



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
GALVESTON-HOUSTON

CCHD assists organizations to help those still challenged with Harvey recovery

By Rebecca Torrellas, Texas Catholic Herald ~ November 13, 2018



Leaders and volunteers of the Gulf Coast Leadership Council meet with victims of Hurricane Harvey to help them apply for available funds for assistance in dealing with the aftermath of the storm at St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church on May 25. Photo courtesy of the [Gulf Coast Leadership Council](#).

HOUSTON — On Nov. 18 and 19 there will be a second collection at Mass to support the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), which allocates funds to community projects that promote the mission and vision of CCHD while adhering to the moral and social teachings of the Catholic Church.

“Poverty challenges us daily in the United States, but it also presents an opportunity for true encounter with the suffering flesh of Christ. CCHD is a concrete sign of the Church’s solidarity with people living in poverty and its commitment to bringing hope and the joy of the Gospel to our sisters and brothers in need,” said Bishop David P. Talley of the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana, and chair of the CCHD Subcommittee of the USCCB’s committee on domestic justice and human development.

There are more than 46 million people in the United States living in poverty, and this collection supports programs to empower local communities to address the challenges they face.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, for more than 43 million Americans, there is a thin line between eviction and home, hunger and health, unemployment and work, and anxiety and stability. This line is the poverty line; for a family of four, that line is \$24,257 a year.

The CCHD supports those living in poverty across the country to identify and address the unique obstacles they face as they work to lift themselves out of poverty. The fund is dedicated to enable those living in poverty locally to break the cycle of poverty by funding community programs that encourage independence and provide the support they need to make lasting changes.

In addition, 25 percent of funds collected remains in the Archdiocese to fund local anti-poverty projects.

Last year's local funds were allocated to several charities in Galveston-Houston to help with recovery and rebuilding from Hurricane Harvey. One of those organizations was **Gulf Coast Interfaith Galveston**.

Joe Compian, one of the project leaders for the organization, said that CCHD funds were imperative to help the organization deal with the immense scope of the damage Hurricane Harvey caused.

"Hurricanes are always learning moments," Compian said. "During Hurricane Ike our entire focus was Galveston Island because there was a great need there. We were able to understand the scope of the disaster area. With Hurricane Harvey, the vastness of the destruction continues to overwhelm everybody."

He said recognizing the needs of the community became most important. The first need and biggest challenge was to gather volunteers and organize efforts.

The second focus became to build a website with a variety of resources, including local response organizations with links to applications. The purpose of the site, which is still in development, is to have a list of resources available to those affected by hurricanes so that people who lost everything can find the help they need in one place, matching the need to the help. Compian said he hopes to launch the site within the end of the year.

The third focus of the organization is to provide information to help parents attain health insurance for their children.

Compian said Gulf Coast Interfaith Galveston is maturing as an organization and he hopes it will be a beginning point to help those in need.

"We're organizing our resources and making sure the community knows about it," he said.

Another organization that was supplied CCHD funds to help with Hurricane Harvey recovery is the Gulf Coast Leadership Council (GCLC), a branch of The Metropolitan Organization (TMO).

The GCLC has hosted numerous Harvey Intake sessions at churches in North, Northeast and Southeast Houston/Pasadena to connect agencies with victims of Hurricane Harvey who are still in desperate need of assistance.

“The purpose of these intake sessions is to bring recovery resources to a targeted neighborhood and community,” Elizabeth Valdez, lead organizer with TMO, said. “While many Harvey survivors have become distrustful and disheartened by the recovery process, these sessions have offered a more hopeful approach by meeting survivors in their congregations. Over 300 families visited the sessions and approximately 80 percent did not have a case manager prior to these sessions. For many, this was their first face-to-face interaction with an agency.”

GCLC leaders organized the sessions and conducted neighborhood walks to bring in clients from surrounding neighborhoods. The host congregations included Assumption Catholic Church, St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church, New Pleasant Grove Baptist, Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, St. Pius V Catholic Church in Pasadena and St. Leo the Great Catholic Church.

Sherry Dunlap, leader with TMO, said the organization hosts sessions at various churches and brings agencies to the people who are in need of home repairs. “Phone calls are made to seek churches who have people who have not received any assistance or did not receive enough support to get back in their homes,” she said. “Some of the people we meet with have unmet needs, therefore, we connect them with agencies who provide support.”

Dunlap said the organization also works to be advocates for the people they are serving. They have met before city council to seek more disaster case managers, with Mayor Sylvester Turner about disaster relief funding, and with Judge Ed Emmett about the bayous that would be included in the bond.

“Meetings are conducted to check on the progress of people we have connected with the agencies, and to prepare for our sessions with the agencies,” she said. “Phone calls are made and received from Harvey victims daily to check on them and advise them as to their next steps.”

The organization plans to continue hosting sessions, which are coordinated in partnership with the Alliance for Multicultural Services, SBP, Wesley Community Center, Avenue CDC, Fifth Ward CDC, and other LISC Collaborative Members.

“Without the support of the CCHD funds, we certainly could not have reached as many people as we have served and continue to serve,” Dunlap said. To learn more about the Collection for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development visit www.usccb.org/cchd/collection.