

Student Vestry Fundraises for St. Andrew's Family Affected by Hurricane Maria



Liz Torrey December 13, 2017

This fall, the St. Andrew's student vestry has been working to raise funds and collect goods for the family of Dining Services employee Ana Rivera. Rivera's stepdaughter and three stepchildren moved from Puerto Rico to Delaware in early December; the family lost their home and most of their possessions in Hurricane Maria, and will live with Rivera for the foreseeable future.

The Sunday before Rivera's family arrived in Delaware, vestry leaders presented Rivera with cash donations, gift cards, household goods, and apparel that had been given by St. Andrew's faculty, staff, students, and families.

"This family is literally traveling here with the clothes that they have on their backs and what they can carry," explained Vestry Senior Warden Haden Cunningham '18. "So we're just trying to support them as much as we can through giving money, giving clothes, and helping to establish them in their new home in Delaware."

The vestry raised funds and donations through a variety of means. Proceeds from St. Andrew's annual Turkey Trot footrace and its associated bake sale went wholly to the

Rivera family; students paid three dollars to enter the race (top runners received a "coupon" for rides into town), and faculty baked goods for a post-race bake sale. Faculty and staff could also make donations directly to the vestry on race day, and Head of School Tad Roach and Dean of Teaching & Learning Elizabeth Roach made a matching gift equal to the total funds raised by the Turkey Trot. The vestry also held donation drives during the month of November for new and gently used books, toys, games, clothes, and coats.

"When [Associate Chaplain] Mr. DeSalvo shared the story of Ms. Rivera's family with us, we just jumped on it," said Warrington Webb '18, who serves as the vestry's Junior Warden. "Originally, we were planning on giving the proceeds from the Turkey Trot to [Family Help, Inc.](#) [a Middletown nonprofit that provides support and housing to families in crisis], but then we shifted and started throwing all our resources at this opportunity."

Beyond participating in and assisting Chapel services, the vestry's primary function is to fundraise for local and national charities. "Most of the work the vestry does is fundraising for causes outside the St. Andrew's community," Haden said. "We familiarize ourselves with the organizations that we're giving to as much as we can, so that we can make sure that the funds are being put to their best use. We had already donated to hurricane relief earlier in the year, through the Episcopal Church, but Ms. Rivera made us realize that this is something that's directly affecting the St. Andrew's community."

"I think one of the good things the vestry does is to try to engage the entire community to give back," said Vestry Secretary-Treasurer Claire Miller '18. "This [effort] was more personal because it's a member of our community. I think that made it that much more special to have all of these donations coming in. There was a lot of excitement around this."

"People were really excited for the Turkey Trot," Haden agreed. "We had a lot of buzz and a lot of people ready to help. It's been so fun, getting the whole School to participate and be excited about the projects that the vestry is undertaking."

The vestry's work inspired other students and faculty to hold their own fundraisers for the Rivera family. The V Form Council held a candy cane fundraiser, through which students could purchase and send candy canes to one another; the funds were used to purchase Christmas gifts for the three children, who are five, three and one years old. Faculty also gathered donations so that Ms. Rivera's step sister could do her own Christmas shopping for the children.

The family arrived in Delaware in early December, and recently joined the student body