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Nearly 50 volunteers donate their time during the six-hour event.



Photos contributed

Thousands of donated items are unloaded, sorted, packaged, boxed and then loaded onto trucks for delivery to local charities.

ORCA raises more than \$50,000 for hurricane relief

Two weeks after Hurricane Florence slammed into the North Carolina coast, the Ocean Ridge Charities Association (ORCA) rolled into action to support relief efforts in Brunswick County. The charity announced a two-fold effort: a commodity collection plan and a fundraising campaign that commits all dollars ORCA raises over the next six months for victims' assistance.

"We know that hurricane recovery will take many months, even years of hard work. It's not over just because the headlines are gone," Mike Gildea, ORCA's founding president, said in a news release. "Too many of those whose lives have been shattered will still need our help."

Immediately, the organization donated more than \$12,000 to several local charities already on the front lines of recovery efforts: Brunswick Family Assistance, Brunswick County Streetreach, the Cape Fear Chapter of the American Red Cross and Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministries.

In early October, ORCA reorganized a long-planned community-wide annual Day of Service into two segments. The first was a commodity collection effort. More than \$11,000 worth of gro-

ceries, cleaning supplies, children's diapers and gift cards were collected and delivered to BFA and Streetreach. "The nearly \$15,000 in commodities and checks was one of the largest, single support efforts by a Brunswick County community in our countywide efforts," BFA board vice chairman said in the release Robert Talley.

The second segment, an even larger ORCA event, came later in the month. The Ocean Ridge community nearly tripled its first effort by collecting more than \$29,000 in food, toiletries, stuffed toys, clothing, furniture, linens, cleaning supplies and various other sundries. Truckloads of hurricane relief supplies were then dispatched to Brunswick County Habitat for Humanity, Streetreach, Salvation Army and Brunswick County Homeless Coalition.

ORCA board members Laura Wheaton and George Briggs, who co-chaired both events, said they were overwhelmed. "The generosity of the Ocean Ridge community never ceases to amaze me, but this went well beyond our wildest expectations," Wheaton said in the release.

"During these events the carloads of donations from the community just kept coming and coming. After six hours, it

seemed like there would be no end to it," Briggs said in the release. "Almost 200 collections and drop-offs were made by Ocean Ridge residents."

Wheaton said more than 100 Ocean Ridge neighbors worked nearly 500 volunteer hours to offload, sort, package, box and re-load all collected items onto delivery trucks for the two events.

Last year's Ocean Ridge community Day of Service raised more than \$20,000 in merchandise for resale at six thrift stores affiliated with ORCA-supported charities. For that effort, ORCA received a national \$10,000 award from the Make A Difference Day (MADD) foundation, one of only 13 organizations out of more than 800 applicants nationwide and the only charity in the Carolinas to receive such recognition.

"The \$40,000 in collections in just the last four weeks is an amazing result but our efforts to fundraise for hurricane victims will continue into 2019," Gildea said.

To learn more about ORCA, go to orcharities.org or email orcharities@gmail.com.



George Briggs, event co-chairman, leads a team of men in loading the trucks.



Event co-chairwoman Laura Wheaton gives last-minute instructions to volunteers.