

Breezy Point Disaster Relief Fund

Grant Type: Dollar

Grant Amount: \$2.5 million

Organization: Breezy Point Disaster Relief Fund



What was the objective of your grant or initiative?

Following the devastation caused by Superstorm Sandy, our objective was to get the people of Breezy Point, a community of 2,837 individual homes that also lost 30 neighbors and relatives on 9/11, back into their homes as quickly as possible.

As a community leader, I received a call from a neighbor the morning after the storm asking where to donate to help those whose homes were lost. With the help of six other residents, we formed the Breezy Point Disaster Relief Fund from scratch. We received our charitable status by mid-November and began helping our residents.

What was your approach?

Our approach was to appeal to as many people as possible to raise funds. The conditions in Breezy Point—130 burned-out homes and another 170 flooded homes—engendered much sympathy, all spread by word of mouth.

- People who had moved from Breezy Point years ago ran fundraisers in Florida, St. Louis, New Mexico, and countless other places.
- Residents who lost their homes hosted fundraisers in local bars and restaurants.
- Residents appealed to their employers for donations.

It became a true community effort, and although every resident was affected, those who had the wherewithal did everything they could to help the most in need. We developed a website and a committee that solicited corporate donations, but our own residents put forth the most effort to help their neighbors.

What were the outsized results?

We ultimately raised \$2.5 million, giving approximately \$2.175 million to 735 residents in grants ranging from \$500 to \$7,500. Residents were asked to complete an application that was reviewed by a committee of five; the committee recommended the size of the grant based on need.

We also received grants of approximately \$400,000 for specific projects, such as our gym, playground, youth athletic programs, and activity center.

We exceeded our initial expectations as we began our initiative days after the storm, and we had virtually no experience in soliciting or administering grants. Although much has been accomplished, there are still about 40% of us who have yet to return home.

