

Coastal Habitat thanks bankers for Sandy help

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MANASQUAN — In June, bankers from across New Jersey pledged to raise money and donate volunteer labor to Coastal Habitat for Humanity's superstorm Sandy rebuilding efforts this summer in the borough.

On Tuesday, the bankers and Coastal Habitat gathered at Stockton Lake Park to tout the success of that partnership.

"We were able to have 27 different banks, donating over \$20,000 and volunteering over 1500 hours," said Maureen Mulligan, executive director of Coastal Habitat for Humanity.

The banking effort was coordinated by the New Jersey Bankers Association, a statewide trade association. Under their umbrella, they marshaled the resources of individual banks that pledged \$100 for every volunteer they sent to work with the Coastal Habitat Restore program.

The bankers worked on a dozen homes in the borough from June 15 to Oct. 1, which Mulligan said are now in various stages of completion.

"Everyone had a positive experience with it," said Michael Affuso, vice president of the association.

The association's [original goal](#) was to have 22 banks participate and raise \$25,000.

"It was a goal they set. Everything is a goal. They were a tremendous help and it was a huge success," Mulligan said.

In the next five years, Coastal Habitat for Humanity's wants to rebuild or restore about 700 Sandy-damaged homes in the Shore in its program. A goal Mulligan said is very "optimistic."

"Due to the way disasters play out, it's [rebuilding] going a lot slower than anyone could imagine," she said. "The plan is still to do several hundred over the next couple of years."

Victoria Vitale, a homeowner at 573 E. Main Street is hoping to get her home, which she has not lived in since Oct. 28, rebuilt through the program.

"I'm still not in," Vitale said. "I'm waiting for the grant (Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Elevation and Mitigation Grant) to come through and they will help. I want them to finish the inside of the house."

Homeowners who would like to have their homes restored in the [Coastal Habitat Restore program](#) have to meet certain income requirements, Mulligan said. If a homeowner qualifies, Coastal Habitat will come and do an assessment of the home.