



Press

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HARC Rises to the Challenge of Storm Alfred

HARTFORD, CT, November 2011 Extraordinary occurrences sometimes require extraordinary measures, and at HARC during the days of Storm Alfred we witnessed a lot of both!

When Storm Alfred swept through Greater Hartford on Saturday, October 29, the destruction to area towns and property was enormous. Large trees were torn apart and toppled, bringing power lines down with them. The loss of electrical power was staggering, affecting nearly everyone in the region. All but one of HARC's ten community residences lost power. Suddenly forty-five fragile people and their staff were plunged into icy cold conditions with no heat, light, or ability to cook.

Fortunately the HARC headquarters at 900 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, retained its electrical power. Heat and all other systems remained intact . . . and the building quickly became the setting of more than a few miracles.

~ MORE ~

Thanks to the speedy actions of VP, Residential and Community Services, Gregory Grant and Directors of Resident Supports, Susan Noonan and Marian Leist, and Assistant Director, Mary Moriarty, all of the group home residents were transported to the HARC offices on Sunday, October 30, with clothing, personal effects, medications and emergency items for several days.

Air mattresses, pillows and blankets for all the residents were quickly brought in and each group home was given an area within HARC's Bulova Center or Elderly Enrichment Program Suite in which to "set up camp." A showering schedule was established and movies, TV and other activities were provided throughout the days and evenings. HARC staff maintained overnight vigils, and both the president/CEO and COO remained at the building day and night, for the duration. HARC's supported employment and day programs were open and functioning as usual for the day program clients who came in. Residential staff shuttled to group homes regularly to pick up additional supplies as needed.

HARC's president/CEO, Stephen Becker, EdD, states, "The first night we were here, I saw that a few of our clients were quite apprehensive and fearful with their normal routines being so upset. I saw such compassion on the part of their staff who comforted them in the gentlest way possible. It was incredibly heartwarming."

Director of Resident Supports, Susan Noonan adds, "The amount of coordination needed in so many areas was astounding: health related and daily treatments, food and dietary considerations, exercise and skin maintenance, showering, removal of sleeping gear every morning so that day programs could function. And yet it all worked. It was fantastic." Marian Leist, Director of Resident Supports agrees. "To see all the staff working together for the good of everyone was totally uplifting. It was the sense that we were all in this together and everyone pitched in. It was

a great feeling to know that when one person just couldn't do any more, there was someone else who stepped in to take over.”

HARC was even able to provide emergency shelter and programming for at least one other Department of Developmental Services Client who has been living on her own. In talking with Addie, who lives in her own apartment in West Hartford, she was surprised to learn that an old friend she had met at Hartford's Regional Center is now a client of HARC. According to Addie, “I would somehow like to be a part of HARC. HARC didn't just fall onto the planet. It had to be created for what people needed. People have given so much of themselves here.”

About HARC

HARC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of people with intellectual disability and their families. It was founded in 1951 by families, long before community services were available and institutionalization was the only option. HARC remains a strong advocate for civil rights and opportunities, and is a major provider of clinical and supportive programs that span the entire lifetime: early intervention (Birth-to-Three), family support, respite care, employment and day services, residential, recreation, behavioral health and elderly services. HARC is celebrating its 60 years of service to the Greater Hartford community with many events during 2011.

HARC is a Community Investment Partner of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut and serves Greater Hartford.

For further information about HARC go to its website, www.harc-ct.org <<http://www.harc-ct.org/>> or call 860.218-6047

Photo captions:

RoseCards: HARC participant Rose enjoys a game of Go Fish at HARC in the aftermath of Storm Alfred

Michael & ShamikiNoland: HARC staff Shamiki Noland shares a gentle moment with participant, Michael, during the aftermath of Storm Alfred

SaarinDianaMartinezCute: HARC participant give her staff, Diana Martinez an enthusiastic hug during the aftermath of Storm Alfred

JaneDrawingGood: HARC participant, Jane shows off her coloring – one of the many activities during the aftermath of Storm Alfred

ToddAnikaNeath: HARC staff, Anika Neath and Todd enjoy a game during the aftermath of Storm Alfred.

Photo credit: Photo by Diana Appleton









