

Zonta Provides Hurricane Relief Funds to Non-Profits

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The Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva and its Foundation follow carefully developed rules and guidelines as they raise and distribute funds—over \$100,000 this past year—to organizations that improve the lives of women and girls, locally and globally. But in a pinch, Zontians say, rules can be creatively bent.

“Our annual grants process is under way, but the grants do not go out until January,” said Zonta President Nancy Dreher. “At our first meeting after the hurricane, club members expressed concerns about the organizations we serve, and what could be done to help them immediately. We came up with the idea of offering smaller, one-time donations *now* to organizations suffering unanticipated losses due to the storm.” The funds, she said, would come from the total set aside for local grants to be made during the current cycle.

After Zontians went quickly to work contacting the organizations approved for grants this year, Grants Committee representatives met to consider the requests, and the Foundation Board voted to approve emergency donations of \$500 each to those with the most immediate needs. Two island organizations that provide services to women and girls, both of which are facing special challenges in the wake of Hurricane Irma, received their checks in person.

“For right now, we must re-stock our food pantry,” said Maggie Feiner, ceo of FISH of Sanibel-Captiva. “We have also been called on to help with medical bills and rent.” This sentiment was echoed by Melissa Rice, executive director of Community Housing & Resources. “Some CHR tenants lost income due to reduced hours, or are not working at all if their employers have not re-opened,” she said. “We are working with each individual case to address the situation.” Both also commented that mandatory evacuations had incurred further unexpected costs for those they serve.

In addition to personal visits to FISH and CHR, Zonta mailed \$500 checks to these Lee County non-profits: Abuse Counseling & Treatment, the PACE Center, Dress for Success, Children’s Network, Parent University, the Heights Center, Healthy Start, Dr. Ella Piper Center and OILE (Organisacion Internacional de Latinos en el Exterior of SW Florida).

Immediate needs, according to reports from these organizations, range from replacing lost food items to transportation assistance to purchase of practical items such as clothing, diapers and household supplies. Many of their clients also face lost income or job loss altogether.

“We are so pleased that Zonta was able to respond so quickly and help just a little with the huge losses so many organizations and their clients are facing,” Dreher said. “These wonderful organizations do such good work with so little. This outcome is a testament to Zontians’ willingness to dig in and help when help is needed.”

Zonta's formal grants process will continue through the fall; final applications have gone out to 17 organizations in SW Florida that provide critical services to women and girls. For these essential grant funds, Zonta relies on the annual Peek at the Unique home tour. Planning for the next one, set for Saturday, March 10, 2018, is already under way.

For more information on Zonta, its services, and to donate, visit www.zontasancap.com.

Captions:

- (1) Zonta president Nancy Dreher (L), FISH case manager Nitza Lopez, FISH program manager Kathy Monroe and Zonta Foundation treasurer Robyn Moran
- (2) CHR housing administrator Alycia Auchterlonie (L), Robyn Moran, Melissa Rice and Nancy Dreher

