



Since September, Heart of Florida United Way has been helping those who have been impacted by Hurricane Maria. We sent solar-powered lights, water filters and USB cell phone chargers to Puerto Rico when Fondos Unidos, our sister city United Way, told us of the need. We gathered the community to formulate a plan when we heard the first evacuees were arriving. We have been at the Orlando Airport Welcome Center and Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) to provide temporary housing since day one to the closing day. And now we are ready to help evacuees transition into stable housing.

United Way is fighting our community's most daunting problems on a daily basis but we are ready to leap into action when emergency situations arise. It has been a community wide effort, from donors to volunteers; it would not have been possible without each one of you.

Jose's Story

When Hurricane Maria struck, she left a wave of destruction and chaos in her wake. Jose and his family lost a lot to the storm, but one thing they never lost was their hope. With a wife in her third trimester of pregnancy and a 5 year-old-son, Jose was determined to provide a bright future for his children despite losing their home. They determined that evacuating stateside was the best option.

Unfortunately, his wife was not permitted to travel due to her pregnancy and remained on the island with their son while staying with relatives. So Jose left on his own. When he arrived at the Orlando International Airport, he was connected to United Way for temporary hotel housing while he waited for his FEMA TSA application to process.

In the meantime he secured 2 part-time jobs. His schedule was erratic and he nearly missed the birth of his daughter back on the island because of it. But Jose persisted, desperate to secure a home so his family could join him in Central Florida. When he was approved for low-income housing, they asked for a security deposit for the apartment and utilities. With most of his income going to support his family in Puerto Rico, Jose knew it would take



many months before he could hope to save up that amount. It was the first time since the storm that Jose felt helpless and hopeless.

That's where United Way comes in. The Hurricane Maria Evacuee Housing Assistance program was designed to help families like Jose who are fighting to make a new life in our community. They have jobs. They've found housing. They just need a little help getting started.

Because of you, Jose is eagerly anticipating the arrival of his wife, son and daughter into their new home this week!

[Learn more about the program](#)

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