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CF supports Hurricane Ian survivors



Supplies are prepared for sending to hurricane survivors.

Story and Photos Provided

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OCALA -- When the College of Central Florida made the decision to close before Hurricane Ian, administrators worried the storm might impact the college's students and faculty served by campuses in Marion, Citrus and Levy counties.

Two days later, when the CF community saw the devastation in Southwest Florida, students, faculty and staff immediately asked, "How can we help?"

Just a few days after the storm, CF staff delivered much-needed generators, gas cans and extension cords to Daytona State College, which experienced major flooding and power loss. When students, faculty and staff returned to campus, groups including the Career and Professional Employees Council quickly organized to facilitate a supply drive.

On Monday, Oct. 10, CF staff loaded six pallets of water, nonperishable food, cleaning supplies and personal hygiene products into a tractor-trailer headed to State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota. CF's contributions filled up the trailer that also included donations from Florida Gateway College, Santa Fe College and Lake-Sumter State College. CF and the other three colleges are all members of the Florida College System.

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“This is why we’re called ‘The Great 28,’” said Florida College System Chancellor Kathryn Hebda. “We see a need and we respond.”

CF President Dr. Jim Henningsen explained that the college also collected a large amount of supplies which will be added to the Marion County collection so items can be distributed by the Marion County Sheriff’s Office to those impacted by the hurricane who still need assistance.

“We have all heard the stories of families who lost everything,” Henningsen said. “They are our neighbors and we are working together to support them. It could have been any one of us.”

For more than a week, CF students, faculty and staff filled campus donation boxes. On Thursday, Oct. 13, 14 CF student and staff volunteers sorted and packed 60 boxes of donated nonperishable food, household supplies and personal hygiene products plus pallets of water and pet food, which will now be delivered to the Marion County Sheriff’s Office for distribution.

“We’re stronger together,” Henningsen said. “Our college family supports our neighbors in need.”