



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Hurricane Preparation Includes Training and Affiliation Before the Storm**

United in Disasters, an initiative of the United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties is encouraging all residents to get trained and affiliated as disaster response volunteers *before* the start of Hurricane Season on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Volunteers are essential in being prepared for, responding to and recovering from disasters. The key is to get trained and affiliated before the storm.

The Volunteer Center at the United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties connects volunteers with the appropriate training and agencies to help with all aspects of disaster volunteering. "If you would like to assist with disaster relief operations, now is the time to contact the Red Cross and schedule your training. Our disaster relief volunteers receive approximately 30 hours of training, and trained volunteers usually are the individuals who go where the action is, serving impacted areas by assisting with damage assessments, shelter operations, mobile feedings, and performing client assistance services," said Dan Roll, Executive Director of Florida's Coast to Coast Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Along with safety briefings and training, in most cases emergency support volunteers are also required to pass background checks, another requirement that takes a significant amount of time. Plus, in a community struggling to respond to and recover from a disaster, an influx of unexpected and/or untrained volunteers and donations can make the response process even more difficult.

"If you are not trained as a first responder, the very best way to help in the immediate aftermath of a disaster is to make a financial gift to the relief organization of your choice," said Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service. "Food is also a welcome gift you can give right in your own community. Food banks across the country are networked to ensure food is delivered where it is needed most."

As we anticipate a busy hurricane season, The Volunteer Center is asking the community to make the call and get registered for training now, before June 1<sup>st</sup>. There are many organizations that will utilize volunteers following a disaster. Some provide direct, immediate response; others organize volunteers; some collect, sort, and distribute donations. The possibilities are endless for the right person, with the right training. The Volunteer Center of the United Way can connect interested volunteers to the right organizations based on skills and interests. But it is up to the potential volunteers to make that initial phone call now, before disaster strikes. Please call 386-253-0563, ext. 239 to register as a disaster response volunteer or for more information.

About the Volunteer Center and United in Disasters.

Working within the community since 1977, the Volunteer Center plays an integral role in United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties' mission to increase the organized capacity of our community to care for its people.

United in Disasters is a new initiative of the United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties designed to help coordinate volunteers after a disaster.

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