

Relief Fund helped employees recover

‘...The people who needed help the most not only didn’t have telephones, they no longer had addresses!’

Three years ago, David Meda, assistant superintendent at Boca West CC, suggested that Florida superintendents might want to send some money to their colleagues in coastal South Carolina who had been hit hard by Hurricane Hugo.

“That could just as easily have been us,” he said at the time. “Sometime it *will* be us.”

So with the blessing of the FGCSA board of directors and some help from Executive Secretary Marie Roberts, Meda conducted a fund-raising campaign for South Carolina golf course employees who needed help in recovering from Hurricane Hugo. His fund drive netted \$4,395, including donations from the state organization, five chapters and several individuals, many of them suppliers.

Three days after Hurricane Andrew leveled much of South Florida last August, Meda’s fund-raising juices began flowing once more.

At the board meeting of the Palm Beach GCSA at Emerald Dunes GC in West Palm Beach Aug. 27, Meda proposed that the chapter establish a relief fund for Andrew’s victims, specifically the golf course maintenance employees whose shelter, clothing and means of transportation were part of the \$10 billion in property destroyed by the storm.

“We liked David’s suggestion and decided to donate \$1,000 to the effort,” says Paul Crawford, president of the Palm Beach chapter, “but we thought it was a project for the state association.” Crawford, who also is vice president of the Florida GCSA, referred the suggestion (and the check) to the state board which quickly established the Hurricane Andrew Relief Fund and asked Roberts to enlist the support of the GCSAA in publicizing the relief effort.

The national organization responded quickly, not only by sending a news release to



After putting in long hours helping their golf courses dig out from the destruction left by Hurricane Andrew, hundreds of golf course employees went home to hungry families in severely damaged houses and apartments. The FGCSA Hurricane Andrew Relief Fund helped many maintenance employees begin to put their lives back together.

PHOTO BY ED RAMEY

Hurricane Andrew Relief Fund Donors

Donor	Amount	Grp total
GCSAA	\$5,000	
Florida GCSA	1,000	
		\$6,000
Florida chapters		
Central Florida	1,000	
West Coast	1,000	
Palm Beach	1,000	
South Florida	1,000	
North Florida	500	
Treasure Coast	500	
Florida Chapters		6,000
Out-of-state chapters		
Carolinas	2,500	
West Virginia	1,000	
Central Illinois	750	
Finger Lakes	500	
Long Island	500	
Mid Atlantic	500	
Ontario	500	
Western Michigan	500	
Connecticut	400	
Greater Cincinnati	250	
Out-of-State Chapters		7,400
Misc. Individuals	790	790
Total		\$19,190

all chapters and media outlets, but also with a check for \$5,000.

"We are also encouraging all GCSAA chapters and members to help with this effort with contributions," wrote GCSAA President William R. Roberts, CGCS. "We hope that golf course employees as well as everyone affected by this tragedy will recover quickly."

As of early December, \$19,190 was raised, including \$6,000 from Florida chapters, \$7,400 from out-of-state chapters and \$790 from individual superintendents.

"It was the help from national that really made it a success," says Roberts. "The \$5,000 check obviously was a big help but their news release and support is what got the money coming in from around the country. That's what made the difference."

The second-largest contribution came from the Carolinas GCSA, which reciprocated for the FGCSA's earlier relief assistance for Hurricane Hugo with a check for \$2,500. Some of the individual contributions came from superintendents in the Carolinas as well.

As of mid-December, \$15,400 had been distributed to 32 employees at nine different golf courses in southern Dade County.

In some respects, finding the right people to help was harder than raising the money.

"We wanted to make sure we got the money to the people who really needed help, not just to those who were first to get in line," said Bill Entwistle, Jr., president of the South Florida GCSA, the organization charged with distributing the funds since the most heavily damaged area falls within its boundaries.

"The phones were down and, most likely, the people who needed help the most not only didn't have telephones, they no longer had addresses," he said. So Entwistle enlisted the aid of some supplier members who lived in South Dade

Apartment survives storm but not looters

Miguel is a spray technician employed at the same golf course since 1987. He lived with his wife and 2-year-old daughter in Leisure City, which is about midway between Kendall and Homestead.

The apartment building where he lived received little structural damage, but his car was badly damaged by flying debris. However he lost quite a bit more in the two days following the storm. While he was out trying to find other members of his family, thugs and hoodlums took control of the apartment building and looted, stole or wantonly destroyed nearly all the possessions of the tenants who weren't home to defend their property.

Damage to the car was covered by insurance but he has lost all his personal possessions and has no place to live.

Relief Fund Assistance Granted

Facility	Recipients	Grants
Calusa CC	3	\$1,500
Card Sound GC	4	2,000
Coral Gables CC	5	2,500
Deering Bay CC	3	1,500
Doral Resort & GC	3	1,400
Indian Creek GC	1	500
Keys Gate GC	3	1,500
Palmetto GC	6	3,000
Riviera CC	4	1,500
Total	32	\$15,400

or at least traveled to the area frequently.

"We asked them to stop at every golf course along the way and let them know that this help was available," said Entwistle, who noted particularly the help of John Mahanna of Nucrane Machinery and Mark Richard, CGCS, of Metro Dade County.

"We asked the superintendent to contact me or one of the other board members and describe the situations of his people who might qualify for the funds," he said. "If we didn't think they were as bad off as some of the others, we told the superintendent up front. If we thought they qualified, we asked the superintendent to put the application in writing."

After talking to several superintendents to get a good feel for the worst-case needs, Entwistle and his board members reviewed the first half-dozen applications as a group to establish some criteria based on the applicant's insurance, immediate needs and prospects for help from other sources. The SFGCSA board authorized Entwistle to screen the rest of the applications, using the criteria the directors had established.

"We think we did a pretty good job of getting some help to everyone who needed it the most," he says, "We still have a few applications pending but we're kind of holding off, hoping we get some more money in so we can give them as much as we gave the others."

"And we have a few people who could have used much more help than we were able to give them the first time around."

Elderly mechanic loses auto to falling tree

Armando is an elderly mechanic who is close to retiring from the golf course where he has worked since 1986.

He and his wife own their home but they did not carry enough insurance to cover the extensive damage it received: part of the roof and the interior walls and nearly all their furniture and clothing. Their car was damaged by a falling tree.

He received some help from FEMA toward the clothes and furniture but nothing toward the car.

"If we had another \$4,000 or \$5,000, we could use it, but I don't think we would need more than that to do the job that the fund was intended to take of."

"...For any organization to offer assistance not only to members, but to members' staffs as well, in these situations is a

very commendable act," wrote Rodney McNeill, superintendent at Calusa CC in Miami. "It makes me really proud to be in this profession and to be a member of the SFGCSA."

While the association expects to virtually empty the special tax-exempt bank account through which the donations were made, the account itself may not be closed. "This is Florida," said Crawford. "We'll probably need it again. There have been some discussions on keeping it open but dormant. It will make it that much easier next time."

According to Entwistle, the best thing a chapter can do to prepare for "next time," is to set up an emergency communications plan to get in touch with all members when the phones are down and most of the roads are impassable.

"We could have reached the people who needed help a lot quicker if we had set up a system for contacting everybody that didn't require telephones or electricity," he said.

Mechanic lost home; wife's job destroyed

Jose is a head mechanic, employed at the same golf course since 1985. He and his wife and five children live in a rental home near the Country Walk development which received extensive news coverage for the devastation it suffered.

None of their personal property — clothing, furniture, personal effects — was insured.

Jose's wife lost her job when the department store in Homestead where she worked was destroyed by the storm.

The family had two cars. The better one was destroyed (no comprehensive insurance) and the other is running on Jose's ingenuity.

Although Jose's landlord is rebuilding the house as quickly as possible and he has a place to stay in the meantime, he must replace the family car and his clothes, furniture and personal items.

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