"Look how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness." - Anne Frank

27 TRILLION gallons of rain over Texas

$125 BILLION in damage, wrecking 1 million vehicles and nearly 135,000 homes

HEALING HOUSTON AFTER HARVEY

11,660 individuals were served by Easter Seals Greater Houston

100% of those being served by Easter Seals Greater Houston are low-income

5,830 individuals received specialty disability related services

95% of those being served belong to a vulnerable population

6,400 HOURS of mental health services

67% of those being served by Easter Seals Greater Houston did not qualify for FEMA assistance
“I’m a single mom with four kids, one who has a disability. I was just trying to make ends meet when the storm came, and then when it came we lost so much. Thanks to your help, we’re finally getting back on track.”

How do you respond to trillions of gallons of water falling on your county? How do you start to recover and rebuild a more resilient place? If you are lucky, you do it by living in one of the few places in the world that could join people from across political divides with the strength of our shared Texas heritage and the equal strength that comes from being in one of the most diverse places in the U.S. What is different here is that we have elected, appointed and community leaders who plan, execute, learn and, yes – lead. What never ceases to amaze me, is that people here – from the most humble to the billionaires, from the child helping muck a home to the mega-church mobilizing huge teams of volunteers – is our capacity for giving.

Standing in my sister and brother-in-law’s home with my husband, three big, wet, dirty dogs and backpack of essentials (yes, I grabbed my wedding photos), I watched with pride as our leaders took on the press. Even though my 56 year old house had never flooded before, I knew immediately that we would be okay – leaders who work together, family to take us in while we found temporary housing, insurance to pay for part of the damage, and Easter Seals’ Board members and employees texting/calling/emailing as they started helping rescue people who were stranded and asking how to help. I LOVE that we don’t sit and wait for someone to come rescue us, we just get in there and start helping ourselves and our neighbors.

As the only area agency which serves veterans, people of all ages with any type of disability and their family members and because of Easter Seals’ past experience with Katrina, Rita and Ike, we knew that we would need to work hard and fast to help veterans and people with disabilities. As much progress as our community planning has made – we still do not adequately address the needs of people with disabilities during catastrophic events. This is in spite of the fact that one in five of us has a disability and that the Mayor’s Office estimated at over 50% of those impacted by Harvey had disabilities. Before the rain stopped falling and before we knew if the funding would be there, we re-tasked case managers, social workers, therapists, mental health specialists, veterans, financial coaches, housing specialists and technology specialists to create our Hurricane Harvey Response Team. We highlight some of their amazing work in this report, but it is not adequate to capture the level of support we received from our community and from people all over the U.S. Nor is it adequate to capture the level of joy, compassion and hard work that the Easter Seals’ family of staff, leadership, donors and volunteers brought to the effort to help people rebuild their lives.

Anne Frank said, “Look how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.” It is most fitting for our reflection on Hurricane Harvey a year later. There is still much to do, from finding affordable accessible housing for those still displaced, to continuing to provide connection to community resources and financial coaching as families rebuild, and providing the mental health supports for those still suffering from the impacts of the storm, and more. So many of you – new friends and old – have helped defy the darkness. For that, I am grateful beyond words.

Sincerely,

Elise Hough, CEO
Easter Seals Greater Houston
We could not have done what we did without you... Their thanks are thanks to you!

“Thank you for helping me to get food and keep warm it was a tremendous help. Right when I was ready to give up and start doubting there was really any help anywhere, Easter Seals called and helped me.”

“Throughout Hurricane Harvey I struggled with both financial stability and emotional well-being. Easter Seals assisted me and empowered me to move forward with my life after Harvey.”

“Without Easter Seals’ help we’d be on the streets, losing our first house, and disappointing our children. Thank you for the help and for everything.”

“It’s people like you who make a difference in a world of chaos and storms.”

“I had to send my kids to live with relatives. Thanks to Easter Seals, I’m back in a place of my own and reunited with my kids.”

“Harvey tried to wreck our lives, but Easter Seals didn’t let it.”

“Easter Seals’ impact on my family has been tremendous, especially with mental health services. I can’t thank you enough for that.”

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