



September 2017

# Journeys

A Newsletter of Travelers Aid International

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## MEMBER NEWS

### Hurricanes Impacts Travelers Aid Agencies

Travelers Aid members in Texas, Florida, Georgia and Puerto Rico were impacted in recent weeks by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

At this time, we have not been able to contact Travelers Aid of Puerto Rico to determine how its staff and volunteers fared in either Hurricane Irma and most especially during Hurricane Maria, which struck the island on Sept. 20. Much of the island remains without power as the entire island's electrical grid was wiped out. The agency, primarily a social service agency, is based at Luis Munoz Marin International Airport and the airport did begin to re-open for limited commercial service on Sept. 22. The airport continues to run on generators. Earlier this week, [press accounts](#) reported on long lines as only 12 flights a day - 2 per airline - were permitted due to a destroyed communications and radar tower.

We are happy to report that none of the staff members or volunteers at the Florida agencies suffered serious personal losses in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. However, several volunteers at both Houston Hobby and Houston Bush airports did suffer extensive water damage in the flooding after Hurricane Harvey and its 50 inches of rain. Thousands of homes were damaged; many without flood insurance. Houston's 2 commercial airports were closed for 4 days.

Travelers Aid volunteers at Washington Reagan, Washington Dulles, New York JFK and Newark airports are donating to [an airport industry fund](#) set up for *all* Hurricane impacted airport employees and volunteers. Others who may be interested in assisting these volunteers may also donate at this website.

While none of the stateside operations suffered structural damages, several were closed for multiple days because of extended power outages. Florida's major utilities now report all Hurricane Irma-related outages have been restored.

Operations of Halifax Urban Ministries, in Daytona Beach, and Lake City Catholic Charities, in north central Florida, were both hampered by the Hurricane Irma electric outages with power not restored until Monday, Sept. 18. Frozen and refrigerated foods were lost during the outage reducing each agency's daily food bag distributions.

In Daytona Beach, the power outage impacted HUM's Bay Street location but not its North Street location, the site of its daily meal program. Meals were still provided. Despite the power outages, HUM employees were still there and shifted to those locations with power.

In Lake City, working from its own power-less facilities the agency staff members provided water and ready-to-eat-meals to other agencies within its 5-county service area.

The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay operates the county's 2-1-1 helpline, Travelers Aid at Tampa International Airport, TransCare, a first-response ambulance service, as well as crisis counseling.

As Irma approached Florida with an uncertain path, the 2-1-1 call center operators provided information on local resources so residents could prepare for the storm. On Saturday, Sept. 9, the call center was closed and the phone lines transferred to an out-of-state partner so that the operators could go home. At the same time, TransCare began responding only to emergency calls and no longer doing medical transfers. During a 12-hour period at the height of the storm, TransCare and all area first responders were pulled off the streets of Tampa.

Crisis Center's facility operated on a back-up generator during the storm and until the power was restored. The agency's essential employees - the 2-1-1 operators, TransCare drivers and its Sexual Assault Services team members - were back in the building on Monday, working. The rest of the employees returned on Wednesday and the center was re-opened to the public on Thursday. One off-site counseling location, the Mary Lee House, did not re-open until its power was restored on Sept. 18.

The Travelers Aid volunteers returned to the airport on Sept. 14 - one day after TPA began limited commercial service.

DayStar Life Center in St. Petersburg was closed on Sept 11, because of the power outage. It did not suffer any structural damage. Its facility was not in an evacuation zone.

Gainesville Catholic Charities was also only closed for a day because of the power outages. The agency suffered minimal impact to its facility.

After Irma blew through Florida, it hit Atlanta as a strong tropical storm, a rare event for that city. The downtown office building housing Hope Atlanta sustained wind damage to its roof and some windows. The building's owner closed the building for repairs until Sept. 15. Hope Atlanta staff members did return on Sept. 13, but did not open to the public. Its other area offices were not impacted by the storm.

Hope Atlanta social workers returned to the Atlanta airport earlier in the summer. With the pre-emptive closure of the region's mass transit system and multiple flight cancellations on Sept. 11, there was a significant rise in stranded travelers as well as homeless individuals at ATL that were assisted by the Hope Atlanta staff.

### **National Assistance Resources**

A number of Travelers Aid members have received assistance requests from individuals who evacuated to states outside of the hurricane zones. There is some assistance available from both [FEMA](#) and the [Red Cross](#) that could help them get back home, but there are stipulations. Assistance from one agency is not a guarantee that aid will be obtained from the other - 2 applications, preferably on-line, are required. Several Travelers Aid members have provided gas and food cards to

returning evacuees.

### **The British Embassy Knows Who to Call: Travelers Aid**

A Travelers Aid volunteer at Washington Reagan National Airport on Sept. 11 assisted the staff of the British Ambassador to book flights to Miami. Trying to reach South Florida to help British citizens in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, the embassy staff called Travelers Aid when they could not find any seats to Miami. The volunteer using Travelers Aid resources found a United Airlines flight out of BWI connecting in Chicago for the embassy team to reach Miami.

### **Merger at FamilyAid Boston**

A Boston non-profit, Family-to-Family Project, [on July 1 merged](#) with FamilyAid Boston. Family-to-Family, a long-time partner, is now a program of FamilyAid Boston. It provides one-time financial assistance to families at risk of losing their homes.

### **New Websites**

Three Travelers Aid members have recently revamped their websites. Please, check them out:

- Homeless and Travelers Aid Society, Albany: [www.hatas.org](http://www.hatas.org)
- Travelers Aid/DFW Airport: [www.dfwtravelersaid.org](http://www.dfwtravelersaid.org)
- Pathways2Tomorrow, Arlington, Texas: [www.pathways2tomorrow.org](http://www.pathways2tomorrow.org)

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## **OUR NEWS**

### **Heads Up for 2018 Annual Conference**

The 2018 Travelers Aid International Conference will be in Chicago. While the hotel and exact dates have not been set, the conference will be during the week of June 11-15. An email announcing the date and hotel will be sent in the coming months.

### **Applications for Travel Aid Assistance Fund**

The Travelers Aid Agency Assistance Fund continues to accept applications from those members experiencing financial difficulties. The maximum grant is \$10,000. The fund is designed to assist a member encountering financial challenges that can be overcome with some assistance, a financial plan and guidance from other members. The funds can also be tapped to help a new agency get off the ground. The application can be obtained from [Dave Asselin](#).

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## **MILESTONES**

### **New Hires and Promotions**

**Community Link** - Steffi Travis is the new Chief Advancement Officer.

**Families Forward Philadelphia** - Jason Miller is the new CEO. He is the former executive director at Ready, Willing and Able and also a visiting professor at University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy & Practice.

**Travelers Aid/Newark Airport** - Christian Havens has been promoted as the program manager effective July 8. Last week, Dide Aydogan began as the new assistant program manager.

**Upward Transitions** - Jeremy Sanders joined the agency as its new CEO. He ministered at local churches for 28 years and was most recently pastor of program ministries at St. Luke's United Methodist Church. He replaces Ray Bitsche, who retired on June 30.

[The digital Travelers Aid International Membership Directory has been updated on our website.](#)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Travelers Aid/Chicago O'Hare Airport** - The annual Volunteer Luncheon will be Oct. 25 at the Avalon Banquets in Elk Grove Village.

**Travelers Aid/Dulles Airport** - The annual Volunteer Holiday Luncheon will be Dec. 5 at the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport.

**Travelers Aid/Reagan Airport** - Staff and volunteers will participate in the Nov. 4 Wings for All event. The airport and American Airlines host the event to assist those with autism and other special needs to learn about the airport travel experience.

The annual Volunteer Holiday Luncheon will be Dec. 1 at The Alexandrian.

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## FUTURE FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Oct. 7, Baltimore Catholic Charities, Ten Oaks Cup Polo Match, Congressional Polo Club. [Learn more.](#)

Oct. 7, Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, SpeakUp 5K, Al Lopez Park. [Learn more.](#)

Oct. 10, Baltimore Catholic Charities Ryder Cup, Hayfields Country Club. [Learn more.](#)

Oct. 11, Baltimore Catholic Charities Annual Awards Celebration, Hippodrome Theater. [Learn more.](#)

Oct. 11, Help of Southern Nevada, Tea, Trends and Tranquility, Mandarin Oriental Hotel. [Learn more.](#)

Oct. 13, Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, Masquerade Soiree, Egypt Shrine Stu Lang Activity Center.

Oct. 18, Families Forward Philadelphia, Jannie L. Blackwell Gala, The Please Touch Museum. [Learn more.](#)

Oct. 27, Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, Community Pop, Tampa Bay Sporting Clays & Archery. [Learn More.](#)

Oct. 28, Total Ministries, Hub City Empty Bowels, Chapman Cultural Center. [Learn more.](#)

Oct. 29, Families Forward Philadelphia, 2017 Generosity Philadelphia 5K, Philadelphia Art Museum. [Learn more.](#)

Nov. 2. Hope Atlanta, Heroes for Hope Awards Dinner, Georgia Aquarium. [Learn more.](#)

Nov. 4, Homeless and Travelers Aid Society, Home Sweet Gingerbread Home Competition, Crossgate Mall. [Learn more.](#)

Nov. 11, Daystar Life Center, Drive Away Hunger Golf Tournament, Buffalo Creek Golf Course in Palmetto. [Learn more.](#)

Nov. 11, Heartland Alliance, Candlelight Ball, Ritz-Carlton at Water Tower Place. [Learn more.](#)

Nov. 16, Family Aid Boston, Home for the Holidays, Exchange Conference Center. [Learn more.](#)

Nov. 16, Homeless and Travelers Aid Society, Evening in Winter Wonderland Gala, Sixty State Place. [Learn more.](#)

Dec. 3, Heartland Alliance, Holiday Brunch, Four Seasons Hotel. [Learn more.](#)

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