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Giving City: New nonprofit leaders shine during disaster

METRO-STATE



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By Monica Williams - Giving City Austin



Holly McDaniel, executive director of the Austin Diaper Bank, led the distribution of more diapers in a single week than the diaper bank delivers in a year. (Photo from Austin Diaper Bank)

Posted: 10:19 a.m. Friday, September 08, 2017

Highlights

Sometimes, such as during a natural disaster, the timing of new leadership can test a



onprofit's response.

For the head of the Austin Diaper Bank, Hurricane Harvey came in her first week on her new job.

When Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf Coast on Aug. 25, Holly McDaniel had been executive director of the Austin Diaper Bank for all of three days. In the single week that followed, her group had distributed more than 600,000 diapers to shelters in Central Texas and the along the coast.

“Usually the diaper bank sends out about 250,000 a year,” said McDaniel. “The response to our call for diapers was overwhelming.”

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, nonprofits go into rescue and relief mode, putting into place plans they’ve created for just such times. But sometimes the timing of new leadership can test an organization’s response. At those times, the infrastructure of an organization — and the experience of its leaders — are critical.

For McDaniel, a 15-year nonprofit veteran, the Harvey disaster was a lesson in outreach. As huge donations came in from the public and from diaper companies, McDaniel reached for the phone. “I just started calling everyone I’ve ever worked with, asking questions. In a big crisis, people are more than willing to help. It’s been a crash course.”

She also leaned heavily on the diaper banks’s only other employee, Lindsey Martinez, who works part time but put in the 12- to 15-hour days right alongside McDaniel. That kind of staff support was critical, she said.

Paula DeLaCruz had been executive director of [Texas Search and Rescue](#) for about five weeks when Harvey hit. The group trains volunteers who are deployed by government and local law enforcement agencies in search-and-rescue operations. As a one-person staff, DeLaCruz had joined the nonprofit with four years in the post-disaster field.

[More Giving City: Donors urged to be smart about donating, volunteering](#)

But for all her readiness and experience, DeLaCruz said no one could have been prepared for the magnitude of Harvey. “I had no script,” she said. “Even the former executive director hadn’t seen an event like this.”

The day before the storm made landfall, her volunteers were put into action.

“My work shifted sharply from a focus on administration to managing field operation support, media requests and spontaneous donations and volunteers,” she said.

Managing calls from people across the country asking that their families be rescued was the hardest

part. “My phone rang 24 hours a day for five days straight.”

Texas Search and Rescue continues to perform search and rescue missions today, but so far, DeLaCruz says it has rescued and evacuated more than 500 people along the coast.

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While Derrick Chubbs had been leader of the Central Texas Food Bank for almost a year, Harvey was the first disaster situation he had faced in that role. But Chubbs had come from 10 years of working with the American Red Cross. He was ready, he said.

“I think my Red Cross experience was critical to this team,” he said.

Chubbs was able to work from his knowledge of the sheltering process, but he admits he was less prepared for the city to move a shelter up the street from the food bank. That’s when the food bank’s investment in a new industrial kitchen paid off.

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Because donors had helped relocate and build the food bank’s new facility, Chubbs said, it has been able to provide food and supplies and also prepare and distribute hundreds of hot breakfasts daily to the shelter. And because of its larger donation-sorting and storing capabilities, it has been able to deploy more than 2,000 volunteers and distribute more than 218,000 pounds of goods, just for Harvey relief.

“What I told my team was that disaster recovery is a marathon, not a sprint,” said Chubbs. “Our primary responsibility is to the people of Central Texas, so we’ve just got to stay focused on our processes.”

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by Rachel Rice, Austin Community Newspapers Staff

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by Joe Gross

You know it, I know it, your neighbors know it: Austin is lousy with folks who just will not throw away their stuff. Austin's garages, its sheds and its crawl spaces are filled with plenty of objects from the good old days, be those the 90s rock/tech boom, the 80s oil boom

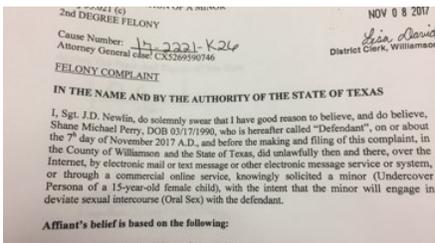
TRAFFIC UPDATE: 4 hospitalized after U.S. 290 crash, EMS says

by Mark D. Wilson, American-Statesman Staff

3:05 p.m. update: Four people were hospitalized on Thursday after a crash on U.S. 290. Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services said two women in their 30s were rushed to Dell Seton Medical Center with potentially serious injuries. Two others were taken to another area hospital with injuries that were not



considered life-threatening, and...



Georgetown man accused of arranging to have sex with 15-year-old girl

by Claire Osborn, American-Statesman Staff

A Georgetown man has been accused of arranging to have sex with a 15-year-old girl he thought he had met online but who turned out to be an undercover officer, according to an arrest affidavit. Shane Perry, 27, was charged with online solicitation of a minor, a second-

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