



KEEPING WALL TOWNSHIP'S ROADS SAFE

Pt. James Cadigan leads county in DWI arrests, again PAGE 22

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## N.J.'s first lady lends a hand

BY AMANDA STONE

THE COAST STAR

**MANASQUAN** —First lady of New Jersey Mary Pat Christie rolled up her sleeves and got to work on renovating a home in town last week that was damaged during Hurricane Sandy.

It was during the trip she made to the East Main Street home last Friday, along with her 17-year-old daughter, Sarah, when Mrs. Christie announced that the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund would be allocating \$839,000 to Coastal Habitat for Humanity in order to help the organization rebuild and repair storm-damaged homes not only in Manasquan, but all along the Jersey Shore.

Mrs. Christie chairs the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund, a nonprofit organization which was created in the days after Hurricane Sandy devastated coastal communities last October.

Coastal Habitat for Humanity, also a nonprofit, was created in 1994 in order to address the specific housing needs in the local area.

The pairing of the two nonprofits will allow homeowners in need of assistance in the aftermath of the storm to move forward with much needed funding to make the necessary repairs to their homes.

"From despair and destruction, we're certainly making a difference," Mrs. Christie said just minutes before donning a hard hat inside the storm-damaged home. "I love crystallizing what we're doing with the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund and to see the people that are really benefiting from it and to see the amazing people that are helping."

The first beneficiary of the relief fund's donation to Coastal Habitat for Humanity is Manasquan's Renata Bonelli. Her East Main Street home was flooded with nearly 30 inches of water during the hurricane.

"I lost every single thing I



AMANDA STONE THE COAST STAR

New Jersey's first lady Mary Pat Christie [third from right] and her daughter Sarah [second from left], 17, joined members of Coastal Habitat for Humanity to rebuild a home damaged by Hurricane Sandy in Manasquan.

owned," Ms. Bonelli said. Adding insult to injury, Ms. Bonelli is also the owner of a small business which is run out of her home.

All of her inventory in her jewelry business was damaged as well, she said.

"It really was as bad as you could possibly imagine," Ms. Bonelli said.

In the weeks after the storm, Ms. Bonelli said she made the decision to repair, instead of demolish, her home.

Finding a way to fund the project, she said, was difficult until she learned about Coastal Habitat for Humanity through local churches.

Without the help of the nonprofit, she said, she likely would have been forced to demolish her home and start over.

"Had they not helped me, I would have to tear down my house," Ms. Bonelli said.

She lauded the nonprofit and its volunteers.

"They're professional, courteous, on top of everything. They're fast moving," Ms. Bonelli said.

Maureen Mulligan, the execu-

tive director of Coastal Habitat for Humanity, said when the hurricane hit last October, she and her staff were prepared for the challenges ahead.

Receiving the donation from the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund help put them on the right track in moving forward.

"To take on a project that is 10 times the size we've ever been able to do was mind boggling until our first lady came up with a fund and was willing to share some of the proceeds with us," Ms. Mulligan said.

Ms. Mulligan continued, "Habitat now has the money to begin these projects and it's really because of the first lady's fund."

Mrs. Christie said the relief fund has donations and commitments of donations totaling about \$34 million as of last week.

With that money, she said, the state will be able to rebuild.

"I'm really excited about what we're going to be able to accomplish," Mrs. Christie said.

Her daughter said she was happy to be able to accompany her

mother to the borough last week.

"I've been coming to the Shore for as long as I can remember. It's so sad to see that people's houses are still in these conditions," Sarah said.

Getting the coast cleaned up is important to her and her friends, she said.

"The beach is so important to all of my friends, we're down here every summer," Sarah said. "We just want it to be back to normal. We want these people to have safe places to live again."

Mayor George Dempsey, who was also in attendance last week, said he was grateful to see the two nonprofits working together to help local residents.

"I think the \$839,000 is going to be a great help to get people who are really hurting, back on their feet," Mayor Dempsey said.

And, to make sure the town gets the same, or more, visitors this summer, he reminded those in attendance last week that the beach will be ready for locals and tourists this summer.

"The beach will definitely be ready and open," Mayor Dempsey said.

Mrs. Christie said she was confident, too, that progress would continue to be made along the entire coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

"I think with the advent of spring, people are feeling that spirit of renewal and they're ready to roll up their sleeves and dig in," Mrs. Christie said. "It's remarkable to me at the speed of which stuff can be accomplished."

To learn more about Coastal Habitat for Humanity, visit [www.coastalhabitat.org](http://www.coastalhabitat.org).

To learn more about the relief fund, visit [www.sandynjrelief-fund.org](http://www.sandynjrelief-fund.org).

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