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Week of
Compassion

Week of Compassion Special Offering
FEBRUARY 21-28



Action Update- January 26

Building Hope, Hearts and Homes in Bay County



Photo: Rebuild Bay County, Inc.

"When Hurricane Michael made landfall in October 2018 and devastated our area, you answered our call... to provide disaster recovery assistance for residents who do not have adequate resources to rebuild and restore their lives in the aftermath of the strongest storm to hit Bay County... and today, we are postured to assist the many residents still recovering from Hurricane Michael, and those impacted by COVID-19, and now Hurricane Sally."
-Donna Pilson, Rebuild Bay County, Inc. Executive Director

Rebuilding communities and lives after a disaster takes time; often, it takes years. Media coverage wanes after the immediate impact, so many never witness the later stages of recovery. But needs continue to evolve long after the initial crisis. And sometimes, new needs emerge as well. Week of Compassion is committed to supporting local

partners through every stage of disaster recovery as they meet rapidly changing needs in their local communities-- and even face the challenges of compound disasters.

Hurricane Michael devastated communities along the Florida panhandle in September 2018. Rebuild Bay County, Inc., emerged in the aftermath to meet critical needs and evolved into an organization with a mission: to support community-led recovery and provide critical resources for the Bay County community during the extensive recovery process.

In responding to the needs of Hurricane Michael, the Rebuilding Bay County team learned a great deal about how to distribute resources throughout the community to help residents

recover. Week of Compassion provided a grant in the **summer of 2019** to help the organization become more efficient in serving survivors. “We were just hitting our stride,” says RBC Director Donna Pilson, “when we started seeing impact from the pandemic.”

Because RBC had become so effective in the work of disaster response, the County Emergency Management division asked them to assist with feeding programs. They transferred what they knew about moving money, man power, and materials to a different environment. Over the summer, they helped distribute 80k pounds of food to seniors. “We utilized all of our influence and partnerships to make that happen,” says Pilson. RBC also played a role in distributing PPE supplies to the community, including large shipments of masks.

Of course, COVID also affected the work of rebuilding from Hurricane Michael, making it harder to secure volunteers and skilled labor to continue construction. But they have found ways to keep construction going, using contracted builders and working with other local organizations as well.

At the end of the summer, just as they were wrapping up the work of food distribution-- Hurricane Sally came. While Bay County didn't take the brunt of the storm, they did receive enough of an impact to get a FEMA declaration. Which means the county is now under three declared disasters.

More than two years after Hurricane Michael, Rebuilding Bay County continues to focus on long-term, unmet needs from the storm, even as they have adapted and expanded to meet the needs of other disasters. Needs continue to evolve. Now, as many residents are moving back into their homes (or into new homes) they need furniture and replacements for other household items that they lost. With the recent completion of an additional grant from Week of Compassion, Rebuild Bay assisted several residents in the FEMA Direct Housing program to purchase their units and/or get them ready for relocation.

As the challenges of long-term rebuilding continue, Week of Compassion is grateful for the ways in which our partners model resilience and flexibility. Your support helps groups like Rebuild Bay County meet immediate needs in their community, while also continuing the long-range process of rebuilding after a disaster, even when other disasters compound the challenges. Week of Compassion is committed to walking alongside churches, partners and communities every step of the way. As one of RBC's clients says: “It means a lot to finally have help when you've been trying for so long. A little bit of help goes a long way. I appreciate it from the bottom of my heart.”

Week of Compassion
Responses Since Jan. 12



Louisiana,
Hurricane Relief



Brazil,
Flood Relief

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Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

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