two weeks last September, they were pummeled by not one but two Category 5 hurricanes. First Irma devastated St. Thomas and its next-door neighbor, St. John, and slightly "dusted up" St. Croix, 40 miles to the south. Then Maria showed up to finish the job, ripping up St. Croix and dumping massive quantities of water on all three islands and surrounding islets. Both of the territory's hospitals, both of its airports, most of its electric grid, and thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed.

No one was spared, including Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands (CCVI), which suffered minor to serious damage to most of its structures and the complete loss of one facility.

Undeterred, the small staff of 20, plus a handful of volunteers, has continued throughout the disaster and its aftermath to deliver on the agency's mission: combatting homelessness and uplifting the needy and the marginalized.

Andrea Shillingford, executive director, has nothing but praise for all of her workers, many of whom are serving despite major personal losses.

Following are the stories of some of these heroes.



Brenda Charles

A member of the CCVI staff for 24 years, Brenda Charles works primarily in the St. Croix soup kitchen, which is a lifeline for individuals who are chronically homeless.

By the evening of Sept. 18, most residents had hunkered down, awaiting Maria's arrival, which was fast approaching with winds in excess of 165 miles per hour. Bethlehem House Shelter, a home for people down on their luck who need a place to live temporarily, was deemed too vulnerable. Staff moved the 29 men, women and children housed there to a government disaster shelter.

But what about the chronically homeless men and women who live in the streets and alleyways of St. Croix? They are also CCVI's clients. So Charles got into the agency van and started searching.

"I was just trying to beat the time before the wind picked up. I went to all the different areas where the homeless are" to give them a lift to one of the government disaster shelters. She also got calls from concerned members of the public, who had sighted people who needed help. "They'd say, 'there's someone by Banco Popular or there's someone laying down by Subway,'" Charles said.

Not everyone she found understood the gravity of the situation.

"Some of them want to give me a hard time," she recalled. They told her they would be fine in their usual doorway or other cubbyhole. But she was not taking no for an answer. "I said 'You can't be out here. You have to go to the shelter.'"

Managers at some of the public shelters refused to take in the homeless. So Charles drove from shelter to shelter, and finally enlisted the aid of VITEMA (the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency) which ordered public shelter managers to accept the people.

Charles says she made six-and-a-half trips that night. The half trip was the one time she was driving away from a shelter and spotted four people in a bus shanty, so circled back for them. In all, she picked up 44 people and took them to safety, then she headed home. "It was rough out there," she recalled. "I could hardly see on the road. The rain had picked up and I was kind of scared, but I said, let me keep the faith." She arrived home safely minutes after midnight and shortly before the worst of the storm began.

Michael "Mic" Akin, Elton and Beverly Chongasing

After 38 years in the Virgin Islands, 12 of them as executive director of CCVI, retired Mic Akin could not resist offering to help

out in his former home after Irma struck. He contacted Catholic Charities USA and started the ball rolling on what turned into significant ongoing support from the national agency to its small affiliate. CCUSA wanted him to deliver the first of the aid and help in distribution, but there was a hitch: nearly all of the island's hotels were closed and those few with any undamaged rooms were already full of residents who had lost their homes.

One text to St. Thomas friends Beverly and Elton Chongasing solved that problem. Active members of their church and community – Elton is a longtime member of the CCVI board – they are well accustomed to sharing their home with extended family, friends, and the occasional stranger in need. For two weeks they fed and sheltered Akin, including during the surprise visit by Maria, which formed while he was on his way to the territory and arrived two days after he did.

Nishawn Georges, Arden Shillingford

Maria left quite a mess for Nishawn Georges, CCVI's supervisor for St. Croix. A tree had fallen through the roof of one building at Bethlehem House; the wind had ripped up the other. The agency van was damaged. The soup kitchen was usable, but damaged. And for days and days and days there was no way to communicate with anyone off-island.

"She did what I did on St. Thomas," Shillingford said. She traveled the debris-filled and damaged roads, checking on staff and clients and getting basic services up and running. Georges had an advantage: she is a member of the V.I. National Guard and so had some leeway during the confining weeks-long curfew.

On St. Thomas, Shillingford had her own advantage - a man named Arden Shillingford, her husband. They lost their home due to Hurricane Irma, and it was a long time before Arden's own office reopened. So he became a super volunteer, accompanying his wife on her mission.

"He did not have a choice," Shillingford joked, adding more seriously, "I was really happy to have his support. He was there from Day One until he had to go back to work."

The U.S. Virgin Islands may be small, and vulnerable to the hurricanes that form over the Atlantic, but the people there have big hearts and strong hands to help each other through the storms. ■

CÁRITAS DE PUERTO RICO

By Padre Enrique Camacho, Executive Director, Cáritas de Puerto Rico



▶ Since the passage of Hurricane Irma, Cáritas de Puerto Rico has been very active supporting the affected communities in the eastern part of Puerto Rico. They have even helped their neighbor, St. Thomas of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Thanks to the initiative of Archbishop Monsignor Roberto González Nieves, who contacted the National Guard of Puerto Rico, two helicopters were sent to St. Thomas with more than 6,000 pounds of food, water, basic necessities and five generators.

After Irma came Hurricane Maria, but Cáritas had already activated its Command and Information Center at the radio stations of the Archdiocese of San Juan – Radio Paz and Oro 92.5 – from where information was transmitted in order to support communities during the hurricane.

The day after Maria passed, Cáritas visited communities that had been impacted by the storm and opened its offices in order to provide food, water, clothing and essential items to thousands of families. A process including interviews, listening sessions and accompaniment was followed to determine needs.

Two weeks after the disaster, Cáritas had already helped more than 25,000 families. Indeed, in many remote communities Cáritas was the first agency to deliver supplies. After two months, the number of families served had grown to more than 150,000 throughout Puerto Rico. Cáritas continues to work at delivering supplies and meeting people’s needs in collaboration with the six dioceses of Puerto Rico, which has made it possible to reach the 78 municipalities of Puerto Rico. This outreach was helped immeasurably by the Catholic Church’s 500 parishes and their volunteers.

Since the middle of November 2017, Cáritas distributed more than \$1 million in food vouchers throughout the island and more than \$3 million in direct aid. We have a warehouse of 10,000 square feet in the town of Cataño and in each diocese around

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the island there are one or several warehouses as well. Also, food and basic necessities, which filled 15 vans, have been distributed throughout the island, more than 1 million pounds worth:

32	power generators	10	pallets of rice
1k	portable stoves	17	pallets of beans
21	pallets of portable lanterns	65	pallets of cleaning and hygiene products
13	pallets of batteries	15	pallets of sheets
20	water pallets (more than 550,000 bottles of drinking water)	16	pallets of baby products
60	pallets of non-perishable food	30	pallets of clothes
100k+	baby diapers	352	tarps for the roofs

We offer much thanks to Catholic Charities USA, whose support and accompaniment have been decisive in providing this help to our people. We are extremely grateful. We have also received great support from Food for the Poor, many parishes, colleges and universities, the Puerto Rican diaspora and other national and international organizations, such as the Houston Astros, UNICEF and MANO A MANO (Spain).

The support of our Social Parish Ministry "Cáritas Parroquiales" and their volunteers, who have taken to the streets to carry out their "Love Visits" has also been fundamental. They have aided in identifying the needs and deficiencies in their parish territories, in order to provide answers of mercy and charity.

Puerto Rico is still facing a lot challenges, like lack of electricity and water in most communities. Many families lost everything and are still without a home. Therefore, Cáritas Puerto Rico has identified four objectives as initial steps towards long-term recovery: continue the distribution of aid to communities; provide case management to victims in order to help them be in a better condition than they were before the disaster; establish health clinics in the most affected and vulnerable communities; and give families the tools for their human development, such as trainings and other programs to teach them skills and to empower them. ■



MIRACLES OF CHARITY

“.... Human closeness at these times (of disaster) gives us strength – there is solidarity” (Pope Francis – aboard the papal flight from Seoul, South Korea, to Rome, Aug. 18, 2014).

By Kim Burgo, Senior Director, Disaster Operations, Catholic Charities USA

Human closeness gives us strength that leads us to solidarity... I've had a lot of time to reflect on this quote from Pope Francis since the Weather Channel monitors began to light up with the approach and landfall of Hurricane Harvey in late August, then the arrival of Hurricane Irma, trailed by the passing of Hurricane Jose, followed by the power and destructive force of Hurricane Maria. Wow! At one point I thought: “This is a disaster nightmare! How do we process it all? Where do we even begin to sort out what to tackle first?”

More than 20 million people were affected by one month of hurricanes. Thousands of families lost loved ones, hundreds of thousands lost their homes and all their belongings, countless individuals lost their income, their jobs, and their livelihoods. Those who previously lived in poverty were now critically vulnerable, while many who never sought social services before had begun a poverty journey difficult to overcome. Even now, hundreds of thousands remain without electricity. I had to ask myself: “How does one actually go about providing 20 million people with human closeness, which gives strength and leads to solidarity, and still make a difference in someone's life?” Just saying to someone, “it's going to be OK,” isn't going to work.

In the days and weeks following the hurricanes, I began to see the answers in the miracles I witnessed while supporting agencies in their disaster response, like the clients in Houston who offered and helped to unload the CCUSA Mobile Response Center, filled with much-needed resources, when no other volunteers were available. These clients set up the distribution site and cared enough to serve each other until everyone received the resources he or she needed. Another miracle was the group of homeless men standing on an overpass who waved, cheered and took pictures of the CCUSA Mobile Response Center as we drove by under them, shouting out their “thank you's” because Catholic Charities is always there to help them.

Indeed, in every place that was impacted by the hurricanes, the miracles of charity and generosity were evident.

The diocese of Corpus Christi was “ground zero” for Hurricane Harvey, but the people there didn't think twice about sharing their resources with the Diocese of Victoria, which had none. They packed up the CCUSA Mobile Response Center vehicle and sent it off to relieve the suffering of those in Victoria. And, when the truckload of resources arrived in Victoria, the people were waiting. A mop, Clorox,

food, water, diapers: It was all that was needed to bring tears to the eyes of those who were left vulnerable. When the supplies dwindled in less than two hours, neighbors arrived bringing more and more goods. Like the miracle of the loaves and fishes in the Bible, enough supplies arrived to serve hundreds of people during the following four hours. In total, almost 11,000 people received disaster services provided from the CCUSA Mobile Response Center before it made its journey back to Alexandria, Va.

Catholic Charities San Antonio organized a convoy of 72 trucks that hauled \$4.1 million in relief supplies, which were loaded onto the vehicles by 600 volunteers and driven four hours away to be received by Catholic Charities of Galveston/Houston. Upon arrival, the contents of the trucks were off-loaded by 300 volunteers, all of whom were dedicated and determined to give of their strength to assist those who were made fragile by the aftermath of the hurricane. Staff from Catholic Charities agencies in Albany, Camden, and Gary assisted with every aspect of the disaster services being provided. And in the week that followed, more than 500 CCUSA Annual Gathering attendees (Sept. 28-30, 2017) from across the country would continue to support the disaster work in Houston and Beaumont by operating call centers, canvassing neighborhoods, participating in distribution sites, assisting in food fairs and mucking/gutting homes in the hopes of moving each family one step closer in their recovery process.

Catholic Charities Austin and Dallas supported evacuees at shelters, and Catholic Charities Fort Worth sent teams of staff to supplement and support agency staff who were in such desperate need of a break. Houston took from their resources and sent supplies to Beaumont. Lake Charles – also providing assistance to evacuees – made sure Beaumont maintained its presence by supplementing distribution sites whenever possible. Catholic Charities Beaumont became a catalyst for disaster service provision by being a physical presence in each county it serves, ensuring resources would be available to all.

While activities continued in Texas, Florida began to respond to its own catastrophe following Hurricane Irma. Each of the Florida agencies began to support one another, providing mutual aid assistance and sending disaster supplies to those areas hardest hit. Catholic Charities staff from Charleston South Carolina packed their bags to provide assistance to Catholic Charities Venice. Hurricane

Irma also caused havoc in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (St. Thomas and St. Croix). Without a second thought, Catholic Charities/Cáritas Puerto Rico reached across the sea to provide immediate help to its island neighbor, Catholic Charities of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Two weeks after Irma cut services in Puerto Rico and ravaged the Virgin Islands, Hurricane Maria provided a devastation not seen on the islands since the 1920s. Yet, despite the challenges that occurred in the previous weeks, both Texas and Florida agencies took immediate actions in support of their suffering Catholic Charities family members in Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands. Once again, the call to give strength was embraced by staff from the New Jersey Catholic Conference, Catholic Charities Camden, and Catholic Charities Cleveland. All of them were bringing their knowledge, their compassion, and their desire to be of service to those made most vulnerable.

Catholic Charities local agency staff in each of the disaster-affected agencies were impacted by the hurricanes they experienced. In Catholic Charities/Cáritas Puerto Rico, more than 50 percent of local staff lost their homes and everything they owned. Yet, in Puerto Rico, as in the Virgin Islands, Texas and Florida, these front line heroes come to the office each and every day to provide hope, kindness, and compassion to all who seek help from Catholic Charities.

This is only the beginning. Disaster recovery services will be required for years to come. Through these stories, and all those too numerous to share, Catholic Charities gives breath and a beating heart to the call of Pope Francis to provide the human closeness that gives strength and leads to solidarity. Every embrace of comfort, every tear shed with each other, every story of survival shared, every compassionate touch, and every action that provides hope, is part of that miracle where we, as Catholic Charities, have a profound impact as we support one another and provide meaningful and life-changing assistance to the 20 million disaster survivors who are on their road to recovery. ■

PLAN.PREPARE. PROTECT.

NEW PROGRAM UNVEILED AT THE APPLIED INSTITUTE FOR DISASTER EXCELLENCE

Plan.Prepate.Protect. is a pilot program developed as a four-tier progressive disaster readiness training for parishes. It was developed as a joint project of Catholic Charities agencies across Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma with information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Catholic Charities USA, the American Red Cross, and other sources. Funding for this ambitious project was generously made available through CCUSA grant funding from the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.

The program was developed based on several years of interaction with parishes representing various demographics, size, composition, resources and geographical locations. A full seven years' worth of disaster data analysis based on actual events and client assistance data compiled by local Catholic Charities agencies was used to ground and inform this training. In sum, Catholic Charities has learned, based on more than 100 years of disaster recovery service, *that the key to successful recovery after a disaster depends on effective preparation before it strikes.*

Plan.Prepate.Protect. was unveiled at this year's Applied Institute for Disaster Excellence at Lake Junaluska, N.C. Participants gathered from 39 agencies, 35 dioceses, and 22 states from all coasts (including Alaska) and got a sneak peek of this innovate training from creators Mark Chan (Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Oklahoma City) and Aren Koenig (Catholic Charities of Missouri).

The training progresses from preparing the people within the church to looking outward to the community at large. It helps the church determine how they will respond when their neighbors and others around them may be hurting. Each deliberately designed level of the training helps comprise how to best prepare local parishes for disasters and what that preparation means. The end result are parishes that are stronger, more resilient assets in their communities. Look for more announcements regarding this innovative training program in the future!



#GIVINGTUESDAY

Catholic Charities USA participated in the ringing of the opening bell at Nasdaq in New York City in recognition of #GivingTuesday (Nov. 28). Along with other organizations that stood up for victims of multiple disasters during 2017, CCUSA was invited by the host of the event, Blackbaud, Inc., to participate in acknowledging the generosity of donors who gave money in support of relief efforts.

Blackbaud, which is the world's leading cloud software company powering social good, anticipated that 2017 would be a record-breaking year for charitable giving.

At the event Anthony Sciacca, chief development officer for CCUSA, made the following comment: "On this #GivingTuesday, Catholic Charities USA is highlighting the plight of the vulnerable and persons in need in America. Millions of our sisters and brothers are without shelter, including far too many of our veterans. Donations from today will help Catholic Charities serve vulnerable populations by providing housing and a wide range of other services."

Pictured above: Representing CCUSA at the event were Charles Cornelio, chair of the CCUSA Board of Trustees; Anthony Sciacca, chief development officer for CCUSA; and Patricia Cole, vice president of communications for CCUSA.

Catholic University of America and the Archdiocese of Washington Host Christmas Concert to Benefit CCUSA Hurricane Relief



Pictured from the left: Msgr. Walter Rossi rector of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington, Steve Bogus, vice president of corporate and foundation giving for CCUSA and John Garvey, president of Catholic University of America.

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Chicago Spirit of Saint Nicholas Ball

The 28th Annual Spirit of Saint Nicholas Ball was held at the Chicago Hilton on December 1st and was hosted by Chair-couple Michael and Claire O’Grady. This year’s event was a record-breaking year raising over \$1,700,000 in net proceed to benefit our Children’s Programs. Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Most Rev. Bishop Joseph Perry, Most Rev. Bishop Alberto Rojas, and Very Rev. Ronald Hicks were in attendance along with over 1,350 guests, making for a very memorable kick-off to the Christmas season and celebration of Catholic Charities 100th Anniversary. In addition to the funds raised, over 350 toys were donated to our Celebration of Giving event which benefits.



Former Executive Director Honored: Bill Sinclair, Catholic Charities of Tennessee



Bill Sinclair, who retired in January 2017 after serving more than 30 years as executive director of Catholic Charities of Tennessee and 40 years on staff, was honored with the Spirit of Service Award on Wednesday, October 18, 2017, during the Celebration of Mission to Service, a benefit event for Catholic Charities and Saint Mary Villa Child Development Center (CDC). The event was presented by Saint Thomas Health.

“The Spirit of Service Award is presented to individuals or groups that have been significant contributors to the well-being of the clients served by Catholic Charities and Saint Mary Villa and reflect the agencies’ values of love, goodwill, kindness, learning and laughter,” explained Pam Russo, executive director of Catholic Charities of Tennessee.

“In the past, we have generally had two honorees each year. This year, it was clear that Bill Sinclair should be our sole honoree. His four de-

acades-long commitment to serving those most in need in our community – and throughout the state of Tennessee – speaks for itself.”

Bill Sinclair retired in January 2017 as the longest serving executive director – and staff member – in Catholic Charities of Tennessee history. He started in 1975 when he took a temporary job helping to relocate refugees from what was then South Vietnam. The temporary job became permanent and, in 1977, he was named the agency’s assistant director. He served in that role until 1986, when he was named the agency’s third executive director, succeeding Sister Andrea Vaughn, D.C.

In a Tennessee Register interview prior to his retirement, Sinclair said that the most significant change he saw in the human services profession during his tenure was the shift from concentrating on immediate needs to a long term sustainability focus.

He is married to Eileen Beehan, former director of Social Services for Catholic Charities of Tennessee.

Catholic Charities Maine is Putting Refugees on the Road to Self-sufficiency



Refugees newly arrived in Maine face a lot of challenges, and one of the biggest can be transportation. Catholic Charities Maine says, with the current job market, it has been highly successful in finding refugees jobs, but the problem then is making sure they can keep them.

“We have an awesome job market right now, so it’s going really well for our clients, being placed with employers, but Maine is a rural state, so a lot of folks get placed outside the city,” explains Hannah DeAngelis, program director for Catholic Charities Maine Refugee and Immigration Services (RIS). “Refugees come here with nothing. They do not have access to transportation, and even when they get a minimum wage job, it’s pretty hard to allocate money for a bus pass or a bus ticket, so we’re always struggling with the problem of transportation for our clients for job retention.”

An AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, Dana Dotson, who is working with Catholic Charities, set the wheels in motion for a possible solution, a bike drive project. Catholic Charities put out the word that it was seeking donations of gently used bicycles that could be provided to clients.

It was quickly a hit with local parishes notes DeAngelis. “It was awesome. Our contact at All Saints parish in Brunswick called and said, ‘We have 34 bikes on our lawn.’”

Some of the bikes needed repair, and Catholic Charities is working with Portland Gear Hub, a local non-profit, to get them road ready, but so far, eight clients have already benefited.

“There are a lot of needs people have when they come here, and self-sufficiency is the most immediate, but in the long term, integration absolutely is the goal, helping people feel like they really have

the tools to restart their lives,” says DeAngelis. “I think a bike is a really smart part of that. It is a piece of people helping people to be able to move around the city on their own terms.”

In addition to the bicycles, Catholic Charities provides helmets, locks, and lights, and Dotson has put together a bicycle safety program. While many of the refugees used to bike in their home countries, they need to learn state bicycle laws and how to ride alongside cars. Dotson has even biked with some clients to work to make sure they arrive safely.

In addition to local parishes, the Bike Project has been promoted through flyers and posters distributed throughout the community and on Catholic Charities Maine’s Facebook page.

Catholic Charities to Open New Ambulatory Detox Clinic in Trenton

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, is opening a new ambulatory detox clinic to round out a full complement of addiction and mental health recovery treatment services offered at their Trenton campus located at North Clinton Avenue and Southard Street. This new program opens soon after the New Year. “The addition of this new clinic, offering safe and cost-effective treatment for individuals seeking recovery from opioid and other substance dependence is much needed,” said Marlene Laó-Collins, executive director of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton.

The ambulatory detox clinic is the final component of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC), a federally sponsored initiative that integrates behavioral health services, substance abuse treatment, and primary care at Catholic Charities’ Trenton campus. This initiative launched on July 1, 2017 and has already produced measurable improvements in treatment outcomes. “In just four months, consumers receiving care through the CCBHC have seen an overall reduction in the need for hospitalization and improved access to integrated services,” observed Susan Loughery, director of operations at Catholic Charities. ■

UBI CARITAS DEUS IBI EST:

A STORY ABOUT CÁRITAS PUERTO RICO

With the spate of hurricanes that hit the U.S. mainland and its territories in the fall of 2017, the need for disaster relief was urgent and widespread. Many people focused their efforts in their local communities, and rightly so. Residents, charitable organizations like Catholic Charities, and government offices – already embedded in neighborhoods – were taking care of their brothers and sisters.

National organizations helped too, of course. The level of destruction in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands was such that local efforts alone could not (and still cannot) respond to all the needs. Even as Hurricane Harvey approached the coast of Texas, Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) – the national office for the Catholic Charities ministry – was already initiating a national donation campaign and mobilizing its disaster operations team, including the deployment of the CCUSA Mobile Response Center vehicle to Texas.

In the face of such difficult times, one hears many inspiring stories. Thousands of good people come to the aid of their neighbors, whether it is by rescuing an elderly woman from her flooded home or by sending a \$100 donation to help people get back on their feet. One story that captures this benevolent charity well involves a helicopter ride from San Juan, Puerto Rico to St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Two days after Labor Day, Hurricane Irma tore through the U.S. Virgin Islands and damaged much of St. Thomas and St. John. The hospital, the airport, two police stations, one fire station, and many private homes, including subsidized housing units, were unusable. Communication systems were also down. Without exaggeration, the need was immense. Even as Andrea Shillingford, executive director of Catholic Charities USVI, was assessing the damage, she knew it would be a long time back to normalcy.



In a few days, when Ms. Shillingford was able to get the word out about the situation in the USVI, the bishop of San Juan, Archbishop Roberto Nieves, and the executive director of Cáritas Puerto Rico, Father Enrique Camacho, were already planning to help their island neighbor. Puerto Rico, depending on the point one measures from, is around 100 miles west from the USVI, which is only about a 30 minute ride by air.

On Sept. 11, a day notable in U.S. history for neighbor helping neighbor, and despite Puerto Rico being in the path of Hurricane Maria, Archbishop Nieves and Father Camacho, with the help of Puerto Rico's National Guard, loaded a helicopter full of more than 3,000 pounds of food, water, and other items like solar lamps, batteries, and generators. They flew the supplies to St. Thomas, where Ms. Shillingford met them and received the donations. She told Father Camacho that despite the difficulties of the moment, she was happy to be part of the big family of Catholic Charities. "We are not alone," she said.

Both Archbishop Nieves and Father Camacho were also very glad to be able to help the people in the USVI. Although they probably would say that it was simply part of their duty, their generosity in time of need is an example of sacrificial love after the manner of Christ, even as they were facing Hurricane Maria, which decimated Puerto Rico.

Sometimes people who are overwhelmed by a disaster ask where God is in all of the pain. Certainly part of the answer will always remain a mystery, but another part is the help God provides through people. The aid received from Puerto Rico certainly made Ms. Shillingford and the people of USVI feel not only supported but also hopeful. "If God took us to this, He will take us out of it," she said. And Puerto Rico too. ■

2018 UPCOMING TRAINING & EVENTS

April 10-12

Diocesan Directors' Spring Gathering

Las Vegas, Nev.

Kristan Schlichte

kschlichte@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

April 30 – May 4

O' Grady Leadership Institute

& O' Grady Advanced Leadership Institute

Lutz, Florida

Scott Hurd

shurd@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

September 12-14

Annual Gathering

Buffalo, NY

Bea Lewis

events@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org



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