MSU students with American Red Cross staff and volunteers on International Red Cross Day (May 8) in front of the Puerto Rico Headquarters in San Juan, PR.
OVERVIEW

In September 2017, the island of Puerto Rico was affected by two hurricanes, Irma and Maria, just weeks apart. These two storms left the island’s residents without running water and the power grid destroyed. One year after the hurricanes, there are still parts of the island without power and residents are still cleaning up and repairing their homes. From May 6th–16th, 2018, the MSU Office of Student Engagement sent 10 students and 1 staff member to Puerto Rico to spend the start of their summer break learning about and serving the communities of Puerto Rico with the Cruz Roja Americana (American Red Cross).

IMPACTS & OUTCOMES

Projects and Activities:
- Met and interviewed the dedicated staff and volunteers from the American Red Cross.
- Composed a newsletter based on their interviews to go out to the organization.
- Traveled to Loíza to help install smoke detectors in homes.
- Traveled to Mayagüez to visit with veterans and their spouses at a PTSD workshop.

By participating in this BreaksAway trip to Puerto Rico, students will*:
1. Understand the complexity of disaster response and public/private involvement and their impact on the community.
   - 80% were able to explain 2-3 things they learned about public vs. private (includes nonprofits) responses to natural disasters and their impacts on the community.
2. Understand individual, group, and community roles in national level incidents and disasters.
   - 80% were able to identify 1-2 ways the Red Cross works with local, public and private entities to serve Puerto Rican Communities after Hurricane Maria.
3. Understand the value of civic engagement at the local level.
   - 60% were able to explain how this experience has shaped how their view of the value of civic engagement.
4. Identify a way to bring back the knowledge learned and apply to their home communities.
   - 60% were able to identify one way they plan to use their experience in Puerto Rico and serve their local community.

*Responses from the post-trip survey with a 50% response rate.

Participants:
Emily Billow (Student Leader)
Rebekah Brand
Carolina Dequech Garica
Lane Dornbusch
Brittney Fourstar
Ryan Flatt
Rachel Matsko
Rita Park
Rachel Park
Meghan Rockwood
Randi Maiers (MSU Staff)

Total hours served: 352
Estimated individuals impacted: 200
ABOUT THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

The Puerto Rico Chapter Headquarters of the American Red Cross is located in San Juan, PR. The American Red Cross is a humanitarian organization, led by volunteers and guided by its Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement, that will provide relief to victims of disaster and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.
FROM THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE:

"The role of individuals in disaster response is to help out people in need in anyway they can. We need to rally together to rebuild what was lost, and learn from these events to be better prepared for the next one."

"We heard many stories of community members stepping up as leaders, and it was astonishing to hear how much could be accomplished with motivated leaders."

"I learned that la Cruz Roja is staffed by and has volunteers that are truly passionate about their work, and I think that is a huge contribution as to how their succeed in their missions around the island. It was inspiring to witness people with so much passion for helping their communities in times of need."

"Always ask people around you for their stories, as each person has unique thoughts and views and can contribute to your overall perspective."

"The American Red Cross was able to swiftly and efficiently respond to the hurricanes due to the dedication of all of their staff and volunteers, regardless of the increased complication of the lack of ability to communicate with each other."

"This has made me realize that giving back to a community in need is a lot easier than it may seem. Everyone we helped was so greatful for just being there and showing that we cared. This had made me want to do more for my community and others."

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF MSU BREAKSAWAY?

To cultivate in Montana State University students a spirit of community involvement and to nurture service leaders who will give back to our state, nation, and the world. MSU students work together with communities around the U.S. to promote lifelong community involvement and critical thinking about our societal challenges and the roles each one of us can play in addressing those challenges. MSU BreaksAway is a Program of the Office of Student Engagement since 1996.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

QUESTIONS?

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