Jewish organizations step up hurricane preparedness efforts

By Sergio Carmona  
Staff writer

South Florida Jewish organizations have prepared for this year’s hurricane season. Having learned several things after Hurricane Ir¬ma’s impact on South Flor¬ida last year, Ruth & Norman Rales Jewish Family Services has created a storm alert team and is actively encouraging sen¬iors living alone to register with the agency now, before any major weather event, so that it can ensure some­one is checking in on them when needed.

Rales JFS, which has locations in Boca Raton and Delray Beach, has aimed to help the community before, during and after any major weather event since 1979. Although it is not a first responder agency, it aims to take its responsibility to help its clients and the general community, many of whom live alone with no family to take care of them, very seriously. The agency urges seniors living alone who are not already clients to register with it so that it can check in on them be­fore and after major weather events. Seniors do not have to be an existing agency client to register and contact information will remain confidential and not shared with any other program or service of the agency.

“We want every senior in South Palm Beach County to be safe and to have the support they need after a crisis,” said Danielle Hartman, the agency’s president and chief executive officer. “Last year we opened up a registration line and had more than 30 families con­tact us to register their loved ones as they were living out of state and were not here to check in them­selves. This year we decided to be pro-active with this registration process and are actively encouraging seniors, particularly those living alone with no family close by, to connect with us now, rather than waiting until a crisis.”

Although there is no charge to register for this program, it is restricted to clients residing in the Rales JFS service area of Boca Raton, Delray Beach and Highland Beach. Seniors living in that area can regis­ter (or have their families register them) for the pro­gram by calling 561-852-3380.

In addition, the agency is looking for volunteers to join its storm alert team. Teams of volunteers will be deployed after a major weather event to bring wa­ter and supplies to those who need it.

“Last year our volun­teers were invaluable in helping to bring ice, water and food to seniors who could not get out due to long power outages which made their elevators unus­able,” Hartman noted. “We were able to mobilize vol­unteers working with other community groups on a very short notice. This year we want to be more pro­active and have even more people ready to help us.”

Visit ralesjfs.org/intervol or call the agency’s main office at 561-852-3380 or its satellite office at 561-558-2000 for more information on Rales JFS.

Volunteers should visit jfsfzbrowardcounty.org/volun­teer.html or call 561-852-3380 to become part of the hurricane relief solution. When a storm approaches, regis­tered volunteers will re­ceive an email notification with the date, time and location where they are needed.