

Disaster Case Managers Helping Flood Victims

If you still need help recovering from the June flood, assistance is available.

The Flood Recovery Project - Copper Country, created in October, will assist Copper Country residents facing long term effects from June 2018 flooding, also locally known as the Father's Day Flood.

Marci Vivian and Dennis Leopold will staff Flood Recovery Project - Copper Country as Disaster Case Managers. They are assessing needs and stand ready, reaching out to help those affected by the Father's Day Flood. They are also looking into enhancing counseling options specific to flooding.

"This is a commitment to holistically getting their lives back to a place of normalcy," said the Rev. Paul Perez, of the Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church. "The work of disaster case management is not only material but it's psychological, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being."

Marci and Dennis work with the Copper Country Team Disaster Recovery Group – comprised of local church and community leaders, and nonprofit and government agencies. They also work in partnership with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). UMCOR is the humanitarian disaster recovery arm of The United Methodist Church.

Their work "officially" got up and running Oct. 5th– four months after the June 17 flood. There are still a lot of questions Vivian and Leopold are assessing in terms of the community's needs. They plan on reaching out, at least initially, to as many people as they can.

One thing they know for sure? Lots of people still need help.

Based on their first 150 calls, and how many people registered for aid, they estimate they'll be overseeing about 80 households for disaster case management.

"We are finding that there are people out there still not recovered," Vivian said. "For a lot of people in the Copper Country, not everybody has the resources."

The case managers have compiled a list of flood-impacted residents from a variety of sources and have been making calls since early October. However, they fear there are more residents out there who are still in need of help. After initial contact is made and a need is expressed, a home visit is scheduled to further assess needs.

From there, the plan is for the case managers to connect the residents-in-need to appropriate organizations and nonprofits and walk them through their full recovery process.

"The need from household to household can vary greatly, and funds will be distributed accordingly," Leopold said.

"Because it's getting colder, we're looking for people without furnaces, hot water heaters, as well as homes that have not been cleaned and sanitized yet," Vivian said. "A lot of appliances were submerged, so those have been big needs at this time."

The disaster case manager service does not cost residents anything, they simply have to reach out to Vivian and Leopold indicating they need help to start the process or opt in when they receive a call from the case managers.

“Our case managers assist from the beginning of their client’s case to the close of it to aid and empower that person to work toward their long-term recovery,” Perez said.

“A lot of times we don’t realize the length of time it takes for a community to recover from a natural disaster,” Vivian concluded.

Leopold and Vivian are based out of the old D&N Bank building in Hancock, Room 402, and can be reached by phone at (906) 231-6856. For more information visit www.coppercountrystrong.com.

They are looking for volunteers with a background in construction to help with flood damage assessments and home repair.

Funds for flood recovery are being collected through the Keweenaw Community Foundation located in Hancock as well as Lutheran Social Services–Lutheran Disaster Response c/o Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Houghton.