How real estate can help the survivors of Hurricane Florence

This story has been reposted with permission from Rob Hahn and Sunny Lake Hahn.

Rob and I were supposed to be in Wilmington, North Carolina today to present some new sessions at the State Realtor Conference, Xchange. We watched as Hurricane Florence gained strength across the Atlantic with estimated landfall near Wilmington, and quickly realized that the event would be cancelled.

In an email from the NC Realtors staff today, I was told that they are “working like crazy to get funding and help and strategizing how we can get to work once we are able to get into the areas.” Of this, I have no doubt.

In a quick email back to her, I mentioned a few things we learned after Harvey unleashed 30 trillion gallons of water on Houston.

This time last year, we had just gotten home after being trapped out of town for 11 days during Hurricane Harvey. While we were away we watched paralyzed, not knowing what to do or what we’d come home to. That kind of anxiety stops you in your tracks. And once we were back in Houston, that paralysis continued.

Now that Florence has wreaked her havoc on the Carolinas, we are feeling that same sense of paralysis. What do we do to help? How can we best serve those who have lost everything?

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"*A hurting person is in a storm. They are cold, wet, shivering and scared. Preaching, platitudes and advice will not get them out of the storm. Don't tell a person in a storm that it's a sunny day. There will likely come a day when the clouds part, but it's not today. It's not your job to pull them out of the storm. It's your job to get wet with them*," Adam S. McHugh said.

With our knowledge of last year's catastrophic flooding and aftermath, there are some things we learned that I want to share with you because I know there are so many who want to help, but don't know where to begin. And because so many that are impacted don't know what lies ahead.

For the helpers

Here are some simple things you can start collecting now — because trust me, they will be hard to come by once the waters recede and clean-up begins.

- Bleach
- Mildew killer
- Scrub brushes
- Spray bottles
- Box fans
- Dust masks
- Work gloves
- Contractor brooms
- 50 gallon trash bins
- Home Depot or Lowes gift cards (OK – these aren't hard to come by. But, man, they are appreciated.)

You're probably thinking: *Really? That's what people will need?* Yes. Absolutely. And most importantly, show up to help with the work. You don't need a skilled trade to help with the clean-up. And the first few days after the flooding has stopped are critical. Mold and mildew set in quickly.

For those who are hurting

If your home was flooded or damaged by fallen trees, there is no doubt your community is rallying around you and asking what you need. But here's the thing: you don't know yet. And while you are so very grateful for their support, you don't know what to ask for. You don't know what will be salvageable and what is lost.

My small advice in this time of overwhelm is to start an Amazon Wish List.

I don't mean to sound trite, but you will also want to document everything — and I mean everything.

As you haul things out to the curb for eventual pick-up, take photos and detailed notes.

The work will seem overwhelming, but it will be so helpful when filing a claim with your insurance company. With the amount of devastation across the region, it will take time for insurance adjusters and FEMA to get to everyone.

Little did we know, but looters would come out in the evenings and take things from debris piles in front of homes. They took appliances, furniture, cabinets, basically anything of value, even though it was water damaged. I watched it happen every night as I drove through neighborhoods. If you have pictures to document your belongings, it will help in the event that this happens in your area.

Be patient. Acknowledge that it will take time to rebuild your life. But remember that a day will come where you will start to feel normal again. Your life will go on. And you will come out of this stronger than you can imagine right now.

There will be a day when the clouds will part. But in the meantime, we are here to get wet with you.

Resources

Writer's note: I received a list of resources from NC Realtors. There are links for a needs assessment, volunteer opportunities, updates on relief efforts, donations, etc. Also, if you have a short-term rental near the impacted areas of North Carolina and South Carolina, please let me know, and I will get you in touch with the staff at NC Realtors.

Feel free to share these links!

- Updates on relief efforts: This page will be updated daily or as new information comes in
- If you have been impacted by Hurricane Florence and need assistance, please fill out this quick survey
- To volunteer, please complete this survey
- To make a donation to the NC Realtors Housing Foundation

Source: click here