Hurricane 2017...

News in brief about the indomitable spirit of Dismas employees

Dismas Team shines as hurricanes wreck havoc on facilities
“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.”

Andrew Carnegie

With vital information provided by Corpus Christi Director Mike Corona and Assistant Director Cleo Campos that Hurricane Harvey would likely make landfall in their area on August 25, Dismas deployed our Incident Command System (ICS) developed by the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as a way to standardize the command, control and coordination of our emergency response. With Corporate Office as the Command Structure for information going and coming, the Field Command, led by Regional Vice President Joe Driver, made the operational decisions. Both were supported by our National Maintenance Division. Of utmost importance remained the safety of our residents and staff. Next to safety, timeliness of response and clarity of our message was critical in making the early decision to evacuate our residents to our program in Laredo, Texas, 147 miles away and to obtain critical services to make the evacuation. These entailed determining who was to evacuate, a reliable transportation system, necessary staff for accountability, routing, food and medical services. Once evacuated, an effective shut down of the buildings services followed. Everyone rose swiftly to the occasion. Staff at Laredo welcomed the temporary visitors with a cookout and freshly made beds. The evacuees remained in Laredo for seven days before receiving an “all clear” from the Corpus Christi Mayor that it was safe to return.

As the situation in Corpus Christi was dissipating, a similar scenario was brewing on the east coast with an impending threat from Hurricane Irma, another Category 4 storm making landfall in Florida. In the end, eight Dismas facilities would be impacted by Irma and Harvey - Corpus Christi, Laredo, Dania Beach, Orlando, Savannah, Atlanta, Macon and Wilderness Spirit. For Irma, Dismas again employed the ICS. Our Savannah program evacuated to Macon, and Wilderness Spirit, both in Georgia. Our Dania Beach and Orlando centers evacuated to approved locations within their cities. During the evacuations and oversight of non-evacuated centers, Regional Vice President Jimmy Jones lead the Field Command part of the ICS. Our last evacuees, from Orlando, returned to their program on September 20 - a full 10 days after the first landfall.

Upon return to their centers, none, we are blessed to say, suffered any significant destruction. The grounds and surrounding areas suffered the greatest stress. Responses and stories regarding this are profiled on page 2 of this newsletter.

According to the National Weather Service, Hurricane Harvey was the wettest tropical cyclone on record in the contiguous United States, displacing 30,000 people and prompting more than 17,000 rescues. With winds topping 130, it also caused at least 66 confirmed deaths, 65 of them in the U.S. Economic losses are preliminary estimated at between $70 to $190 billion. By contrast Hurricane Irma registered 185 mile per hour winds and was the most intense Atlantic hurricane to strike the U.S. since Katrina in 2005. Irma caused 102 fatalities and $62.8 billion in damages.
Hurricanes Harvey and Irma affect Dismas Charities facilities

CORPUS CHRISTI is 6.89 feet above sea level. Within 24 hours of learning of the route of the deadly storm Harvey, a bus departed the facility with staff and 38 residents aboard evacuating to Dismas’ program in Laredo. The trip covered the 150 miles in just over four hours. The residents were welcomed with a hot meal, orientation and freshly made beds. Hurricane Harvey generated 130 mile per hour winds and dumped 40 inches of rain over four days. One week later, staff and residents returned to their Dismas home in three 15-passenger vans driven by Laredo Director Danny Reyes, Social Services Coordinator John Berumen and Resident Monitor Eddie Crawford. They were welcomed with a second cook-out provided by Regional Vice President Joe Driver and Cook Maria Martinez. While in Laredo, they experienced a “Good Old South Texas Cookout” to maintain high spirits and take their minds off the stress associated with being away from home. Given that emergency response teams quickly obtained all available hotel space in Corpus Christi and Laredo, Driver was forced to drive back and forth daily from San Antonio to provide on-the-ground leadership.

DANIA BEACH is 8.8 feet above sea level. Residents were evacuated on September 8 to approved sites within the city before Hurricane Irma made landfall. Six residents on furlough or pass had to return to the center because their homes were deemed unsafe. Making matters more serious, a tornado watch was issued. At 9:45 p.m. they lost power. A curfew for all of Broward County was issued.

ORLANDO: After four days without electricity or water, residents were evacuated to a nearby hotel. In total, the facility was without power for 10 days making it the longest impacted center.

SAVANNAH: Residents were evacuated to the Macon facility and Wilderness Spirit, a 66-acre rural retreat and Emergency Preparedness Center just outside Macon and owned by Dismas. Following the Governor’s declaring a state of emergency that covered 94 counties south of Atlanta, Interstate 16 near Savannah was reversed to allow for evacuations. This marked the third time Savannah has evacuated because of tropical storms. Buses used to transport staff and residents remained on the Wilderness Spirit property.

MACON: Although 640 miles from where Hurricane Irma made landfall in Florida, contingencies were immediately underway to address any needs at the facility. Preparations for the arriving Savannah group were put into effect, dividing that population between the Macon facility and Wilderness Spirit, the latter of which only suffered a few downed trees.

ATLANTA: By the time the storm reached Atlanta it had been reduced to a tropical depression extending northward to include all of north Georgia. According to authorities, winds up to 50 mph were expected with 3-7 inches of rain, and the possibility of spin up tornadoes. While saved from serious damage, the program was without power for several days.

MONTGOMERY and AUGUSTA also prepared for the worst but escaped.

“The single overriding factor which was always on the mind of the decision-makers at Dismas, whether Corporate, Field, or Maintenance, was the Safety of staff and residents. We also approached the preparation portion of our plan with Timeless, Partnership and a Return to Normalcy as critical factors,” said Executive Vice President Jan M. Kempf. “I am truly impressed and in awe at the response from all members of the Dismas Family.”

Regional Vice President Jimmy Jones, who had six locations impacted by Hurricane Irma, spent 23 consecutive days on-the-road traveling between his centers.

Director of Maintenance Tim Turner and Electrical Supervisor Kevin Gast delivered over 660 meals to residents at Wilderness Spirit, in Georgia and Orlando, Florida.
Staff resurrect Pony Express expediting system to disperse emergency generators

Over the course of 21 days, Regional Vice President Jimmy Jones, with the assistance of Mechanical Specialist Mike McClure and Electrical Operations Manager Kevin Gast, set in place a process for distributing emergency generators to his facilities in Florida and Georgia which reads something like a page from a Pony Express novel. On September 6, the distribution process began with McClure and Gast taking four generators to Wilderness Spirit near Macon, Georgia where one would remain to serve as the home base and safe haven. From there RVP Jones and Macon Director LaTonja Brown transported the remaining three to Statesboro, Georgia 130 miles from Macon to link up with Savannah Director Katrina Wheeler and her Employment Specialist Yusef Curry. Statesboro was chosen, Jones explained, because of its center location to the majority of his programs. Savannah’s Wheeler was to retain one generator to serve her home facility and transport the two remaining to Orlando Director Jerry James in Jacksonville, Florida, about 175 miles from Statesboro. James would retain one to serve his facility and transport the final generator to Dania Beach Director Ivonne Cavanaugh in Cocoa Beach, Florida. Yahoo!

Just how dangerous is a Category 4 Hurricane?

The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale is a 1-5 rating system based on the hurricane's present intensity which can cause significant damage to property, humans, and animals. This is used to give an estimate of the potential property damage and flooding expected from a hurricane landfall. Wind speed is the determining factor in the scale, as storm surge values are highly dependent on the slope of the continental shelf and the shape of the coastline, in the landfall region.

**Category 4 Hurricane:**
Winds 131-155 mph. Storm surges are generally 13-18 feet above normal. More extensive curtainwall failures with some complete roof structure failures on small residences. Shrubs, trees, and all signs are blown down. Complete destruction of mobile homes and poorly constructed frame homes. Extensive damage to doors and windows. Significant damage to apartments and shopping centers can be expected. Coastal and low-lying escape routes may be severed by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane.

**Hurricane Season:**
The part of the year having a relatively high incidence of hurricanes. The hurricane season in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico runs from June 1 to November 30. The season in the Eastern Pacific basin runs from May 15 to November 30. The season in the Central Pacific basin runs from June 1 to November 30. Tornadoes spawned by hurricanes sometimes produce severe damage and casualties.

Corpus Christi lunch break

Participating in a staff lunch are (from left) Social Services Coordinator Thu Pham, Resident Monitor Leticia Escamilla, Assistant Director Cleo Campos, Regional Vice President Joe Driver, Administrative Assistant Jeannine Whiting, Cook Maria Martinez, Resident Monitor Arnold Meza, and Counselor Johnny Saenz.

Dania Beach garden restored

After Hurricane Irma destroyed the Dania Beach PATCH (People’s Access to Community Horticulture) garden a group of residents, who volunteer every Saturday, helped restore it. The garden, in part, provides a platform for education, cultural growth, community participation and economic development.
Staff operations from within a hotel room.

Boarded up in preparation

Destruction

Clean-up

After

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Healing the Human Spirit for over 50 Years
Dismas heroes rise to the surface before, during and after hurricanes

“I think a hero is any person really intent on making a better place for all people.” Maya Angelou

According to Executive Vice President Jan Kempf, a host of silent heroes rose to address the complications created by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. Echoing Angelou’s statement, Kempf noted that “Everyone showed true teamwork and caring for their fellow man.” Some examples:

*Orlando Cook McKenzie Delva cooked meals for 86 residents on an outdoor grill for four days when the electricity was out.

*Regional Vice President Joe Driver, Laredo Director Danny Reyes and Corpus Christi Director Mike Corona amassed disaster relief supplies in Driver’s truck in anticipation of helping in Florida. Fortunately they were not needed.

*Corpus Christi Counselors John Saenz and Janice Reece, Word Processor Jeanine Whiting, Social Services Coordinator Thu Pham, and Resident Monitors Arnold Meza and Leticia Escamilla spent the day preparing for the residents return by cleaning the center, stripping all bunks and applying fresh linen to each.

*Tucson staff collected over $200 in hygiene and cleaning supplies to donate to BOP families in Houston and Beaumont. More than 60 BOP staff and their families sustained significant damage or complete loss of homes in Texas and, at last report, were living in Shelters.

*El Paso Social Services Coordinator Jessica Frescas started a toiletry donation drive to aid victims of Hurricane Harvey. The donations will be sent to the American Red Cross.

*Corpus Christi Counselor Johnny Saenz, despite having no power at his home, returned to the center to prepare for reoccupation and securing the property. He also cooked on an outdoor grill prior to the resident’s return.

*Corpus Christi Resident Monitor Arnold Meza, regardless of the severe heat, worked tirelessly to prepare the center for reoccupation.

*Regional Vice President Joe Driver and Corpus Christi Cook Maria Martinez prepared a hot lunch for residents and staff.

*Due to no available buses, the host center of Laredo immediately secured three 15-passenger vans to return the Corpus Christi contingent. They were driven by Laredo Director Danny Reyes, Social Services Coordinator John Berumen and Resident Monitor Eddie Crawford.

*Corpus Christi staff and residents installed all the hurricane shutters prior to evacuation.

*Corpus Christi Maintenance Staffer Joe Trevino, despite suffering home damage, assessed the evacuated center every day to ensure it had not suffered catastrophic losses. During the storm Trevino also reattached several hurricane shutters that had blown loose.

*Corporate IT Vice President Chris Scharfenberger and his staff provided guidance, deactivation and transfer of IT services and ensured that systems were not vulnerable to external forces or disruptions.

*National Maintenance Administrator Tim Turner and Corporate Electrician Kevin Gast provided guidance and “live video” feed direction for the deactivation and activation of the center utilities and system assessment.

Jones hires crew to perform miracles at Region III centers

One significant level of assistance during the hurricanes was rendered by Shawn Tucker, of Tucker Enterprises, LLC. Tucker and his three-man crew were recruited by Regional Vice President Jimmy Jones to accompany him to all of his Dismas facilities that sustained tree damage or other related needs. Tucker had worked with the group previously at Macon’s Wilderness Spirit. According to Jones, Tucker initially was reluctant to get involved with residents, having developed a stereotypical image of offenders. However, through his work with Jones and exposure to the caring Dismas mantra, Tucker is now an avid supporter of the organization and even provided a $200 scholarship toward a horticulture class for a Dania Beach resident.
Accolades from throughout Dismas Charities

Call them kudos, accolades, pats on the back or whatever, but there was no lack of them before, during and after the hurricanes slammed our Dismas facilities. Following is a brief listing of some of them.

President/CEO Raymond J. Weis: I’ve been deeply inspired by our Dismas Team Family for their service, sacrifice, long hours and graciousness under fire. No one was forgotten or left behind. The many sacrifices staff families made on behalf of all the recovery work, has been very moving.

Executive Vice President Jan M. Kempf: RVP’s Joe Driver and Jimmy Jones exhibited exemplary planning and execution combined with the utmost in caring and compassion for staff and residents. Their actions strengthened the rest of us and created valuable learning opportunities. Wonderful, efforts and outcomes by all staff involved. It is amazing the swiftness with which everything has been put right. Thank you all for all that you did and for your wonderful spirit in making the lives of residents and staff so comfortable. Nice work!

Regional Vice President Joe Driver: As an RVP I have witnessed Healing the Human Spirit on a monumental scale. The heroes are the staff of Dismas and for that I am forever grateful.

Orlando Director Jerry James: I would like to express my deepest gratitude to RVP Jones and his landscape team for the outstanding job done to clean up and bring the Orlando facility back up to standard. This team arrived at the facility and got right to work trimming trees, cutting and edging our lawn, clearing the roof and gutters, and preparing debris for removal. These gentleman worked with the most utmost professionalism past sunset to ensure the beautification of our property. Mr. Jones please be sure to extend our gratitude to the team. Thanks to this tremendous effort our property was a shining example of resilience in our neighborhood. The city has still not made it to clean up the aftermath and most landscape companies are backlogged with appointments. But here at DCO we in no need of services because team Dismas takes care of its own! Thank you so much for this extra support. Once again we improvised, adapted and overcame! HOORAH!

Dania Beach Director Ivonne Cavanaugh: Mr. Jones it was definitely our pleasure. Thanks for giving us a chance to show you who we truly are. Your dedication to all of your facilities pushes us to exceed our own expectations.