

Community Foundation grant to help DeSoto residents still recovering from Hurricane Ian

Herald Tribune

A nonprofit agency created after Hurricane Ian to aid DeSoto County residents in need of disaster assistance has been awarded a \$105,000 grant, the group announced on Tuesday.

The Hope DeSoto Long-Term Recovery Group received the grant from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. The money will be dispersed over a three-year period to help with emergency and disaster recovery, the group's executive director, Amanda Reuter, said.

Hope DeSoto was formed to be a stable, local resource for residents still in need after FEMA, insurance teams, and other services left the area, Reuter said.

"We plan to be here for at least 10 years, and beyond that," Reuter said. "For right now, it's still one day at a time." Reuter said there are still many people who haven't come forward to ask for assistance.

Hope DeSoto has already partnered with the Mennonite Disaster Service and Arcadia-DeSoto Habitat for Humanity on more than a dozen home-repair projects.

Reuter says the group will also soon receive a \$20,000 grant from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to go toward repairing floors and walls of homes damaged by Hurricane Ian, which struck in September 2022, flooding the Peace River with more than 20 inches of rain.

More grants are anticipated in 2024 to be used for legal aid, case management, mental health services, home repairs, cleanup, rental assistance, transportation, and outbuilding/barn structure rebuilds.

Hope DeSoto also plans to host an insurance forum this year with United Policyholders, and will participate in Remake Learning Days, helping residents to prepare for the 2024 hurricane season,

supported by The Patterson Foundation.