

Darcy Hall Spirit

Darcy Hall is another location proving that even the awesome power of Hurricane Charley couldn't cripple the Life Care spirit. Karen DiPiero, executive director, said it was with great pride that she "watched the Darcy Hall team pool all their strength, time, compassion and skills on that day. When there is a will, there is a way. As our mission statement reads, 'Our residents are our highest priority and our associates are our greatest resource.'"

Here are her observations on that fateful event:

Darcy Hall was prepared for strong winds and heavy rains. As the nursing administration team and the executive director were tracking the storm on TV, they got to see Charley whip through Punta Gorda and Central Florida with winds up to 145 miles an hour. First and foremost was the concern for our sister facility, their residents and staff. Calls were made to that facility to ensure their safety. At some point Friday night, it was certain that those residents would need to be evacuated to a safer location. A total of 160 residents needed to be relocated on Saturday, August 14. We admitted 42 residents that Saturday. The dedication, work ethic and love demonstrated by our associates was simply incredible. It looked like we do this thing on a daily basis! Within hours, Darcy Hall was full. All residents had their meals and medications. Everyone was in a warm bed and well-cared-for.

Darcy's nursing team was hard at work ensuring all residents had been fully assessed, as well as trying to contact as many families as possible to ensure everyone knew the whereabouts of their loved ones. Becky Bachman, Norveen Miller, Beverly Nicholson, Rose Sawyers, Janet Swift, Charmaine Reynolds, Andrea McFadden, Randi Radin, our new DON, Sue Flynn -- all worked together to get the job done.

Kerry Williams and Linda Rhinehart admitted all 42 residents into our computer system. Kelly Clancy and Beth Ann Beer, along with our dietary team, never missed a beat. Every resident's diet was inputted into the system. Joan Karns, Marie St. Jean and Alisa Vargas in social services, Marcia Fenner in marketing and Jane Raasch in activities helped with personal belonging and ensuring everyone was happy and comfortable. Carey Braga and the rehab team pulled together to ensure everyone had the adaptive equipment and wheelchairs they needed. Donna Kirschner in medical records ensured everyone's records were accurate and physicians were selected. Raul Acosta and Robinson Rios drove to Punta Gorda and transported residents to various locations. Neither one returned to the facility before midnight. The staff who accompanied the residents from Life Care Center of Punta Gorda put their lives on hold to ensure their residents were safe. Four certified nursing assistants returned home on Saturday only to turn around on Sunday and return to Darcy Hall to assist us with staffing needs. Our medical director, Dr. Gallante, and her nurse practitioner assisted us every step

of the way by following all 42 residents. In order to thank the associates of Darcy Hall, pizza was brought in. Everybody had worked their hardest, and it showed.

It seemed like a miracle, but by midnight, 160 residents were in different Life Care facilities throughout the state of Florida. The human spirit is something special. Not one of the individuals who were working hard to make this happen ever voiced a concern or hesitation about making this evacuation a reality.

Yes, Karen DiPiero and the associates of Darcy Hall demonstrated the Whatever It Takes spirit -- in this storm as well as at other times -- in service to our residents. In the process, they are drawn closer together in the bonds of love and friendship.

--Beecher Hunter