

Students aid in hurricane recovery

November 13, 2017 4:00 PM Samantha Gaynor
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Student volunteers from Tulane University are finding different ways to assist those communities affected by the recent hurricanes. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The United States and Caribbean saw the effects of several major hurricanes this year. Now, Tulane students, with help from the Center for Public Service (CPS), are reaching out to these devastated communities to help with recovery efforts.

“Recovery is long term,” said Katie Houck, associate director at CPS. “It’s not just something that’s all done once we stop hearing about it in the media. It’s important that students stay informed.”

To keep them informed, CPS launched the Hurricane Relief and Recovery Newsletter in October, with news about volunteer opportunities and related programming taking

place on campus.

“We try to find something already happening that students can tag onto, or we can help them realize logistics of finding a new location,” Houck said. “A lot of places don’t have the infrastructure to support volunteers after a disaster.”

Areas that cannot support volunteers can still receive donations, though; CPS coordinates donation drives. This fall, a group of students led a Caribbean-relief drive that collected items in four residence halls at Tulane. The drive resulted in enough donations to send four large barrels of food, clothing and other supplies to Dominica, St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. Martin.

Raphael Miller is a Tulane student who co-chaired a hurricane relief drive for the Caribbean.

“I went to St. Martin in 2016 on a family trip, and I fell in love with the island,” said Miller. “Finding out the island we’d grown to love was destroyed, we started saying we want to do something.”

In addition to drives, the Community Action Council for Tulane University Students (CACTUS) provides one-day volunteer opportunities in areas affected by this season’s hurricanes.

The group’s next disaster relief project is an all-gender pageant on Jan. 25. CACTUS chair Karissa Chao said that donations collected will benefit the affected areas.

“A lot of places aren’t ready to take volunteers for at least two to three months,” Chao said. “Donating money is often the biggest help.”

To learn more about how to get involved with an upcoming volunteer project, send an email to Katie Houck at khouck@tulane.edu.