

Community Foundation of Sarasota County awards nearly \$1 million for Hurricane Ian recovery

Herald Tribune

With a new hurricane season underway, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County has awarded nearly \$1 million to local nonprofits to address the ongoing impacts of Hurricane Ian, with another \$720,000 reserved for long-term recovery efforts.

Programs receiving support include hurricane survivor advocacy and case management, mental and behavioral health treatment, youth services, and still-lingering home repairs.

“The toll of a storm like Ian is extensive,” Community Foundation president and CEO Roxie Jerde said. “We all know that Ian’s damage cost more than \$100 billion in repairs. Still, that number, as staggering as it is, doesn’t tell the story of how people’s lives were turned upside down. The trauma and disruptions, these are issues that don’t get resolved instantly.”

Grants were announced for nonprofit organizations helping rebuild their communities in Sarasota, Manatee, DeSoto, and Charlotte counties with emphasis placed on the areas hardest hit by the storm, namely south Sarasota County, Charlotte County and DeSoto County.

The Suncoast Disaster Recovery Fund (SDRF) was activated in the days just before Ian made landfall at the end of September 2022. It was created in partnership with The Patterson Foundation, which seeded the fund with \$500,000 and offered matching gifts up to \$750,000. To determine funding priorities for nearly \$5 million raised, a task force was convened that included Community Foundation staff and board members and key stakeholders in hard-hit communities.

This initial grant cycle supports organizations in their efforts to bring stability to people’s lives in a few

key ways that emerged as best practices through consultation from the Center for Disaster Philanthropy and with guidance from community foundations in places like New Orleans and Jacksonville.

Here's what was funded:

- Mental and behavioral health: Grants to support mental and behavioral health efforts focused on providing access to services for those with income-related barriers and vulnerable populations. Funding was given to Samaritan Counseling Services of the Gulf Coast; Operation Warrior Resolution; and the Child Protection Center.
- Services to children, youth, and other dependent people: Many services that families and children rely upon to support wellbeing have been disrupted because of damage to structures. Nonprofits receiving support included riding therapy programs at Prospect Riding Center, Sarasota Manatee Association for Riding Therapy, and Easterseals Southwest Florida. The Florida Center for Early Childhood received a grant to support services for children's mental health. Other grants went to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota and DeSoto Counties, and the Lighthouse Vision Loss Education Center.
- Home repair and housing: According to CoStar, Ian destroyed 5,000 homes and severely damaged another 30,000. Organizations funded to facilitate response to limited-asset people include Wintergarden Presbyterian Church in Port Charlotte, Catholic Charities Diocese of Venice, and Arcadia-DeSoto County Habitat for Humanity.
- Survivor advocacy: The United Policyholders' Roadmap to Recovery helps empower survivors to navigate the insurance system and expedite payment. Funding was granted to United Policyholders to provide legal services, tools, and resources to those still awaiting compensation. Funding was also provided to United Way of Charlotte County, Laurel Civic Association, Gulf Coast Partnership, and CenterPlace Health to support case management.
- Long Term Recovery Groups involve representatives from many aspects of a community, including faith-based, government, business and nonprofit entities. Activities include overseeing construction, coordination of volunteers, government, and more. Hope DeSoto Long Term Recovery Group Inc. was established to coordinate DeSoto County's recovery and was awarded a kickstart grant and promise for future funding.
- Future funding: Additional grant cycles will be announced to support long-term recovery efforts. Funding updates, including stories of those helped through this fund, will be available at cfsarasota.org. To learn more about available grants, visit cfsarasota.org/nonprofits/grants.

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