

Thanks to donors, United Way agencies helped local flood victims

Our community has had floods before, but no one anticipated the extent of the flood that arrived in the last week of June this year. It may be the largest tragedy ever to affect Broome County, as measured by the value of the homes, businesses, roads, and other facilities damaged or destroyed. One estimate is that it will



Flooded homes and a car on Chrisfield Avenue in Johnson City (photo by Kirk VanZandbergen)

cost about a half-billion dollars to repair the damage and replace what was destroyed.

While all deaths or injuries are tragic, the number of people who were seriously injured or died in the flood was low.

As the severity of the flood became known, organizations supported by United Way began assisting victims of the flood.

The **American Red Cross** opened multiple shelters for flood victims; provided clean up kits to individuals and families; provided comfort kits (personal care items such as toothpaste, shampoo, soap, razors, etc.); provided meals and snacks; and provided financial assistance to both individuals and their families. The Southern Tier Chapter moved its disaster operation to the United Way offices in Vestal for about 12 hours when it appeared that the Red Cross offices in Endicott were in danger of flooding.

The **Salvation Army** cleaned and moved heavy appliances from more than 150 homes and provided food baskets to flood victims and families with clothing vouchers (\$50 for each person in the family). It distributed 1400 clean-up kits and other cleaning supplies, as well as water and fruit juices. It also provided emotional and spiritual assistance to individuals, manned area disaster relief centers, and coordinated the clean-up crews for the City of Binghamton, providing the clean-up supplies used in that effort.

Catholic Social Services quickly arranged for three area churches to be used as flood relief centers, in a coordinated effort with the Council of Churches, Salvation Army, and United Way. It provided volunteers, personal care items, cleaning supplies, and food at the centers. It also worked with the **Mental Health Association** to provide social workers/counselors for victims of the flooding.

Many businesses and individuals donated supplies, which were coordinated through United Way to make sure that they were sent to the locations where they were most needed.

In addition, **First Call for Help**, which is operated by United Way, stepped up its role as a one-stop service to the community, providing flood victims who did not know where to turn with information about all types of assistance. First Call for Help extended its service hours following the flood to include Saturday, Sunday, and the Independence Day holiday. Before the flood, calls would usually range between 50 and 100 per day. After the flood, as many as 275 were received in a single day, and the nature of the calls changed. Immediately after the flood, callers wanted information about who to call for immediate help. Later callers wanted to spend more time talking about help with applications for assistance. First Call for Help also produced a Flood Assistance Guide, which was available on both its and the United Way websites, and was updated daily as information changed.

Other United Way member agencies, such as **Deposit Foundation, Family and Children's Society, Planned Parenthood, Boys and Girls Club of Binghamton**, and **RSVP**, also assisted flood victims by helping flood victims get access to their prescriptions, obtain temporary housing, collecting supplies for flood victims, and serving as volunteers at flood relief centers.

When you continue to support United Way of Broome County, you ensure that the organizations in our community will remain strong and ready to help when tragedies strike.



Flood victims were sent to Binghamton University's Events Center (above) and 23 other area shelters. (photo by Jonathan Cohen, Binghamton University)

what matters is published monthly by United Way of Broome County to highlight the positive results of your contributions to United Way on the people in our community.

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