

PHILANTHROPY MATTERS

Hurricane Aftermath & Generosity Both Overwhelming



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First, the good news.

At the beginning of October our Community Foundation announced a \$500,000 match donation challenge by an anonymous ORC family to create a hurricane relief fund specifically to benefit hard hit Monroe County beyond the Club's gates. So, the new Ocean Reef Com-

munity Foundation Florida Keys Hurricane Recovery Fund was created.

And with the generosity of several other ORC member families, exceeded the match challenge goal in less than a week. This new Ocean Reef Community Foundation Fund now has over \$1.2 million pledged for Keys-wide relief efforts and it continues to grow with individual and matching donations.

We are now pleased to announce that **Bob Schmetterer**, Immediate Past Ocean Reef Club Chairman and longtime ORCF Grants Committee Member, is already Chairing this new committee tasked with distributing the funds as quickly and efficiently as possible. Beyond Bob, the committee members are **Mike Berman, Julie Daugherty, Alan Goldstein, Ken Karl**, ORCA President David Ritz and myself.

Because the new fund will benefit not only nearby areas in

the Upper Keys, where we have considerable knowledge of and familiarity with needs and charities, an advisory committee with the same kind of expertise Keys-wide has been created as well. Monroe County Mayor George Neugent chairs the committee which also includes County Commissioner David Rice and State Representative Holly Raschein's aide Kate DeLoach, among others.

"Many of us don't fully appreciate the importance of all the Florida Keys to Ocean Reef. Their economic, political and environmental well-being is completely connected to ours, if something good or bad happens to the Keys it happens to all of us. Including hurricanes, downturns in the economy, up ticks in the economy, oil spills, great weather, reef die offs, real estate booms and busts, housing crisis, labor shortages... everything. That's why this new Ocean Reef fund is so important to us all," says Schmetterer. He also reported that, "Our new committee is already making things happen and getting recovery assistance and donations to those who need it most."

Separately, the membership's generous support of the effort to support hurricane relief for the specifically for employees of Ocean Reef and the communities they call home --Homestead, Florida City and the Upper Keys -- also falls solidly in the category of good news. The total raised so far for this effort was right at \$1 million at press time (including non-tax deductible contributions to the Club).

So there is heartening and remarkable good news in that the community has raised almost \$2.25 million to help and we are already making a difference for people who desperately need it. We've been inundated with Hurricane-Related Grant Applications (available on our website at www.orfound.org), and the bad news is that the need is every bit as overwhelming as the generosity it inspired:

to 27 percent of the 55,000 total residential units in the Keys, were either destroyed or severely damaged and are not habitable, dramatically worsening an already critical affordable housing crisis.

- The County Mayor estimates the Keys may lose 20 percent of workers as people who are without employment and/or housing leave the area. He also notes that about 10 percent of students have not returned to Sugarloaf School (mile marker 18).
- Employers that remain closed in the Lower Keys include Little Palm Island Resort & Spa and a Noble House Resort on Little Torch Key.
- *The Miami Herald* reported Monday that the entire staff of 256 at Hawks Cay Resort in Duck Key (mile marker 61) has been laid off.
- Only 275 of Islamorada's 1,300 hotel rooms are currently available and the Village of Islamorada Council estimates upwards of 80 percent of hotel rooms may be offline through the entire 2018 season. Cheeca Lodge & Spa, Postcard Inn Beach Resort & Marina, Amara Cay Resort, La Siesta Resort & Marina and Pelican Cove Resort & Marina estimate it will be at least six months before they can reopen hotel and charter fishing operations.
- A grant application submitted by Star of the Sea Outreach Mission includes data recorded at food pantries throughout the Keys that shows new registrants recorded in the four weeks since the hurricane struck have already exceeded the totals recorded in the four years prior.
- To make a tax-deductible donation to the Florida Keys Hurricane Response Fund, please mail your check made payable to the Ocean Reef Community Foundation with Florida Keys Hurricane response in the memo line to: 35 Ocean Reef Drive, Suite 148, Key Largo, FL 33037.

■ 10,000-15,000 homes, 18



An American Holiday Tradition - U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program

Christmas is a time of joy, happiness and goodwill. This year with the catastrophic Hurricane Irma, devastating the Lower Keys, the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program is lending their support and time giving children living in the Keys a wonderful Christmas holiday. These children have been exposed to the harsh reality of a natural disaster effecting their daily lives and dreams. The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve is hoping through the generosity of the people who donate new unwrapped toys, this will be a joyous holiday for families, and for a moment, bring normalcy back to their lives.

Collection boxes are located in the Russell Post Sotheby's International Realty offices in the Plaza Building, Suite A-101 and in the Business Center, Suite 120.

Let's help in putting back a smile on a child's face! Is there anything better?

On behalf of my Key Largo committee, thank you in advance for your participation.

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