



Update from the Superintendent

To: All BDS Employees
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: October 14, 2022

This is a copy of the Superintendent's weekly message that is sent to parents/guardians. We want to make sure you have the same information as well so you're in the loop :)

This week marks a sobering milestone in our community as we note the passage of four years since Hurricane Michael roared ashore and forever changed our landscape, our hearts and our families.

The good news is, we've accomplished SO MUCH since that date four years ago and I am confident we have many more exciting ground breakings, developments and improvements yet to come. But we also know, all too well, what's going on to the south of us where those in Fort Myers and the surrounding areas are just getting started on the arduous rebuilding process.

Many of us want to help and several donation trucks have already left our area. Our students are working on another way to help right now and you can get involved as well if you like.

After Michael, we received LOTS of letters and cards from those who survived other devastating hurricanes. The letters and cards were written by students to students and by adults to adults and they told tales of inspiration, encouragement and hope. And they were incredibly uplifting during some difficult days.

Our students, under the direction of the Bay High School Student Government Association, are working to do the same for those impacted by Hurricane Ian. **Bay High's SGA members are collecting letters and cards until October 31st and they welcome submissions from all schools, all students and all community members.**

It doesn't cost anything to write a few inspirational words and we hope you'll join this campaign so we can show our friends in South Florida how much we care and empathize with them.

As a school district, I want you to know that BDS is leveraging many of our resources to help the school districts most impacted by Hurricane Ian. We're in regular contact with them and have offered up documents, manuals, "how to" guides and the expertise of those instrumental in our own recovery in an all-out effort to help them.

Unfortunately, we know only too well how challenging working with FEMA can be, but we hope to help guide them in the right direction so they can benefit from our lessons learned the hard way.

While it may be tempting to send "stuff" to South Florida, please remember what a bind we were in after the storm. We barely had ANY storage facilities that were undamaged and traveling our roads to deliver stuff was challenging on a good day.

So, in addition to letters, we're encouraging our community to contribute to Bay High's penny drive for Hurricane Ian (you can drop off donations at the school's office located at 1200 Harrison Avenue, Panama City, 32401) and to support the mission of Mercy Chefs.

Mercy Chefs, as you may remember, served thousands of meals in our community for two years after Hurricane Michael. Those hot meals, and fellowship around the dinner table, provided hope to so many of us and we want to make sure we're doing all we can to help them provide the same level of care for those in the Fort Myers area.

I don't often publicly ask for donations for charitable organizations because I know people typically have their own preferences and there are a plethora of amazing organizations worthy of our support. But in this case, I know the track record of Mercy Chefs and I know the incredible service they are providing to those impacted by

Hurricane Ian and I know they need our support. You can donate to Mercy Chefs with a donation at www.mercychefs.com or you can mail a check to 711 Washington Street, Portsmouth, VA, 23704.

We also encourage those interested to donate to Samaritan's Purse

(<https://www.samaritanspurse.org/our-ministry/donate-online/>) or the Salvation Army

(<https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/ways-to-give/>). Both organizations were also instrumental in our recovery and are helping those in South Florida.

Thank you to all of those who have helped our neighbors in South Florida in any way at all. We can't change what happened to us but we can remember the power of small things like cold drinks, hot meals and encouraging words and we can pay it forward.

Stay safe and God Bless!