

PHILANTHROPY MATTERS

All Charities vs. the Hurricane?



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Just last year we were thrilled to mark the 10th Anniversary All Charities Weekend by giving more than \$1 million in Community Grants to charities outside the gates in Homestead, Florida City and the Upper Keys for the first time. The Grants Committee was seeing real progress in those communities with the success of All Charities behind our efforts. It was looking like a banner year. Little did we know, Hurricane Irma was just around the corner

with some unpleasant surprises.

Some of the surprises she brought us were wonderful, though. The community's outpouring of generosity was tremendous. First the Membership's response to the Community Relief Fund appeals to help employees and the communities where they live raised another million. Next another great surprise, a \$500,000 match offer which helped to create the Florida Keys Hurricane Response Fund raised another \$1.3 million for hard hit Monroe County.

Then we started to see what was happening with donations outside the gates. Most of the charities we work with saw an immediate increase in donations in response to the storm, too. But then they stopped and so did a lot of the regular support they had enjoyed before the

storm.

Most ongoing and annual fundraising efforts that had normally helped with operating costs and special projects were completely derailed. Formerly thriving, generous businesses and families which charities relied upon are now struggling with their own losses. It turned out a lot of regular supporters who stepped up and gave in the aftermath to help charities get back up and running and provide programs for storm victims, had already given all they had to give for the year.

Our grantees are reporting that year-end and other giving rates have dropped off precipitously. Once robust nonprofits are now scrambling to do more with dramatic fundraising shortfalls. In many cases we've been able to provide significant help with hurricane response funds, but we can't repair the damage to the economy that will continue to impact charities. Established, stalwart nonprofits including Hospice of the Florida Keys are already being forced to shut their doors permanently.

Today we still have more than \$4 million in unfunded hurricane relief requests and more

than \$2 million in Community Grants requests for 2018. The storm is going to leave a mark and, unfortunately, local charities need Ocean Reef's support now more than ever before.

We've definitely had to ask ourselves around the office and meeting tables if we are going to see the same effects on regular support for charities at Ocean Reef that they're seeing outside the gates. Has Mother Nature already asked too much of the community? Sure, Ocean Reef Members are insulated from relying on the local economy, but you've also recently given unexpected millions. Are we about to see our first decline in participation in All Charities Weekend?

So far, among all the surprises Irma has thrown us, all indications are the answer will be no. The actual bidding is still the only thing up in the air, so we're holding our breath and hoping bids and paddles go up, too. As a rule, our Grants Committee is very mindful that charities outside the gates do not depend on our continued support. This year, I am hoping they can. When it comes to All Charities vs. the Hurricane, I am betting on the Ocean Reef community.

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