



Photos contributed

To aid Brunswick County residents after Hurricane Florence, the Ocean Ridge Charities Association hosted a two-fold hurricane relief effort: a commodity collection plan and a fundraising campaign that commits all dollars ORCA raises over the next six months for victims' assistance.

## ORCA donates supplies in wake of hurricane

Two weeks after Hurricane Florence made landfall on 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. Too many of those whose lives have been shattered will still need our help," said ORCA's founding President Mike Gildea.

Immediately the organization donated more than \$12,000 to several local charities already on the front lines of recovery efforts—Brunswick Family Assistance (BFA), Brunswick County Streetreach, the local Red Cross and the Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministries.

In early October ORCA quickly reorganized a community-wide, annual Day of Service into two segments. The first was a commodity collection effort. The organization collected more than \$11,000 worth of groceries, cleaning supplies, children's diapers and gift cards. The items were delivered to BFA and Streetreach.

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

ORCA board members Laura Wheaton and George Briggs, who co-chaired both events, were overwhelmed.

"The generosity of the Ocean Ridge community never ceases to amaze me.



Ocean Ridge Charities Association hosted a supplies drop-off, where residents dropped off supplies for Hurricane Florence relief.

But this went well beyond our wildest expectations." Wheaton said.

"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. Almost 200 collections and drop-offs were made by Ocean Ridge residents, Briggs added.

Wheaton noted that for the two events, 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.

"Without them and their compassion, we couldn't have completed this extraordinary task," said Wheaton.

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, the ORCA received a national, \$10,000 award from the Make A Difference Day (MADD)

foundation—one of only 13 organizations out of over 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 noted.

ORCA is a tax exempt, non-profit corporation located within the Ocean Ridge Plantation development in southeast Brunswick County. The community is home to nearly 850 full and part-time households with over nearly 1,600 residents who are predominantly retirees. Organized in 2009-10, the award winning organization has raised nearly \$450,000 for local Brunswick County charities and non-profits.

To learn more about ORCA, go to [www.orcharities.org](http://www.orcharities.org) or contact the organization at [orcharities@gmail.com](mailto:orcharities@gmail.com)