



NBC – Today Gives Hope Report

July 2013

On October 29, 2012 Hurricane Sandy battered the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. Since that day, United Way has worked to support the near and long-term recovery of the individuals and families whose lives have been upended by the storm. Over eight million people were affected - many of them were already vulnerable and facing severe financial challenges, struggling with food insecurity and unable to meet basic needs. The TODAY Gives Hope program played an important role in helping people rebuild their homes and connecting families to tangible goods that were lost or damaged in the aftermath of the storm.

About the Program

On January 29, NBC News and United Way of New York City launched a “Digital Donation Drive” to benefit those impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Modeled like a wedding registry, and in partnership with Amazon.com, select United Ways in Connecticut, Long Island, New York City and New Jersey registered for goods that were requested by community partners. The program launched on Sandy’s three month anniversary and highlighted how devastated communities continued to need support.

Desperately needed goods like tools, space heaters, bedding and school supplies were purchased to help families repair the damage, replace what was lost and return to a sense of normalcy. United Way continues to ensure the distribution of these goods through our best-in-class network of community-based organizations in these areas.

Our Local Reach

NBC and United Way identified four communities that would receive goods – these were the communities that were hit hardest by Sandy and continued to struggle for months after the storm surges subsided.

Connecticut

We partnered with the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County to address needs in their coastal areas that took the largest hit from the storm. These communities include Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Fairfield.



United Way's Alternative Spring break volunteers help clean up debris in the Rockaways.

Long Island

The south shore of Long Island, including towns like Long Beach, Mastic Beach, Freeport and Lindenhurst, were decimated from flooding. In Long Beach alone, 7,000 out of the city's 10,000 residential homes were either severely damaged or declared uninhabitable. Our partner, United Way of Long Island, sprang into action to help those in need.

New Jersey

On Coastal New Jersey, countless families in Ocean and Monmouth Counties lost their homes and possessions. In towns like Seaside Heights, over 60% of homes were damaged or destroyed. United Ways in these areas joined us to support communities like Union Beach, Toms River, Keansburg, Sea Bright and Bayshore.



United Way of NYC's Young Leaders Council members gathered to sort and pack donations from the Today Gives HOPE program.

New York City

In New York City, tremendous damage was incurred in waterfront neighborhoods like the Rockaways, Red Hook, Coney Island and Staten Island. Two months after Sandy one-fifth of Rockaway residents surveyed were still not in their homes and 29% were still without power.

Donation Summary

In each community, local United Ways took careful consideration to address the needs present in their towns. Where some were in critical need of tools and building supplies, others focused on the home and personal goods that were lost in the storm.

From January 29th to April 29th, orders came in to the Amazon wish lists from around the country. Nearly 2,000 items were donated by the TODAY Show audience. Each local United Way took in and then distributed the goods back out to the community over the course of the program.

The following goods were ordered and distributed:

Connecticut

Item	Registered	Received
Amazon Gift Cards (\$25)	100	12
Amazon Gift Cards (\$50)	50	2
Amazon Gift Cards (\$100)	25	6
Office Max (\$25)	20	0
Office Max (\$50)	10	0
Subway Sandwiches (\$25)	25	0
Home Depot (\$25)	100	5
Home Depot (\$50)	50	5
Home Depot (\$100)	25	9
TOTAL		39

Long Island

Item	Registered	Received
Amazon Gift Cards (\$25)	50	28
Amazon Gift Cards (\$50)	20	3
Twin Bed Sheets	50	22
Pillows	50	21
Blankets	50	50
Comforters	50	7
Kohls (\$25)	50	8
Kohls (\$50)	50	2
JCPenney (\$25)	20	4
JCPenney (\$50)	20	2
Air Blower	8	0
Space Heaters	25	25
Dehumidifiers	25	0
Generators	10	0
“Jump Start” Duracell	20	0
Tool Belts	75	8
Hammer	45	36
Philips Head Screw Driver	25	25
Cordless Drill	45	12
Rechargble Flashlight	20	1
Wet/Dry Vaccum	25	3
Home Depot (\$25)	100	9
Home Depot (\$50)	100	9
Rubber Gloves (box)	20	1
Full Face mask		
w/ HEPA respirator (box)	50	3
Tyvek Suits	100	4
Eye Protectors (box)	25	7
Heavy Work Gloves (box)	25	25
Fungicide (gallons)	20	4
CO2 / Smoke Detectors	100	0
TOTAL		319

New Jersey

Item	Registered	Received
Amazon Gift Cards (\$25)	50	50
Amazon Gift Cards (\$50)	20	20
Twin Bed Sheets	50	50
Pillows	50	46
Blankets	50	50
Comforters	50	41
Kohls (\$25)	10	10
Kohls (\$50)	10	10
JCPenney (\$25)	20	16
JCPenney (\$50)	20	11
Space Heaters	25	25
Generators	10	1
“Jump Start” Duracell	20	7
Tool Belts	75	16
Hammer	45	45
Philips Head Screw Driver	25	25
Cordless Drill	45	43
Rechargble Flashlight	20	9
Wet/Dry Vaccum	25	17
Home Depot (\$25)	100	77
Home Depot (\$50)	50	37
Rubber Gloves (box)	20	13
Full Face mask		
w/ HEPA respirator (box)	50	27
Tyvek Suits	100	45
Eye Protectors (box)	20	16
Heavy Work Gloves (box)	10	10
Fungicide (gallons)	20	20
Boscovs (\$25)	10	1
Boscovs (\$50)	10	0
TOTAL		738

New York City

Item	Registered	Received	Item	Registered	Received
Amazon Gift Cards (\$25)	147	0	Stop that angry thought		
Amazon Gift Cards (\$50)	172	0	card game	10	3
Amazon Gift Cards (\$100)	22	0	Out of this World:		
Twin Bed Sheets	206	0	Hey Max...Pay attention	10	1
Full Bed Sheets	156	2	Eukee the Jumpy		
Blankets Full Size	187	2	Jumpy Elephant	10	4
Comforters	187	1	All Dogs Have ADHD		
Air Purifiers	17	5	by Kathy Hoopman	10	3
Crib Bedding	80	0	Hands are not for Hitting		
Twin	6	0	English and Spanish	10	5
Full	6	0	Annie's Plan:		
Kitchen Towels	100	2	Taking charge of school work	10	1
Can openers	25	1	Sensory Combo Pack	12	0
Bath Towel Sets	236	0	School Supplies Pack	245	1
Pots and Pans Sets	100	5	#2 Pencils (144pack)	1000	1
Dish Sets	12	0	Backpacks	281	37
Glassware	12	3	24 pack of Sharpies	6	0
Subway (\$25)	20	0	Play doh sets	32	2
Tablet/Laptop Computers	50	0	Washable paint 6 pack	12	0
Toaster Oven	77	6	Mini canvas		
Microwave	96	0	and easel set of 15 pieces	6	1
TV DVD Player	40	0	Legos	36	0
Clock Radio	60	8	Jungle Action Figure Set	18	0
Mini Fridge	25	1	Foam block sets	12	5
Space Heaters	37	2	Wood block sets	12	4
Fans	7	0	Trucks, trains, cars	36	10
Luggage	12	15	Hoodies (size L)	124	3
Generators	25	1	Winter jackets youth (size M)	16	12
Smoke and CO2 Detectors	118	2	Hat, glove, scarf sets, kids	30	25
Home Depot Gift Cards (\$25)	225	1	Hat, glove, scarf sets, adults	26	7
Home Depot Gift Cards (\$50)	340	1	Car Seat (Infant)	6	1
Home Depot Gift Cards (\$100)	4	4	Car Seat (Toddler)	6	0
Interior Paint (neutral color)	50	1	Car Seat (Booster)	6	4
Painting supplies			Diapers (size 3)	145	4
(brushes/rollers/pans/etc)	50	0	Diapers (size 4)	145	5
Crowbars	25	0	Wipes	125	20
Full Face mask			Infant Formula	45	16
w/ HEPA respirator (box)	18	7	Kohls Gift Card (\$25)	125	20
Tyvek Suits	18	2	Kohls Gift Card (\$50)	212	4
Eye Protectors (box)	18	3	JCPenney Gift Card(\$25)	125	4
Heavy Work Gloves (box)	18	1	JCPenney Gift Card (\$50)	112	19
The Impulse control game	10	2	TOTAL		300

Program Impact

Connecticut

When Hurricane Sandy hit, Bridgeport sustained the state's highest storm surge, nearly 9.8 feet above normal high tide. The storm surge deteriorated the seawall and led to extensive flooding to the South End neighborhood. Two large housing developments, Marina Village and Seaside Village took a large brunt of the devastation. Marina Village is home to 406 households and approximately 1500 residents. Seaside Village is a 257 unit complex of low and moderate income.

United Way of Coastal Fairfield Connecticut (UWCFC) has been working closely with the City of Bridgeport and representatives from Marina and Seaside Village to address the needs of residents in this hard hit neighborhood. To support their community, UWCFC registered exclusively for gift cards on the Today Gives HOPE wish list.

Through the generosity of viewers, UWCFC received \$2,125 in Amazon and Home Depot gift cards. In partnership with case managers from Salvation Army, American Red Cross and the Greater Bridgeport Long Term Recovery Committee, they have helped individuals and families replace household items, bedding and linens damaged or destroyed as a result of the storm. In addition, gift cards were also used to fulfill basic needs – like buying food and clothing that was damaged in the storm.

Long Island

When Superstorm Sandy struck Long Island in October 2012, it devastated 58,000 homes, and carved a path of destruction none of us will ever forget. The scope of the recovery efforts and the length of time needed for all affected businesses and families to return to pre-hurricane status compelled United Way of Long Island (UWLI) to become very active in Hurricane recovery and re-building efforts.

With this in mind, UWLI focused their registry on tools and building supplies.

Items like fungicide, tyvek suits and respirators were donated to Americorps teams on the island that were used to clean and muck-out houses so that rebuilding can begin. Home goods like bedding and tools were delivered to Lindy Manpower – a group of grassroots volunteers that are assisting the construction of homes that were damaged. Through their work, they were able to find families who were in need of these goods.

In addition, United Way of Long Island also operates a program called “Project Warmth.” The program is Long Island’s only non-governmental emergency fuel fund which provides one-time grants to oil and utility companies on behalf of residents facing heating emergencies. Through this service, UWLI identified families that have outstanding expenses as a result of the storm and would benefit from the gift cards.

New Jersey

Ocean and Monmouth Counties, New Jersey – the two counties that suffered the most damage in New Jersey – had the most successful registry, receiving nearly everything they requested.

Through a coordinated network of nonprofit organizations, United Way of Ocean County and United Way of Monmouth County delivered items to where they were needed most. This network, the Long Term Recovery Group, oversaw the flow of volunteers and supplies ensuring that goods are delivered effectively and equitably. Organizations like Coastal Habitat for Humanity, Highlands Solution Center and Occupy Sandy used tools and construction supplies for their rebuilding efforts in Bayshore. Oceanport, New Jersey received donations through Oceanport Cares. Faith-based organizations and local churches distributed items across communities like Manasquan, Asbury Park and Belmar. This is just a sample of the organizations that were supported through the TODAY Gives Hope Program in New Jersey.

Additionally, building supplies were utilized in New Jersey through a United Way program called “Alternative Spring Break.” College students from across the country donated their spring break in March to serve as volunteers to work on projects in hurricane-affected locations. Some of these projects included the restoration of local organizations, such as community centers, that serve as the back bone of support to low-income areas that have been damaged during the storm.

New York City

United Way of New York City partnered with five community-based organizations that were assisting large numbers or individuals and families that were struggling as a result of Sandy. These organizations have been identified as those who were doing the most expansive hurricane work recovery and case management services across the five boroughs.

Good Shepherd Services received an assortment of items like school supplies, backpacks, bedding and gift cards. Their program directors and case managers identified families were in need in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

SCO Family of Services was providing disaster case management, counseling and referral services for families affected by Hurricane Sandy in Far Rockaway. They received a generous shipment of diapers, baby wipes, formula, and home goods like linens and kitchen supplies for families.

The Met Council on Jewish Poverty has been working in New York City to support individuals and families that continue to struggle months after Sandy. Through their case management services, they were able to distribute simple home items like blankets and towels, but also support families with financial support through gift card donations.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York distributed their donations through their network of agencies and coordinating services. The rebuilding goods that they received - safety equipment, eye protectors, tyvek suits, painting supplies, heaters and home depot gift cards – helped families whose homes suffered as a result of the flood waters in New York City's low lying areas.

On Staten Island, a mattress, bedding, winter clothes, toys and books were sent to the Staten Island Mental Health Society (SIMHS). SIMHS provides mental health counseling to students and families and work within schools where nearly 90% of students were affected.

Conclusion

TODAY show anchors assist with the distribution of food, water, and supplies in Coney Island.



The TODAY Gives Hope program brought much needed awareness to the ongoing needs of hurricane-affected families after the storm. Long after flood waters subsided, people in the Tri-State region were still struggling to meet basic needs like food and shelter. In the period of three to six months after the storm, **TODAY Gives Hope raised an incredible 1,834 items** for the people of Connecticut, New York City, Long Island and New Jersey. The program was a simple and easy way for the TODAY Show audience to reach out in small or large ways to help their neighbors. Finally, this program could evolve into an ongoing partnership with local United Ways that serve areas in the wake of disasters and crisis such as this.