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Holiday Celebration for Hurricane Maria Evacuees

Chicago helps Hurricane Maria evacuees from Puerto Rico celebrate the holidays one year after displacement.

The City of Chicago, FOCUS North America, and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) joined forces to help Hurricane Maria Evacuees still struggling from their displacement one year later have happy holidays.

“Chicago continues to be a welcoming city for evacuees,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “We know how the hurricane and the displacement continues to effect families, but we are still here to help ease the struggles, especially during the holidays.”

Two hundred and fifty individuals and over one hundred families received personal hygiene kits with snacks and a family board game courtesy of FOCUS North America and a ham with holiday fixings courtesy of the City of Chicago.

“We are excited to serve the hurricane victims in Chicago, easing some of the stress we know many evacuees continue to face this holiday season,” said Seraphim Danckaert, Executive Director of FOCUS North America. “Our mission is to help those in need across North America, and we are grateful to our partners in the city of Chicago for making this service event possible.”

The City has served 1782 individuals or 951 families through a multiagency resource center that was open from November 2017 until May 2018 and at the Trina Davila

Community Service Center after, which continues to help evacuees. PRCC is working to identify where these evacuees are and to see if they continue to have needs.

“We are grateful the City continues to make evacuees from Puerto Rico a priority,” said Jose E. Lopez, Executive Director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. “We are glad to have an opportunity to serve evacuees and all Puerto Ricans in Chicago.”

The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) continues to assist evacuees at the Trina Davila Community Service Center. The DFSS operates six community service centers open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to serve all Chicagoans. Community Service Centers help individuals and families in need access a wide range of resources from shelter, food and clothing to domestic violence assistance, drug rehab, job training and prisoner re-entry services. Clients can get information about rental, utility and other financial assistance programs as well.

Since the Hurricane Maria first hit Puerto Rico, Mayor Emanuel has been working with community leaders and elected officials including Congressman Gutierrez to support recovery on the island. In March of this year, Mayor Emanuel and Congressman Gutierrez led a delegation on a humanitarian visit to Puerto Rico as part of a mayoral exchange program that allows leaders to share expertise with peers and support rebuilding efforts on the island.

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A delegation of 23 members of the Chicago Fire Department spent 10 days in Puerto Rico in October 2017 to provide aide, support and an on-the-ground assessment of additional resources needed.

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