



# Staten Island Sunday Advance

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## 5,000 VOLUNTEERS COME TO THE ISLAND'S AID

Thanks to an army of relief workers, Staten Island is no longer forgotten

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STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

**T**hey came from as far away as Nevada and Texas, as close as Manhattan and Brooklyn, but the most important thing was that they came — to Staten Island.

Volunteers, young and old, with kind words, helping hands and positive attitudes, making it clear that this — at our time of greatest need — is no longer New York City's forgotten borough.

The out-of-town volunteers joined the ranks of countless thousands of borough residents, including children and teenagers, who continue to step up and step out to help Hurricane Sandy's victims in the most up close and personal ways.

From the Miller Field Distribution Center, a hoard of over 5,000 volunteers swarmed out across the Island, bringing supplies, donations and other items to areas where they are so desperately needed, said Peter Spencer, the mayor's storm liaison to Staten Island. Spencer said about 1,000 homes have received outreach Saturday due to volunteers' efforts, which included participation from local churches, the National Guard and many others.

The staging area at Miller Field provided a site not only to send out volunteers and provide assistance, but several organizations set up mini sites to provide assistance. Among them were FEMA, the Health and Hospitals Corporation, insurance companies, and others, said Lisa Bova-Haitt, coordinator of the Miller Field site.

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Some of the approximately 5,000 volunteers walk toward the sign-up area in the parking lot at Midland Beach.



The daughters of former President George W. Bush — Jenna Bush Hager (in yellow jacket) and Barbara Bush — help unload supplies from the Salvation Army on Midland Avenue.

inator of the Miller Field site.

Spencer said volunteers are handing out everything from medical and cleaning supplies to food and other items.

"Staten Island, as you know, is an unbelievable community," said Ms. Bova-Haitt of the help that residents and others have been providing over the last two weeks.

She said that volunteers have come from Virginia, South Carolina, Maryland and Putnam Valley, N.Y., among other places.

Those volunteers include Connie Morton, a graduate student in emergency management who is on sabbatical. She arrived Wednesday from her home in Las Vegas, Nev., as part of group of 22 others, most of them from Maryland and Virginia, all affiliated with We Care, a national nonprofit organization.

"I'm humbled — these people lost everything," she said on Saturday morning at the Miller Field distribution site before leaving for a day's work of cleanup. "These are ordinary, hard-working people, people who never asked for a handout."

Asked how long she planned to stay on the Island, Ms. Morton replied: "I bought a one-way ticket, and will stay for as long as there is meaningful work."

Here's a look at some of the activity and efforts on Saturday:

### GRATITUDE ON OLYMPIA BOULEVARD

Rosemary Vasquez, born and raised in Midland Beach, was standing outside four devastated small homes that she owns on Olympia Boulevard on Saturday, watching one tenant cart out box after box of waterlogged, destroyed personal effects and toss them on the huge and still growing pile of debris at curbside.

"Look! People are still coming!" she said, pointing to men arriving at her property to work with other volunteers to rip out everything from the saturated structures. Through Oasis Christian Center on nearby Greeley Avenue, the volunteers traveled from "Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Alabama," Ms. Vasquez said.

One of them, Dave White, 37, a professional builder and member of York Grace Brethren Church, left his wife and three children — 7, 12, and 15 years old — in York, Pa., to volunteer from Friday morning through Sunday, returning home for work on Monday. "This is a major disaster," he said, noting that this was his first-ever visit to the borough.

"These are the most honest, trustworthy people I've ever seen in my life," said a grateful Ms. Vasquez, holding back tears. "God bless them, and God bless Pastor Tim (McIntyre) at Oasis."

### 'WAGNER CARES' BRINGS OUT STUDENTS

A trio of out-of-town Wagner College seniors, along with Dr. Mohammad Alaudin of Bulls Head from the chemistry faculty, walked down Greeley Avenue near Father Capodanno Boulevard in Midland Beach on Saturday morning, pushing carts filled with relief supplies.

They were going door-to-door and "assessing what people need," said Eden Stark, 22, a microbiology major from Ohio. She was joined by Mary Schaffer, 21, from Pennsylvania, and Cassandra Tay, also 21, from New Jersey, both arts administration majors.

The students, who were volunteering for the Salvation Army, explained that the college had sign-up sheets, and that the student government created a website in response to Hurricane Sandy: [wagnercares.org](http://wagnercares.org).

Its purpose "is to act as a central hub for students to locate ways of volunteering and assisting their neighbors," and "will remain a



Among the volunteers were soldiers, who move supplies with military precision at Miller Field.



Wagner College volunteers, from left to right, are Eden Stark of Ohio; Mary Schaffer of Pennsylvania; Cassandra Tay of New Jersey; chemistry professor Dr. Mohammad Alaudin of Bulls Head, and Tony Tipton gather on Greeley Avenue.



A small army of volunteers helped life-long Midland Beach resident Rosemary Vasquez clear out debris from her destroyed houses on Olympia Boulevard.

constant resource for Wagner College students in the future, acting as a partnership with our community for volunteer and community-based efforts."

### SALVATION ON MIDLAND AVENUE

The Salvation Army's distribution center at 600 Midland Ave. was a hub of activity on Saturday, filled with volunteers — among them Jenna Bush Hager and Barbara Bush, former President George W. Bush's twin daughters — who helped unload boxes of supplies from arriving trucks and packed up large red shopping carts with blankets and other necessities to distribute on foot to needy families in their wrecked homes.

Diapers, canned soup, water, hand sanitizer, hygiene kits, boxes of apples and bags of cat and dog food were among the plentiful items free for the taking. A Salvation Army truck was parked curbside, serving coffee, hot chocolate, low-sodium chicken-vegetable soup and potato chips at no charge.

"We're serving an average of 200 to 300 people a day," said Dobbs Ferry resident Susan Kelly, who serves as the incident-center commander, along with her husband, Scott Kelly.

"Every day we get calls from people wanting to volunteer, and today we have a group of 20 from Manhattan, students from Wagner College, and friends of Jenna and Barbara Bush."

In highest demand are the large plastic buckets that serve as "cleaning kits," filled with brooms, bleach, work gloves and other items.

Most-needed supplies include face masks, socks, work gloves, cleaning supplies and feminine and baby hygiene products, Susan Kelly added.

"There's been such a great outpouring of support," said Erin Esparza, a Brooklyn Heights resident who serves on the advisory board of the Greater New York Salvation Army. "Jenna organized friends and colleagues," she added, noting that Mrs. Bush Hager and her sister, Barbara, are New Yorkers, and their mother, Laura, is on the national advisory board of the Salvation Army.

Jeff Prensley, 33, from the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn who works in the insurance industry, was one of the volunteers on the bucket line, unloading large cardboard boxes filled with water and sports drinks, and



Lorraine Nazi of Tottenville wears a mask as she helps deliver supplies for the Salvation Army on Midland Avenue.

then breaking open boxes filled with Rubbermaid ice chests. Asked what motivated him to show up, he replied: "Why not? It's the right thing to do, and I wanted to help out."

### VOLUNTEERS ON THE WEST SHORE

Three women left a small home at 1085 Olympia Blvd. on Saturday morning, explaining that they worked for the city Department of Education and simply organized themselves to help out, 15 of them in all, going house-to-house to ask what beleaguered families needed, using a checklist form for each individual family.

"You just feel terrible," said Denise Lall of New Springville, a speech pathologist.

"I went out last weekend and saw the destruction in New Dorp," said her friend, Christina Cataldo of Bulls Head, who was born and raised on the Island.

"I can't believe this is Staten Island," added Sara Carlucci, also of Bulls Head and a speech pathologist. "A lot of (the victims) are in such good spirits, and the number of volunteers is absolutely amazing. There are people here from Alabama."

The house the women had just left had a generator humming in the side yard, courtesy of her father Miguel's boss, said Diana Galicia, 12. She explained that her family

ing the lush fabric. "The blanket is warm. We share it with them and it is made of 70 recycled plastic bottles," he said, all by the foundation's volunteers.

There are also the bamboo banks — cylinder-shaped containers that volunteers are told to drop a mere 2 cents in each day. By doing so, they think positively while providing money that can send help out into the world. Kuo said he has been all over at disasters such as Haiti, Chile and South America, now he said he is happy that he and his volunteers could come to the Island and help, along with spreading messages of love and hope.

"This is a place of love, I am so proud to be here," he said.

### ASSISTANCE FROM CLOSER TO HOME

While Kuo hailed from Los Angeles, Jennifer Smith came from right around the corner in Great Kills. Like so many, she wanted to do everything she could to help.

"I wanted to help because there was so much devastation," said Ms. Smith, 51. "I know I am OK, but so many people are not, so whatever I can do to help, I want to do."

With a full tank of gas, Ms. Smith was loading her car with donations to be dropped off wherever they might be needed. She said she had already been providing donations for two days after the hurricane and still wanted to do more.

"When I handed out donations, I saw so many people that were just in a state of shock — I wanted to be helpful and provide whatever they needed. This really changes your life," she said.

### YOUTH VOLUNTEERS PITCH IN, TOO

Then there were young volunteers like Krista Savin, 11. The Bulls Head fifth-grader from PS 60 was so moved after seeing what Sandy had done to her community she wanted to run out and help.

"I saw pictures and it was just devastating because all the people had lost their homes and everything," Krista said.

Of course, Krista was hoping to actually get some hands-on work done, removing construction and housing debris that so heavily dots the front doors of many of the devastated communities.

"I didn't want her to come for that, because that was so dangerous," said her mother, Rebecca Savin. Instead mom, Krista and sister Jordan, 8,

"Feel that," he said touch-

## HURRICANE SANDY

VOLUNTEERS FROM PAGE A 1

# Forgotten no longer: 5,000 volunteers on the Island

dropped by the center to help out in any way they could.

"It's wonderful and heart-warming and it makes you want to cry," said Ms. Savin of all of the efforts at the center. She said she was especially happy with her two budding young humanitarians.

"They make me really proud," she said.

### THE COUSIN FROM VERMONT

Part of the Savin family's inspiration to help also came from cousin Kim Post. The 29-year-old native from Richmond, now a resident of Bennington, Vt., doesn't own a TV or radio — by choice. But once she heard about the devastation in her native home, she had to come down and see it firsthand. She also had to come down and help.

"I wanted to see it for myself," she said. "I think about everyone and wanted to make sure they are safe. It's hard to be so far away," she said.

Ms. Post, owner of the Nova Mae Cafe in Bennington, is no stranger to struggle: Her 6-year-old (the cafe's namesake) has a rare genetic disorder. Mom has made many connections due to her daughter's illness. Those same connections wanted to help when they heard about what happened to her hometown and provided donations.

Ms. Post dropped off the goods at Great Kills, Mount Loretto and at Yetman Avenue, including clothing, blankets, dog food and "500 bottles of Oil of Olay lotion. People said they really needed it; their hands were dry," she said excitedly.

Ms. Post was also working on completing three batches of her delicious organic soup to head back out and serve to those in need.

"I feel pain in my back. I am exhausted, but I feel like I wanted to be here," she added. "I waited 'til Friday and drove so fast to come here. Everyone has pulled together. It's so great."

### TYSON FOODS DELIVERS CHICKEN

Patrick Bourke has one of those warm, down-home accents that just begs to be loved. Instead, Bourke was giving out the love on Saturday with a Tyson Foods semi filled with chicken in preparation for handing out the delicious chicken dishes — the company's specialty — to the hungry and anyone in need.

"We are new to Staten Island, it's our first time here. But it's crazy," said Bourke of the overwhelming damage he's seen.

Prepared meals included a delicious egg omelet with Canadian bacon wraps and other tasty, ready-on-the-grill, mouthwatering items. The large 53-foot trailer is nicknamed The Meals that Matter Trailer.

"This is the first time it's been deployed in the continental United States," said Bourke. The truck came online in April and was driven straight from the company's Springdale, Ark., home to here.

Bourke, manager of logistics planning transportation for Tyson Foods, said they have been providing between 12,000-13,000 meals to the hungry. The company truck had started out first in Bayonne and has been on the Island since last Sunday.

Bourke said volunteers have come from not only Arkansas, but also Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and Indiana, to name a few; he and so many others have been working 14-16 hour days, simply because: "You're our neighbors and neighbors help neighbors."

Bourke added the company presence would be around as long as needed with relief trucks on the way if supplies begin to dwindle.

"There's a need and we are here to fill it," he said, adding, "We will be out here 'til Thanksgiving if we have to."