

The Lake Houston Area: Rebuilding Together

Looking Back at 2017 and Looking Ahead to 2018

What can we say about the last four months of 2017 that you don't already know. Federal data collectors reported more than 6,000 homes and 3,300 businesses with damage in the Lake Houston area. So many of our long-serving volunteers lost so much when the flood waters took over entire neighborhoods. Our hearts are with each and every one of you as you continue the arduous task of rebuilding.

We celebrate the resiliency of the Lake Houston area as we face the new year. Our neighbors have been such an inspiration to everyone at HAAM! Area residents who were able to get out in the aftermath of the storm turned up immediately to mobilize relief efforts. Those who couldn't because they were hemmed in by flood waters emerged as soon as the road cleared. They came from all around the greater Houston area, and ultimately from all around the country, to help.

In 2017, HAAM received \$2,427,684 in funding for Hurricane relief and was able to distribute 91% of that (\$2,212,181) before the end of December with the remainder set to be distributed in the first quarter of 2018. Another \$875,000 of funding was secured the last week of December to help families in the rest of 2018.

We hope you enjoy seeing just some of the efforts that took place, and we thank each and every one of you for your support!



The relief efforts started close to home. Long before the bridge spanning the lake was reopened, our friends at Atascocita Community Church were loading up truck after truck with donated supplies, food, clothing, and necessities and delivering them to HAAM. Community organizers in the Eagle Springs subdivision mobilized their neighborhood, and car and truck loads from north and West of Lake Houston showed up to provide donations and volunteer help to organize and distribute them. Before HAAM even reopened its doors, clients were being served. While donations were being unloaded, they were being distributed. In 7 consecutive days, beginning August 31, HAAM served a staggering 1,320 individuals.

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Humble ISD transportation was on the job delivering help, and A Grand Affair fed staff, volunteers, and flood victims during the long and arduous days that followed. Our long-standing partner, Family Promise shared much-needed diapers. Lone Star AmeriCorp students, unable to attend classes due to flooding at the college logged countless volunteer hours at HAAM. High school students, scouting troops, NCL, and youth groups all came together to answer the call for help, showing how neighbors help neighbors in times of crisis. And because so many of our long-term, dedicated volunteers were, themselves, dealing with extensive flooding, HAAM relied on those who weren't flooded to put in long hours in order to make relief efforts a reality.



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What happened next was somewhat more of a surprise. Help started pouring in from across the country.

The American Patriots (“3%”) had mobilized their network even before the storms rolled in. Using a nationwide force long-distance haulers, American Patriots gathered supplies and established pickup locations while the United Truckers reached out to its members using social media to engage drivers who had extra space and who had the ability to end their journey here in Southeast Texas – either in Humble or Bay City. In addition to much-needed supplies, HAAM benefited from a security detail that stayed to keep the facility, staff, volunteers and clients safe for a month following the floods.



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Ocean Powers Technology is headquartered in Central NJ, an area all-too-familiar with Hurricanes like Irene and Sandy. They also have a strong presence in The Woodlands. So when they saw what Hurricane Harvey was doing to our area, the team in New Jersey started a donation drive: in 10 days, they gathered about 3,000 pounds of supplies. They then undertook the logistical planning to get the supplies to HAAM. "CEO George Kirby wanted to make this gift to an organization that takes a hand-to-hand approach to distributing donations," Trey Mebane explained, "and HAAM is that type of place." Working with Landstar Trucking to secure transport and Reed Crane and Rigging to move the pod from the truck to HAAM's parking lot, the team not only donated the contents of the pod, but also the shipping container, adding vital storage to HAAM's limited space.



The support from far away continued throughout the post-hurricane period. Mayor Don Walters asked residents of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, to adopt Humble. What started with a trickle of letters in the mail, enclosing checks from people and words of support, turned into an unexpected but joyous visit from the Mayor, "We were absolutely overwhelmed that a city like Cuyahoga Falls would choose to donate to HAAM," said Executive Director Millie Garrison. "With all of the heartache we have experienced, this unexpected kindness impacted us in such an uplifting way."

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HAAM was also beyond fortunate to partner with Insperity and the Lake Houston Chamber of Commerce to administer the Lake Houston Area Relief Fund. That fund, which Insperity matched, ultimately raised \$1,660,534.84 and assisted over 400 households and businesses. A committee worked tirelessly to review applications and determine awards, and HAAM staff and volunteers undertook the administration of the funds. The Lake Houston area is the only area that undertook this “neighbors helping neighbors” approach to disaster relief; a true testimony to the sense of community in this region.

All in all, HAAM provided meaningful financial relief to more than 800 families and distributed more than \$2.2 million dollars in the four months following the floods. None of that could have been accomplished without you: our volunteers, our donors, our supporters, and our staff. And while we hope to never again face this type of crisis as a community, HAAM will always be here to help those in need.