

Boys and Girls Club Returns to Texas

By **Nicholas Garton** - Sep 11, 2017



Boys and Girls Club of Dane County volunteers took several families shopping at Walmart to replenish their households. (Photo Credit: Sabrina Madison)

The Boys and Girls Club of Dane County received an emotional and rousing message of thanks from the community of LaGrange, Texas on Sunday afternoon

LaGrange, a small city with a population of about 4,000, is one of the most impoverished areas in the country. The families and people of that area work hard to get by even in the best of times. It is a tightknit community where people rely on one another for things most of us take for granted. And that's during the best of times.

These have not been the best of times for the citizens of LaGrange or across much of Texas. Faced with remarkable and seemingly insurmountable damage to their community after Hurricane Harvey caused devastation, the folks of LaGrange were in need of any help they could get.

The Boys and Girls Club of Dane County did its best to provide some relief. Led by Boys and Girls Club Board members and volunteers, truckloads of supplies and aid — more than \$350,000 worth — were driven down from Madison to Austin and distributed with some local logistical assistance.

Once there, volunteers did whatever they were called upon to do in order to help the community be rebuilt.

“They came in and viewed some of our disaster areas and selected eight families,” LaGrange Mayor Janet Moerbe told Madison365. “They gave those families a financial donation and then took them to Walmart and let them purchase items that they needed. The Boys and Girls Club brought three truckloads of supplies to Texas. Most of the truckload items were taken to the evacuation centers in Austin. But here in LaGrange they approached families that were affected.”

More Boys and Girls Club volunteers returned this past week to reconnect with those eight families and aid in their ongoing recovery.

Mayor Moerbe said about 300 people had their homes completely destroyed. She said 34 businesses were flooded out.

“We have just been in recovery mode the last couple of days, trying to form a long-term recovery team. We have a lot of different entities that are helping. Church groups, FEMA, and we are forming an executive board. But before this we were in clean-up mode. Just trying to get the debris and homes cleaned up. We have mobile homes that are destroyed and we still have the clean-up to do for those areas.”

Moerbe delivered a personal and emotional message of thanks via Facebook to the members of the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County, some of whom are currently still in LaGrange doing whatever they can to help. Moerbe’s message was powerful and resonated with Boys and Girls Club CEO Michael Johnson.

“I’m teary eyed watching the videos and the pictures of these folks’ homes,” Michael Johnson said. “We took some fifty people on a shopping spree to Walmart. Mayor Moerbe came out and met us for brunch Sunday morning. It was an impactful day. Just watching the videos and seeing people thanking our city, just seeing what they have gone through, I just can’t find the words to describe it.”

For Michael Johnson, it has been rewarding to know that his Boys and Girls Club team was able to deliver such massive aid to a community.

"Some of the trailer homes were blown away twenty miles," Johnson said. "People came home and found their trailers upside down and stuff like that. I've only met maybe ten of the nineteen families we helped. The emails I'm getting, the Facebook messages I'm getting over something you'd think is so small, that lets me know that they're thankful despite the situation they're in. These people lost everything. I think my team had an emotional, purpose-filled trip."

During a brunch on Sunday morning, Mayor Moerbe gave a speech to those in attendance thanking them for all the hard work and help.

"It's been a totally amazing experience," Moerbe said. "The whole flooding was very heartbreaking but everything that's happened since then is extremely heartening. It doesn't matter what race, religion, political party you are, it's just amazing to have people helping one another. We couldn't have been as far along as we are without the outside help because, like I said, we're a small community. In a time when our nation needs a little boost in spirit and pulling together, we are feeling that here in LaGrange."

Written by [Nicholas Garton](#)

Nicholas Garton is a Madison College student and a reporter in the Madison365 Academy.