

# FORT MYERS FLORIDA WEEKLY®

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WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20-26, 2017

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# After IRMA, HELPING hands

Storm stories that might just bolster your faith in humanity

BY EVAN WILLIAMS

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**D**URING THE WEEK THAT BEGAN WITH Hurricane Irma, a lot of people I met forgot what day it was. The nights without power were sweaty and sleepless. They had evacuated once from the hurricane and a second time to a hotel with air conditioning. They were thrust together with family and friends and pets. Cell phone service was spotty, floodwaters still cov-

SEE HELPING, A16 ▶



Folks from our area have been pitching in, offering assistance to others in need. See each of their stories inside, pages 16-19.



NOAA/CIRA IMAGE OF HURRICANE IRMA; COMMUNITY PHOTOS BY EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

## Relief fund established for victims; \$500K raised already

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation has joined forces with the United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades and Okeechobee to create a giving fund to move money to nonprofits who can help individuals in the aftermath of those affected by Hurricane Irma. Officials announced Friday, Sept. 15, that \$500,000 had been raised, and also announced a community donation challenge.

In addition, the foundation will distribute funds to Collier and Charlotte

counties through the Community Foundation of Collier County, United Way of Collier County, Charlotte County Community Foundation, United Way of Charlotte County and other nonprofit organizations designated by donors.

Early contributors to the fund to support the region include JPMorgan Chase. The Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins clubs each donated \$100,000. Also, Richard M. Schulze Charitable Foundation, Fort Myers Miracle, Robert



COURTESY PHOTO

From left, county commissioners Brian Hamman and Cecil Pendergrass, and Sarah Owen.

SEE DONATION, A23 ▶

## INSIDE

### Thank you

As are most Southwest Floridians, our writers, contributors and advertisers were dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Irma last week. A number of our regular features are missing in this edition, and some are in abbreviated form. Florida Weekly thanks the hundreds of responders, volunteers and neighbors working to restore our homes and businesses.

— Florida Weekly team



### Hop to it

Singer/songwriter Lindsay Ell headlines Island Hoppers Fest. **C1** ▶



### Money & investing

Spoofing? It's market manipulation. **A26** ▶



### House Hunting

112 Big Pine Lane, Punta Gorda. **B1** ▶

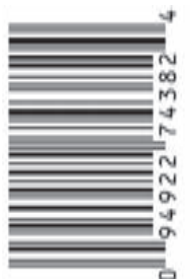
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**New York hospitality**

**M**AYBE IT'S BECAUSE THEY'VE BEEN THROUGH WORSE BECAUSE, AS GENEVIEVE Bruno puts it, she can "still remember the sight and the smell of the smoke of 9/11 like it was yesterday." Whatever the reason for their gratitude, she and her husband Calcedonio "Cal" of Bruno's of Brooklyn, the cozy Italian eatery in downtown Fort Myers, are all about giving back. A stone's throw away from the Lee County Justice Center, Bruno's is a favorite of first responders.

The day after Irma, the restaurant had power and Genevieve and Bruno had the kitchen up and running for downtown regulars and emergency personnel by lunchtime. Cal was behind the counter preparing penne with red sauce and serving it up in tin foil bowls to anyone who walked through the doors. There were videographers from TV news stations. "Thank you for all you do. Thank you for staying on the air through the storm," Cal told them as he handed them steaming bowls of pasta.

When one couple tried to leave cash, Genevieve politely refused. "We're not doing this for money," she explained. "We just want to feed our community, give people cold water, let them use our phone or charge theirs."

In the days after the storm, the Bruno family fed Sheriff Mike Scott, Mayor Randy Henderson and treated all first responders and emergency personnel to a hot meal and cold beverages. "We just want to thank everyone for helping our wonderful city," Genevieve said. And nobody knows how to say thank you to our men and women in blue better than New Yorkers.

— Stephanie Davis

**A standing ovation**

**A**S THE NORTHERN EYE WALL OF HURRICANE IRMA APPROACHED MIGUEL and Unota Cintron's 1940s bungalow on a quiet street off McGregor Boulevard, the couple took refuge in a closet near the center of the house just before they heard a thunderous crash.

Irma's gusts had hurled an enormous old tree from the backyard onto the Cintron's roof, its branches piercing gaping holes through the ceiling.

"Rain was coming into our dining room and living room," Unota wrote on Facebook. "The night before the hurricane, I dreamt that I could see the roof blown off ... I believed it was God telling me something, so I gathered all of our family photos into bins and kept moving them throughout the house, not knowing where to leave them. Before we hid in the closet, we moved the bins from the dining room to the bed — the last move saved them."

But nothing could save the roof, and the house was uninhabitable for Unota, Miguel and their teen-age daughter, Isabella.

The community pulled together fast. Marc Collins, a busy philanthropist who plays piano at the bar at Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, where all three Cintrons

have performed in shows over the years, had evacuated with his wife Lori to his hometown of Athens, Ala., where family members and old friends kept asking how they could assist Fort Myers victims of Irma. In response, Marc and Lori organized a gathering at a pizza restaurant in Athens, where the folks of Alabama gathered much-needed funds for the Cintrons of Florida.

The day after Irma, the Cintrons' longtime friends and popular Broadway Palm actors Victor and Kelly Legarreta (who had evacuated to the east coast) returned to their Cape Coral home to a similar fate. The hurricane had destroyed their roof and sent so much water into their house that it trashed kitchen appliances, walls, floors and more.

Far away in Lancaster, Pa., actors and crew at Broadway Palm's sister theater, The Dutch Apple, started a collection for the Legarretas and the Cintrons to help them rebuild.

Due to the generosity of strangers in Alabama, the friendship of fellow actors in Pennsylvania and lots of loving local support in Lee County, the show must — and will — go on for these two hard-working theater families.

— Stephanie Davis



**HELPING**

From page 1

ered large parts of south Fort Myers and Lehigh Acres, temperatures were rising and so were tempers.

On Wednesday, I arrived to an interview with my shorts on backward. Horns blared at intersections with non-working lights. Coworkers snapped at each other. Emotions were raw.

A woman in Everglades City wept at the site of power trucks coming down the road into town, recalled Tricia Dorn, key account executive with Lee County Electric Cooperative. When she met with the mayor and city clerk there outside an office, they were splattered with mud and greeted her unexpectedly with a hug. This was three, maybe four days after the storm. She had been meeting with officials all week.

"I'm losing track of what day it is," she said on Saturday.

Already that morning new storms were forming in the Atlantic Ocean, a clerk at Publix pointed out nervously, ringing up groceries. But amid the disorientation and uncertainties the storm brought, life was moving on and everywhere were helping hands.

**Horse rescue**

North Fort Myers resident Patty Fitch thought she was going to have to put down her beloved 15-year-old buckskin horse, Sugar, after her hind legs were badly mauled when she slipped into a septic tank during the storm. She and her husband, Mark, didn't have the money to pay for treatment.

After Ms. Fitch's cousin in Michigan posted of Sugar's plight on Facebook, help poured in. That included staff and

clients of Calusa Equine Veterinary Services in North Fort Myers, which established a fund to help the injured horse get the care and medicine, including antibiotics, she needed to recover.

"I just feel like this tremendous weight in my heart just lifted from the wonderful people who pitched in," said Ms. Fitch, 56. "There's some amazing beautiful people out there. It kind of restores my faith in humanity."

By the Thursday after the storm, Calusa Equine's fund had raised more than \$800, said Dr. Emma J. Morse, a veterinarian who treated Sugar. Others offered help such as a dry barn to house Sugar as she makes her recovery, which will take a month or two of carefully changing bandages and cleaning the wounds each day. Sugar also has a 3-year-old filly, Baby Girl (aka Spice).



COURTESY PHOTO

**Thistle Lodge kitchen staff prepared lunch for electrical and other workers at Bailey's General Store on Sanibel Island.**

**No rest, but food for the weary**

With a massive effort underway to restore power and other utilities this week, and clean up downed trees, cooks from Casa Ybel Resort's Thistle Lodge on Sanibel Island whipped up lunch for hundreds of workers on Friday afternoon.

"Everyone out here is trying to get power up," said Thistle Lodge's executive sous chef, Jamie Crisp. "We just can't thank 'em enough."

Trucks from LCEC, Florida Power & Light, Asplundh and other companies crowded into the parking lot behind Bai-

EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY  
**Calusa Equine Veterinary Services staff helps dress Sugar's wounds.**



ley's General Store. Workers sat in the trucks for a momentary break from the heat, eating cheeseburgers and brats.

"We're just hot," said one worker who couldn't give his name because he wasn't authorized to speak with the press. "I leave my house before sunup, get home after sundown. We don't have any power either."

**Morning after Irma**

As soon as the all clear was given on Monday morning, Fort Myers city manager Saeed Kazemi stepped out of the fire station off Veronica Shoemaker Boulevard where he was holed up, and took a look around. He was heartened to see that, already, neighbors were helping each other clear brush.

"The minute it passed us I saw people were working together," he said.

By the time the sun set over Dunbar on Thursday night, Mr. Kazemi, along with employees and volunteers with the city of Fort Myers and the Dr. Ann Murphy Knight S.T.A.R.S. Complex had distributed ice, water, ready-to-eat meals, and other supplies to residents.

It was one of at least three locations the city targeted in the days after the storm, offering assistance to thousands.

S.T.A.R.S. employee Jay Major, 21, was helping load up jugs of water. She had evacuated to Georgia and got back in to town on Tuesday. She said power had already been restored at her house.

**First-time volunteer**

On Friday morning, volunteers Ashley Ingersoll, 31, and her daughter Kailyn, 7, came out to help serve a hot lunch with cold water, and offer canned goods, cereal, boxes of raisins and non-perishable supplies to veterans and other residents in the parking lot at the Bay Pines V.A. hospital in Cape Coral.

It was one of three locations organized by CCMi, which runs a soup kitchen and Meals on Wheels, the week after the storm where people without power found sustenance and friendly smiles.

Ms. Ingersoll saw a CCMi posting on Facebook and came out with her daughter to help.

"I wanted her to see what it's like to

give back. That's a big part of why we're here," she said.

Dan Hechinger, a 68-year-old Vietnam War veteran, had come for food for himself and others who were staying at his place in Cape Coral after the storm.

"It's going to help my family, but it's going to help another family, too," he said.

**Irma on the Internet**

The last time a major hurricane hit the Southwest Florida coast in 2005, Facebook had only existed for a year and the iPhone had yet to appear.

This time, people found help on social media, at times when they couldn't find it anywhere else. A stranded motorist got gas, medicine was delivered to a wounded horse and volunteers discovered the requests of social service agencies that needed them.

Amid her own personal turmoil as she took shelter from the storm, Robyn Metcalf Horth set up a Facebook page, SWFL Hurricane IRMA HELP & Recovery Lee County, which quickly grew to more than 1,000 members.

A dog trainer and mentor with Petco in Fort Myers, Ms. Horth, 53, had returned to her home at Spring Woods Mobile Home Park in North Fort Myers after the storm to find that it was uninhabitable due to mold. She had evacuated to her parents' house in Fort Myers to ride out the storm with her five dogs while her mother spent that time in the hospital with bronchitis.

On her Facebook page, people found a place to share information about where to get ice and gas, school closures, medical care, and how to file for unemployment. One member posted pictures of a lost gray and white cat named Otis in Cape Coral on Sunday morning. Others found a place where they could commiserate and find camaraderie.

"Let's not ignore the fact that we all thought our town was going to be destroyed," Wanda Lopez posted on the site on Sunday. "We contemplated losing everything."

She recommended: "Cry, journal, meditate, get energy work done, etc."

On Thursday night, Ms. Horth posted



EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY  
**CCMI volunteer Ashley Ingersoll and her daughter, first-time volunteer Kailyn.**



EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

**The city of Fort Myers offered help at the S.T.A.R.S. Complex in Dunbar, where residents came to get ice, water, food and other supplies.**

a message looking for battery-powered fans or a generator. The next morning a friend was on the way with a generator plus gas to run it.

"When you give back to the community, the community gives back to you," she said.

**Reaching out, and out and out**

Fort Myers resident Alexandra Cox, 33, had evacuated with her mom on Saturday before the storm. They headed to Clearwater to pick up her aunt, and then to St. Augustine.

On Monday, Ms. Cox headed back in her 2001 Volkswagen Cabrio convertible. Looking for a way to avoid heavy traffic on Interstate 75, she used Google Maps to take backroads. With nearly a full tank of gas, she expected to be able to find a place to fill up, somewhere. But as the needle fell on her gauge, sta-

SEE HELPING, A18 ▶

**LaBelle mom receives help for special needs family**

JORDAN AND HIS 14 OTHER BROTHERS AND SISTERS HUDDLED IN THEIR MOM'S MASTER BEDROOM closet. They had practiced this before with their adopted mother Mary Beth Pringle. They knew the drill. But this time it was real.

When Hurricane Irma blew through Southwest Florida, Ms. Pringle, 57, had a plan in place. She and her 15 adopted children with varying special needs would hunker down in their sturdy LaBelle home.

The storm pushed through, tore up part of the roof and ripped up trees, but otherwise left the home intact., Ms. Pringle said.

Then the night after the storm passed, authorities came knocking on their door that they needed to evacuate now because sheet flooding from neighboring Glades County was very possible.

This was not part of the Pringle family's hurricane plan.

So at around 11 p.m. Ms. Pringle gathered the children, medicines, birth certificates, pushed clothing from dressers into bags and grabbed life jackets — just in case. The family loaded into their van and headed on the dark unlit roads to safety — wherever that might be.

For the next two hours Ms. Pringle made phone calls to find lodging and gas. No luck. Then she put out a plea on Facebook and soon she was flooded with responses to help. Help from family, friends and the Hendry County Sheriff's Office led to her finding gas and a three-bedroom apartment.

"Everybody helped on Facebook," Ms. Pringle said. "That's what happened at the very end. The community called me back."

"That's why I wanted to move to a small community," she said. "When you have a big, unique family like me you need your community."

— Ella Naylor

**Social media saviors**

"THIS IS HOW IT WENT DOWN. I HAVE A FRIEND FROM FORT MYERS WHO NOW LIVES IN ARIZONA. I AM FROM FORT MYERS BUT NOW live in Massachusetts. My friend in Arizona posted that HER friend needed emergency last-minute help to board up her home windows in Cape Coral. Her husband is a pilot who couldn't get home until the

day of the storm. It's a big house and he couldn't do it alone. I contacted a friend in Cape Coral who was already prepped, and her son volunteered to go help. My Arizona friend also managed to round up a couple of other people through different connections. A group of strangers went to the house and worked together to make it safe. This is how the world is supposed to work. It's not every man for himself. It is every person for each other. Please help your neighbors. Share. Life is short, and you can't take it with you."

The above is a Facebook post made on Sept. 10, the day of Irma, by Amy Ware of South Deerfield, Mass.

There's no denying that social media, and especially Facebook, played an integral role in getting people help before, during and after Hurricane Irma.

The week before the storm:

"We're trying to decide whether to evacuate or stay. Facebook friends, what's your take?"

"I found some hurricane tracking websites I really like. Here are the links ..."

"Does anybody know where I can find C batteries? My Walgreen's is out."

During the storm:

"I just saw on TV that it's tracking more to the west, so we're headed to Georgia. How's traffic on I-75?"

"Police with bullhorns just came through our neighborhood and ordered us to evacuate. I'm freaking out. Which shelters take dogs?!"

"I'm in east Naples and I think the eye just passed over us. It was SO loud and scary. Now there's this eery calm."

After the storm:

"Does anyone know where I can get fuel without waiting in line for two hours?"

"OMG! We just got power. Hallelujah!"

Facebook was a constant exchange of information ("They're handing out food at..."), of people helping others ("Can someone help me move this tree off my roof..."), of commiserating ("Why do we even live here?...") and of celebrating ("Publix is OPEN!").

Sure, we survived hurricanes without social media before, but thanks to Mark Zuckerberg, we'll never have to again.

— Stephanie Davis





## Community rallies to help homeless pets

JENNIFER GALLOWAY SPENT MONDAY MORNING CUDDLING LOLA, A SICK AND SENIOR CAT AND RESIDENT AT GULF COAST HUMANE SOCIETY.

It was the morning after Hurricane Irma. Ms. Galloway, executive director at GCHS, soothed and held the dying cat as temperatures increased and heat from lack of air conditioning filled the shelter. She and her staff pushed IV fluids into Lola and many other animals facing dehydration and overheating. Ms. Galloway sighed and took a quick moment to survey the shelter. It was quiet. Too quiet. There was nobody there except for herself and five other volunteers.

Where was everybody? When she realized that there were no other volunteers to help her with hurricane recovery she said she was stunned.

"I was so disheartened," she said. "The heat was so bad."

The more than 300 dogs, cats and other animals that reside at the Fort Myers shelter needed cool air. The plywood hammered across the windows to keep the pets, staff and volunteers safe was now preventing any air from getting in to the shelter. Several generators stopped working after they became waterlogged from the storm.

Ms. Galloway's volunteer coordinator, Jessica Bamford, called her fiancé, Dirk Purdy, owner of Your K9s Come First, to help. Mr. Purdy hurried over with his 71-year-old father, Robert Purdy. The father-son team spent the rest of the day removing the plywood, fixing and refueling the generators.

"You can tell we were needed," Mr. Purdy said. "It was so hot."

He said he watched the dogs stop panting and relax as the power was restored to the generators and the plywood removed.

But Ms. Galloway needed much more help.

So that night she put out a plea on Facebook for volunteers and help.

The next day was like Christmas morning at GCHS. People — many of them total strangers — came armed with chainsaws and able bodies to help. "It was amazing," she said.

Brian Simon was one of the volunteers to show up at the shelter's door wanting to help.

Mr. Simon noticed a Facebook post and took his teenage son Sander. They helped pick up the scattered plywood

"It was pretty easy," Mr. Simon said. "We showed up. They were very happy to have us."

To help or donate to GCHS, see [www.gulfcoasthumane.org](http://www.gulfcoasthumane.org) or call 332-0364.

— Ella Naylor



## Donate life

ON AUG. 30, IRMA BEGAN AS A LOW-PRESSURE SYSTEM IN THE EASTERN ATLANTIC WITH WINDS OF 48 MPH. THAT same day, Fort Myers real estate professional Kynse Leigh Agles, 37, received the news that a match had been found and she would finally get the kidney and pancreas transplant that could save her life.

Battling stage five kidney failure and diabetes, Kynse was living with an insulin port and was set to start dialysis as she remained on the waiting list for a matching organ donor. When the call came in, she boarded a charter plane from Fort Myers to Tampa General Hospital for surgery. On Aug. 31, as surgeons removed Kynse's pancreas and kidneys and replaced them with those of her donor, Irma intensified into a hurricane.

While Kynse recovered in the hospital and kept her friends and family up to date on her Facebook page ("Kynse's Kidney/Pancreas Transplant Journey"), Irma fluctuated and grew. Kynse had some setbacks, received a blood transfusion, but remained strong. By Sept. 5, she was transferred from ICU into a standard room at Tampa General. Meanwhile, Irma became a Category 5 hurricane, and watches and warnings went into effect across the Caribbean.

Kynse continued her recovery in the hospital, her mother, sister and friends by her side. One week post-transplant, Hurricane Irma hammered the Turks and Caicos Islands with 175-mph winds as hurricane warnings were issued for the Florida Keys — and Kynse was being released to a Tampa hotel. There was an uncharacteristic nervous tremor in her video diary on Facebook that day: "It's just one week post op and I'm being released into the wild — and there's a hurricane out there."

When her white blood count went up, she was readmitted to Tampa General. She reassured her Facebook followers that she was on the third floor and there were generators. It was Sunday, Sept. 10, the day of the storm — and 10 days since she had received a new pancreas and kidney. From the window of her hospital room, Kynse posted a video of Irma's wind and rain lashing Hillsborough Bay.

After an organ transplant and a major hurricane, it might have been a good time for Kynse to finally relax, but on Sept. 14, she was back in Fort Myers, opening her downtown offices up to "anyone who needs to conduct business," she posted. "We have power, WiFi, conference rooms, office equipment, fax machines." She helped organize and host a community picnic with meals, water and supplies in flooded Lehigh Acres. She set up her office as a collection site for canned foods, clothing, diapers and other necessities for hurricane victims. And with nearly every post, she continued to remind her followers to become organ donors.

Irma weakened and finally dissipated, but Kynse Leigh Agles is just getting started.

— Stephanie Davis



# HELPING

From page 17

tion after station was dry. She ended up burning fumes, just making it to a Pilot truck stop off I-75 in Ocala.

She drove up to a pump and shut the car off. All the other pumps were full of vehicles waiting for gas, too. Night was coming and she was looking at sleeping in her car alone at the truck stop.

"So, I posted something on Facebook saying, 'I am stranded in Ocala, does anyone know anyone that can get me some fuel?'" she said.

About 15 minutes later, a friend who lives in Woonsocket, R.I., contacted her on Facebook Messenger saying his friend might know someone in Ocala who could bring her gas. A few minutes later the friend of a friend of a friend arrived with fuel, and refused to take any cash for it.

"She's literally 15 minutes from me and she has 7 gallons of gas to just give me," Ms. Cox recalled. "They never even lost power, they didn't need it for their generators."

That got her to Bradenton, where she found a WaWa station with gas, and safe passage home (but no power there).

## Clearing the streets

Anthony Melendez, 36, has six kids to take care of at home in south Fort Myers, where his neighborhood was flooded and was still without power a week after the storm.

"We did get probably about two feet of water in our neighborhood, and a bunch of our neighbors were trapped because of the water," he said.

With his family safe, he headed out the day after the storm passed to start clearing the streets with his truck — which was able to drive through the water — and equipment such as heavy-duty chainsaws he uses for his development company, Superior Site Services.

He also assisted a friend who lives



EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

**Help came from The Rocket Lounge in Fort Myers, where Patrick Pinner and his daughter Esther came to catch up on some work after the storm.**

about two streets away in Briarcliff and was trapped along with a horse on her property by downed trees.

"As soon as she called I was like, 'I'll be over there.' So we got over there and we did her property and then a neighbor across the street, I cleared his driveway, and then went into San Carlos Park and did a little bit of work in San Carlos Park and then came home," he said.

How is his family faring?

"Hot," he laughs, but otherwise fine. "They're just hot and bored. We've got a generator and everything but trying to find an A/C unit right now, a little window one because it gets so hot. We're probably not getting our electric turned back on for two or three weeks."

## Office space

"I don't feel like I'm quite back in my body yet," said Natalia Harvey on Wednesday.

She weathered the storm with nine people including her son, a parakeet, and 97-year-old grandmother in a fifth-floor, 700-square-foot apartment near downtown Fort Myers.

The office manager for The Rocket Lounge, a business incubator and office space on the third floor of an old brick building in downtown Fort Myers, she welcomed newcomers Patrick Pinner and his daughter Esther, 11, whose school was closed due to the storm.

The Lounge had posted on Facebook that it was offering free or discounted office space to people without power after the storm.

With his home office off McGregor Boulevard still without electricity and with a large royal palm tree leaning against his house when he and his family got back from Ocala, where they had evacuated, Mr. Pinner had come to get some work done and take his mind off Irma.

As vice president of small format chains for Big Red, he helps his company distribute soft drinks to chains such as Walgreens, CVS, and 7-Eleven.

"I'm grateful to this place because there's not a lot of Starbucks and those places (with power and internet services), and they're inundated right now," he said.

## Use it or lose it

With restaurants without power possibly set to lose food, many set about giving it away instead, a comfort to people both before and after Irma hit.

On Thursday and Friday before Irma, families streamed into Scoops on First in the River District for a cold, sweet treat.

With potentially hundreds of gallons of 48 flavors of ice cream and eight of gelato that could potentially melt during a power outage, owner Lori Large and her staff posted on Facebook, put out a sign on the sidewalk, and watched the families pour in for free scoops

With many kids, flavors such as Fundo, Superman, and Cotton Candy went fast. They also gave away ice cream to Golisano Children's Hospital, local police departments and a TV news



EVAN WILLIAMS / FLORIDA WEEKLY

Free scoops of ice cream were given to these kids to help keep them cool.



crew. Friday was a long day of serving ice cream before she and her staff evacuated.

One grateful family told Ms. Large, "Come down to our house for dinner, where we live in East Fort Myers."

**Irma baby**

Just minutes after the eye of the storm passed, at 7:44 p.m. on Sunday, September 10, a 6-pound, 13-ounce boy named Angel Anikyn Pino was delivered by caesarean section at Cape Coral Hospital.

Elsewhere in the hospital, as he was being delivered, nurses on the night shift who had heard the operation was underway played "Eye of the Tiger" by Survivor in his honor.

Anikyn is the first child of Samantha Powers, 24, and her fiancé Angel Junior Pino, 27, who is deployed with the Army National Guard in Japan. He was able to video chat with Ms. Powers and Anikyn when they were in the hospital.

For Anikyn, who arrived amid what the *New York Post* called "Irmageddon," he'll have to wait until he gets older to hear the story. On Saturday before the storm, Ms. Powers and her mom packed food, water, a blow-up mattress and other belongings, and left their home in Cape Coral to stay at the hospital with other pregnant women who were near term. On Sunday as winds picked up, the families were moved into a hallway away from the windows.

Ms. Powers was sitting in a rocking chair and began to feel some pain, though not like contractions. A doctor



Anikyn and his mom, Samantha Powers.

COURTESY PHOTO

found she had severe preeclampsia, a condition of pregnant women diagnosed by high blood pressure and other signs, which put her at risk of stroke or seizure if the baby was not delivered immediately. A C-section under general anesthesia was scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

"We had to wait for the eye to pass over us and as we were getting ready to go back (to perform the operation), we went on generator instead of city power," said Dr. Paul Joslyn, the obstetrician who delivered Anikyn. "Every-

thing went as smoothly as it possibly could and she had a little baby boy."

Normally there is a maternal triage room where she would have undergone the operation, but there were windows there. Nurses swiftly set up privacy screens in the hallway, equipment to monitor her during the operation, and a seat for her mom.

"Everything just happened so fast, I had called my fiancé to let him know I'm going in for a C-section," Ms. Powers said. "He was afraid that the

power would go out and something would happen but I told him, 'I'm at the hospital and they have generators.' It all happened so fast. My mom was there and she was stressing out. She didn't know what to think or what to do because we weren't expecting any of that."

After the operation, she spent about a half hour with Anikyn, enough time to see that he arrived safe and healthy.

Dr. Joslyn praised the nursing staff who acted quickly.

"It really was very impressive, frankly," he said.

Ms. Powers went home a few days later and Anikyn was kept at the hospital until late in the week.

"As of now he's doing great," she said. "All the nurses love him. He's very calm and content for being born in the middle of a hurricane. He's just, he's a great baby and I'm glad that we both came out safe and OK."

So is her fiancé.

"He's overwhelmed with joy and knowing that me and his son are safe," she said. "Anikyn looks just like him. He's like a little Mini-Me of him."

Her fiancé will be back in mid-November. Ms. Powers graduated from cosmology school and plans to get her license and work at a salon after she and Anikyn have recovered.

He was one of five babies delivered at Cape Coral Hospital during the course of the storm, including a pair of twins, reported Nancy Travis, director of women and neonatal services. None of them were named Irma. ■



**Alva family saves chickens by boat**

WHEN KYLE VEALEY AND AUBREY VEALEY, BOTH 31, BOUGHT THEIR 30-ACRE property in Alva several years ago they were hoping to view the river — not live in it. But Hurricane Irma shaped their property to be waterfront, thanks to flooding from nearby Cypress Creek, which is fed from the Caloosahatchee River.

The couple and their four young children hunkered down at their father's home in Buckingham during the storm. When they tried to return the next morning they found their 1,000-square-foot cabin surrounded by 5 feet of water. Their home was accessible only by water vessel.

Ms. Vealey said she canoed over daily to check on four chickens and eight head of cattle. On the first trip, Ms. Vealey rowed over to her front porch to fetch the hens that were trapped by the water. They were gathered on the few dry spot left on the front and back porch.

"When I went to rescue them they were so happy," Ms. Vealey said. "You wouldn't think chickens have personalities but they do." At first it took a little bit of soothing to get the fowl to settle in during the ride back to dry land.

"Two of them were happy be on board. Two of them wanted to jump ship." Eventually the feathered passengers huddled down in the front of the boat.

The chickens were resettled near the couple's 3,200-square-foot home under construction. It's dry and safe.

"They have the whole house to themselves."

— Ella Nayer

**Calm after the storm**

SOCIAL MEDIA PROVED AN IMPORTANT SOURCE FOR POST-HURRICANE RECOVERY, WITH POSTS DIRECTING SOUTHWEST FLORIDIANS where to find ice, gas, free tree removal and open restaurants for a hot meal. It also alerted an Estero resident that her childhood friend from New York was desperately seeking an 89-year-old Bonita Springs man who she thought had evacuated to Alico Arena.

"My friend posted that her sister-in-law's dad was missing and she hadn't heard from him since Sunday," said Phyllis Ershowsky, a Lee County resident and owner of PKE Marketing & PR Solutions in Fort Myers. "She was frantic and calling everywhere. My friend didn't realize how close I lived."

Ms. Ershowsky and her husband visited the arena Sept. 13 where a team from the Red Cross and Lee County Sheriff Lt. Edward Ahlquist helped her search row by row, aisle by aisle, calling for John Lentini and comparing evacuees to a photograph.

Mr. Lentini lives alone. He and three elderly neighbors evacuated their homes in Southern Pines, a manufactured home community near Imperial Parkway which was flooded after the storm.

"They were so kind and caring about the situation," Ms. Ershowsky said. "Lt. Ahlquist called his colleagues in Bonita to take a boat to Mr. Lentini's house. Even after several days running a shelter for thousands of people, these people were incredibly calm, patient, compassionate and eager to help."

Mr. Lentini wasn't home. It turns out he and his friends had hunkered down in a San Carlos Park hotel and once their cash ran out they were directed to Alico just hours after the Ershowsky's search. He was happily reunited with his daughter, Anne Lentini Pyne, who flew in from New York on Friday.

Ms. Ershowsky's takeaway from the experience was the prevailing calmness and kindness — from those manning the phones at the United Way's 211 call center to the Lee Emergency Operations Center compiling a list of those reported missing.

"What amazed me was these people were so calm," she said. "The volunteers, the LCSO officers, Red Cross and United Way need to be recognized. I know there are a lot of complaints but this crisis has brought out the best in people. I think we are so fortunate to be in a community where that sense of caring is extraordinary."

— Nanci Theoret

