

HELPING FAMILIES RECOVER FROM HURRICANE IRMA



HURRICANE IRMA CAME BARRELING THROUGH HIGHLANDS COUNTY IN SEPTEMBER AND CAUSED WIDE DEVASTATION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY. A LOT OF IT WAS WIND DAMAGE SO WE CREATED RELATIONSHIPS WITH UMCOR AND TEAM RUBICON AND FEMA AND STARTED COLLABORATING AND SEEING HOW THE THREE OF OUR ORGANIZATIONS COULD WORK TOGETHER TO SERVE FAMILIES IN HIGHLANDS COUNTY. WE WERE ACTUALLY HOME WHEN IT HAPPENED AND MY DAUGHTER WAS IN THE ROOM AND THE WHOLE ROOF COLLAPSED. EVERYTHING STARTED TO FLOOD, THE PHONES WENT OUT, THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO BUT JUST SIT THERE AND KIND OF BEAR DOWN ON IT. IT WAS A VERY LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE FOR US. MY KIDS HAVE ASTHMA SO TO SEE THEIR, THEIR ROOMS WITH LIKE WATER DAMAGE, I'M SCARED THAT YOU KNOW THAT THAT MIGHT AGGRAVATE ANY OF THEIR ASTHMA BECAUSE THEIR, THEIR HEALTH IS LIKE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY. THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE HURTING HERE RIGHT NOW. JUST HAVING SOMEONE MAKE A FIRST PHONE CALL. I'VE HAD SOME VOLUNTEERS THAT HAVE, HAVE JUST MADE THAT SIMPLE CALL AND SAYING SOMEONE'S GONNA BE THERE, WE'RE GONNA HELP, WE'RE JUST, WE JUST WANT TO LET YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT FORGOTTEN. THERE'S MANY FAMILIES IN HIGHLANDS COUNTY THAT ARE IN NEED OF CRITICAL HOME REPAIRS AND HABITAT FOR HUMANITY IN HIGHLANDS COUNTY HAS CREATED A REPAIR PROGRAM SO THAT WE CAN SERVE THESE FAMILIES AND GET THEM BACK INTO SAFE HOUSING. I AM SO THANKFUL FOR HABITAT FOR NOT FORGETTING ABOUT THE ONES THEY HELPED AND BECAUSE THEY'RE HELPING, WE'LL HAVE THE KIDS HERE SOONER. AND THEN WE'RE ALSO SERVING FAMILIES THAT HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DISPLACED. WE'RE WORKING WITH THEM TO QUALIFY THEM FOR FIRST-TIME HOME OWNERSHIP. GOING FROM HURRICANE TO HOMEOWNER, IT'S JUST, IT DOESN'T SEEM REAL. IT'S NOT ENOUGH WORDS TO REALLY DESCRIBE OR TO SAY LIKE THANK YOU BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT CAN HAPPEN OR WHO'S ACTUALLY THERE FOR YOU AND TO BE A SINGLE MOM AND KNOW, LIKE YOU HAVE HELP, IT'S A LOT. TO BE ABLE TO GIVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MY CHILDREN, IT'S LIKE THE BEST. I THINK I STILL BELIEVE IT'S NOT TRUE, I'M GOING TO STILL THINK EVERYTHING IS NOT REAL.