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Irma brings help for Midway woman from far, and near



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Coastal Georgia Area Community Action Authority Inc. CEO Tres Hamilton and Midway Mayor Dr. Clemontine Washington watch as Midway resident Barbara Stevens, is presented with a donation of \$1,000 by Dan Hawk. Hawk is a part of a group representing the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County and Selfless Ambition from Wisconsin, which travelled to the South to help with hurricane relief.
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"I feel blessed, so blessed."

Midway resident Barbara Stevens has many reasons to feel blessed after Hurricane Irma damaged her home Sept. 11.

Hurricane Irma swept into Liberty County early that morning and blew a tree down onto the bedroom of her mobile home, making her home of 36 years no longer habitable.

Stevens wasn't there. She was safe in Atlanta with family after heeding the mandatory evacuation order.

Had she stayed she would've been asleep in her bed when the tree crashed in.

Stevens was contacted by a neighbor and saw pictures of the damage. The fallen tree took down power and gas lines and caved in part of the roof.

Stevens did not have homeowner's insurance on her trailer and has been staying with her father next door.

A picture of the damage was posted on Facebook by a family member, which caught the attention of Vicky Nelson, who works for Coastal Georgia Area Community Action Authority, Inc. Nelson contacted CEO Tres Hamilton about helping Stevens.

Coastal Georgia Area CAA is an agency that seeks to teach families and communities how to become self-sufficient. Stevens was recommended by the agency to receive a donation by a group that traveled from Wisconsin to help with hurricane relief in the South. Stevens was surprised with a \$1,000 donation in gift cards Sunday evening outside her mobile home.

Members of the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County and Selfless Ambition, a non-profit organization, presented it to her. Michael Johnson, CEO of the Boys and Girls Club, said the group was compelled to help after seeing what happened to her home. Paul Tonneson, CEO of Fiskars' North American headquarters in Madison,

Wisconsin, donated the gift cards.

Stevens got emotional as she thanked them.

Johnson streamed the presentation live on Facebook and vowed to raise another \$1,000 for Stevens by midnight. Immediately those watching in Wisconsin started to pledge money and at the time raised \$700.

“We know (\$2,000) that’s not enough but we know that the Lord will provide and we’re thankful that you’re standing with us today and I’m thankful for all of you all,” Johnson said.

Liberty County Commissioner Marion Stevens, who is a board member for the Coastal Georgia Area CAA, said the timing was right as they were looking to help someone who suffered from the storm.

“Thank you all for not being selfish, that you brought your thoughts and wealth down to little old Midway, Georgia, because it could’ve gone somewhere else,” Marion Stevens said. “This also shows in Liberty County that regardless of who you are someone is always watching. So we need to take from this that when someone else is in trouble from now on we need to reach out to others to help them. I know this was a godsend idea and you all have carried it out to the fullest.”

Midway Mayor Dr. Clemontine Washington also thanked them.

“You don’t know how much we appreciate this. I live right across the street from her, so I know the pain that she bears,” Washington said.

Washington then pledged to match the first donation of \$1,000 for Stevens, giving her a total of \$3,000 so far.

Hamilton said Coastal Georgia Area CAA is here for the community.

“We are a community and what we’re trying to do is, when we see a family in need, what we need is more than just the mayor and Madison, Wisconsin. We need the county, Midway to help us match this,” Hamilton said.

Marion Stevens said he will continue to follow up with Stevens and try to get her connected to the American Red Cross. He also planned on bringing in help to clear out items from her trailer.

Stevens said she was blessed by the donations and support.

The Boys and Girls Club of Dane County and Selfless Ambition collected donations from businesses, schools, churches and community groups for hurricane relief in Texas, Florida and Georgia.

They delivered more than 10,000 pounds of water and 300 boxes of supplies, which included diapers, toiletries, batteries, flashlights and food, for those suffering from Hurricane Irma.

The group traveled to Texas and gave \$1,000 to the Austin Disaster Relief Network, then drove to Florida where they handed out more checks to people in need and helped clean up yard debris. They delivered supplies to the Boys and Girls Club in Jacksonville, a homeless shelter and pet food to an animal shelter. The Coastal Georgia Area CAA headquarters in Brunswick received supplies and a generator.

Supplies will be distributed by Coastal Georgia Area CAA to people in Brunswick and surrounding counties as needed.

Hamilton said those who want to donate to Stevens can go to www.coastalgacaa.org.

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