

Overcoming Wilma

Wednesday, we walked in Wilma's path. The hurricane that cut a swath across south Florida Monday left many calling cards:

- Trees were twisted and broken and littered the landscape where they had fallen.
- Utility poles had snapped as toothpicks might, and some were supported tentatively by power lines, sagging with the extra weight.
- Traffic signs were mangled on their supports, and several had broken away and lay in the street.
- Roofs were peeled away, and signs on buildings missed letters here and there, victims of a strange assault on the English language.
- Electrical power was off, and the flow of water was interrupted in many locations.

Forrest Preston, Don Giardina, Cathy Murray, David Weiss, Mike Burnett, Mike Carter and I had taken a quick trip to Florida to visit a few of our buildings impacted by Wilma. We saw the results at Garden Plaza at Inverrary, The Bridge at Inverrary and Life Care Center of Inverrary, all in Lauderhill, and Lakeside Health Center and Darcy Hall, both in West Palm Beach. The purpose of our visit was not to inspect the damage, although that was a part of it. We were there primarily to show our appreciation to our associates, and to thank them for their steadfastness in the face of the storm, their preparation and professionalism, and the compassion that drove them.

But we were the ones who left blessed and inspired by the interaction. Over and over again, as we addressed their sacrifices, we heard:

- "We were just doing what we were supposed to do."
- "With God's help, we made it just fine."
- "Taking care of our residents is what we are called to do."
- "We knew what we had to do, and together we did it."

What can a team do when it works together unselfishly to meet a challenge? It can take on anything and anyone – and win.

Even a tough lady like Wilma.

--Beecher Hunter