



Ascend Cares Foundation

2017 Annual Report

Making a difference
in people's lives and
local communities





Letter from the

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When we started the Ascend Cares Foundation, I was the only board representative from one of our plant sites. Now, I have the privilege of writing the Chairman's letter for our first annual report.

Chairman

Ascend Cares was founded in 2011 after a tornado outbreak in northern Alabama impacted our team members and their families near the Decatur facility. What grew from a pass-the-hat formation of employees caring about their own following a natural disaster is now a 501(c)(3) organization that is funded entirely by donations and dollar-for-dollar company matching. After seven years, Ascend Cares continues to make a difference in the lives of others by focusing on areas of critical need in the communities we serve, including:

- **Children's Health and Safety**
- **Housing**
- **Education**
- **Hunger**
- **Military Support**

I always say, Ascend Cares is an opportunity to get involved with our communities. Our foundation not only helps employees, it makes a difference in our own backyards. I'm constantly amazed at how selfless and eager Ascend Cares volunteers are to help their coworkers and communities. This selflessness and caring spirit really defines who we are at Ascend. Over the years, our volunteer base has grown and our community impact deepened.

We're now looked upon as a vital partner in the communities we serve.

For our first annual report, we've chosen to highlight a project from each site to provide you with a glimpse of the powerful impact our volunteers have had on the communities we serve. You'll learn about our volunteers from Ascend Cares Chocolate Bayou who constructed an onsite medical clinic for Kidz Harbor, an organization that cares for hundreds of displaced children each year. Or, another example in Greenwood, where our Ascend Cares team constructed their second Habitat for Humanity house, which was completed at our site.

In each of these examples, our work benefited our communities, but, when you speak to our volunteers, it's clear that the positive impact was on them personally.

"The children at Kidz Harbor have been removed from their homes because of abuse and neglect," said Curt Thompson, learning and development leader at Ascend's Chocolate Bayou and team leader for Ascend Cares at the

site. "Within 24 hours of being at Kidz Harbor, each child is required to have a medical exam. By building an onsite medical clinic, we were able to take away an added stress of having the child go to a doctor's office or clinic."

"Habitat for Humanity is an organization that can provide great benefits to a community," said Matt Chapman, maintenance specialist for Ascend's Greenwood site, who helped lead the efforts for the construction of the site's second Habitat for Humanity house. "I've enjoyed working with the Greenwood site volunteers and Habitat for Humanity in Greenwood. It's tremendously moving to see the families get the keys to the house and know that I was a part of it."

Each year we have our Giving Campaign across all of our site locations, which benefits Ascend Cares and the United Way. Last year our employees donated \$131,463, with corporate contributions totaling \$470,249. Because of these funds, we are able to complete big volunteer projects such as the Kidz Harbor medical clinic and the Habitat for Humanity house. Our donations also go toward scholarships for our team members' children. Last year we awarded scholarships to 25 students that totaled \$50,000.

I feel deeply thankful to be a part of the Ascend Cares Foundation. Witnessing the time and effort that our employees put into our community projects inspires me to do more myself. And seeing people donate and give to help others reminds me of the power we have to work together to help everyone in times of need.

I would like to personally thank all of our employees who have donated their time, talent and dollars to support Ascend Cares. On behalf of our Board of Directors, thank you for everything you have done to make people's lives change for the better.



Tom Boggs

Chairman of Ascend Cares

The Ascend Cares Foundation is about making a difference in the lives of others. It is led by Ascend employees and supports Ascend families in their times of need, provides inspiring opportunities for community engagement and facilitates community leadership. Funded entirely by donations and a company match, every dollar donated to the foundation supports the work of the foundation.

About Ascend C

The foundation's name says what is best about the people of Ascend: They care about each other and their communities. The name Ascend Cares was chosen as a tribute to their caring and giving spirit.

Ascend Cares was founded in 2011 after a tornado outbreak in northern Alabama impacted Ascend's team members and their families near the Decatur facility. Since then, Ascend employees have made a tremendous impact on families in need and their local communities.

Our Focus

Ascend Cares is about making a difference and helping meet community needs in the areas of children's health and safety, education, housing, hunger and military support. At each site, Ascend Cares community teams organize small and large volunteer projects.

Programs

Community Projects

Ascend Cares teams across all of our locations invest Ascend Cares dollars and volunteer hours into the local

community through impactful projects and partnerships. In 2017, Ascend Cares' Summer of Caring was launched. This expanded "Day of Caring" was extended to include the summer to increase impact as well as provide more opportunities for family members to participate. Several Summer of Caring projects have grown into longer-term partnerships that will continue to expand over time.

Hardship Grants

Ascend Cares understands that life brings unexpected events caused by illness, injury or natural disaster, and that these events can create financial hardship. Generous employee donations make it possible for Ascend Cares to help ease the stress of meeting basic needs.

Ascend Cares offers direct and indirect financial assistance to employees and contractors the case of immediate and heavy financial hardship. Assistance is determined on a case-by-case basis by an employee Hardship Committee and is related to the hardship created, other assistance received and other

circumstances that may affect the individual or family's ability to meet basic living needs.

Categories of support include injury and illness, disaster, domestic violence, funeral travel costs, eviction, utility cut-off and work transportation repair.

Community Impact Grants

We set high standards for community engagement because we believe we have a responsibility to serve the communities in which we operate. We know many of our employees are actively engaged in our communities, and that engagement brings potential opportunities for Ascend Cares to support the work they are doing. The foundation provides grants to support the personal engagement of Ascend employees in community projects that meet the required criteria. Rather than traditional sponsorship, foundation grants are made to support the employee's active engagement.

Scholarship Program

Ascend Cares awards scholarships to the children of employees of Ascend.



The scholarship program was launched to help invest in the education and personal development of Ascend families. Scholarship recipients are selected based on their outstanding community service and academic achievement.

Contribute to Ascend Cares

As a 501(c)(3) organization, Ascend Cares is funded primarily through the generous donations of Ascend employees and company match. Donations make it possible for Ascend Cares to continue its mission of making a difference in the lives of others.

Donations to Ascend Cares is tax-deductible (federal tax ID #90-0709302) and is matched by the company. Every dollar donated goes to Ascend Cares programs.

Ascend employees can contribute through payroll deduction at any time or make a one-time electronic donation. Outside donations can also be made electronically.

Board of Directors



Rizwan Amanullah
Houston



Tom Boggs
Chairman - Pensacola



Lynn Crear
Chocolate Bayou



Rachell Gold
Director - Houston



Scotty Hall
Decatur



Hal McCord
Greenwood



Phil McDivitt
Houston



Andrew Ralston
Secretary - Houston



Mimi Smith
Foley

Hardship Committee Members



Matt Chapman
Greenwood



Donya Charles
Pensacola



Brittany Cooper
Foley



Lisa Entrekin
Houston



Stephen French
Decatur



Lynda Green
Chocolate Bayou

We are grateful for the support and generous donations received from volunteers and donors.

Site Community Team Leaders



Rohit Aggarwal
Chocolate Bayou



Brittany Cooper
Foley



Lesly Costello
Greenwood



Leigha Diamond
Decatur



Sheree Fields
Houston



Jennifer Flowers
Chocolate Bayou



Anne O'Hara
Remote employees



Sharhonda Owens
Pensacola

1,176

ASCEND VOLUNTEERS

2017

8,500

VOLUNTEER HOURS

HUNGER

11

TOTAL PROJECTS

1,098

HOURS VOLUNTEERED

218

ASCEND VOLUNTEERS

HOUSING

11

TOTAL PROJECTS

3,753

HOURS VOLUNTEERED

331

ASCEND VOLUNTEERS

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

39

TOTAL PROJECTS

2,804

HOURS VOLUNTEERED

601

ASCEND VOLUNTEERS

HEALTH

24

TOTAL PROJECTS

2,009

HOURS VOLUNTEERED

421

ASCEND VOLUNTEERS

MILITARY

8

TOTAL PROJECTS

961

HOURS VOLUNTEERED

136

ASCEND VOLUNTEERS

HARDSHIPS

110 employees and contractors received financial hardship support.

Please note volunteer hours based upon multiple projects. Ascend Cares volunteers may have participated in activities for more than one focus area.

Foley Volunteers Befriend Residents at Diversicare

The staff that works at the Diversicare nursing home facility of Foley not only takes care of its residents, the organization also plays the role of family and friends, especially to those who do not have visitors. When Ascend Cares Foley began visiting the facility, it took on this role to help the staff and build relationships with the facility's residents.

Acting as Family

During a busy shift, Erica and the rest of the Diversicare staff try to make time and visit with the residents while working. "Many of the residents don't get visitors," said Erica Chambers, certified activity director at Diversicare of Foley. "For those who don't have visitors or family, we become their family."

But the residents have received many new visitors from Ascend Cares stepping in to play the role of family and friends. "We've been fortunate to have been working with Ascend Cares Foley for two years now," said Erica. "Having the volunteers spend time with our residents lets them know that they're not forgotten. It also gives them something to talk about and look forward to, since having a visitor is very special."

The feeling is mutual as Ascend Cares Foley team members greatly value their visits. "Over the years, we've gone to Diversicare several times," said Brittany Cooper, human resources generalist for Ascend Performance Materials and the site leader for Ascend Cares Foley. "After visiting with a resident, we leave knowing that we created a bond with someone new."

During a summer visit, Ascend Cares Foley decided to bring gift bags for those residents who don't receive any visitors. "It's not just that these

residents don't have family members to come visit them, but there aren't people to bring toiletries and supplies for them," said Brittany. "The gift bags included shampoo, body wash, socks, toothpaste, hand sanitizer and shaving cream. These are basic items that they need."

In addition to the necessities, the gift bags also included fun items like crossword puzzles, Rubik's Cubes, stuffed animals, candy and a blanket.

Tyler Lopez, right, an Ascend Cares volunteer in Foley, spends time with a resident at Diversicare of Foley.





Making the Holidays Brighter

Because of a limited budget, Diversicare welcomes all of the help they receive from Ascend Cares Foley. “I depend on vendors, volunteers and outside help to help me get through the month,” said Erica. “It’s especially difficult during the holidays.”

For those that don’t receive gifts, Erica makes the holidays as special as possible. “For our residents who don’t have family or whose families choose not to visit, it’s important to me that they aren’t forgotten,” said Erica. “I’m their family and I won’t let them down. Even if I have to buy it myself, I make sure that they have a gift to open.”

In order to help make the holidays a little brighter, Ascend Cares Foley asked Diversicare for a Christmas list for people who don’t have family members to come visit them. “Erica gave us a list of specific things for each resident,” said Brittany. “We took the list and went shopping. And to bring more joy to their holidays, we hand-delivered the gifts to each person and sat down and visited with them.” Last year, Foley delivered 30 gift bags.

Building Friendships

Ascend Cares Foley has been volunteering at Diversicare for two years. Over time, volunteers have developed friendships with some of the residents.

Brittany herself began building a friendship with a resident named Patty. “I was taken aback by how emotional I got as I sat and talked with her,” said Brittany. “Patty and I talked for almost an hour. She told me how she used to be a model and showed me her modeling pictures from the 1920s and 1930s. It was incredible.”

However, volunteering at a nursing home facility doesn’t come without heartache. The next time Brittany went to Diversicare to visit her new friend, she was told that Patty had passed away. “I instantly started crying in the middle of the nursing home,” said Brittany. “I had built that bond and was hoping to see her. I wanted to hear more stories about her amazing life. Even though Patty is gone, I feel fortunate that I was able to spend time with her.”

Erica also remembers the bond that Brittany created with Patty. “I remember Brittany’s visit. They spoke for a long time as Patty shared stories with Brittany about her modeling days,” she said. “I still remember the day that I had to tell Brittany that Patty passed away. It was incredibly sad because they had developed a friendship.”

Residents Help the Volunteers

While the Ascend Cares Foley visits have made an impact at Diversicare, Erica sees now how the residents have helped Ascend Cares. “When Ascend Cares volunteers first began visiting our facility, many of them were shy,” she said. “Now when they come to visit, they are ready to meet someone new and listen to stories about their lives. The volunteers have been amazed at the people they have met, including doctors, surgeons, lawyers and even a man that wrote thirteen books.”

One of Erica’s primary responsibilities at Diversicare is to “spread happiness at the facility.” When talking about the Foley volunteers from Ascend Cares, she feels the same. “When the residents see the volunteers walk in and notice the Ascend Cares shirts, their faces light up,” said Erica. “For me, you can truly see the impact Ascend Cares makes simply by looking at their faces.”

Ascend Cares Greenwood Takes Unconventional Approach to Habitat for Humanity Home Builds

A house is normally built in a neighborhood or a land lot and waits for its future homeowner. However, the Ascend Cares Foundation does things differently when building a house. For the second time, Ascend Cares Greenwood funded and built a Habitat for Humanity house from the ground up in the parking lot of Ascend's Greenwood site.

The idea to get involved with Greenwood's Habitat for Humanity came from the same people who built the house, Ascend Cares Greenwood volunteers. The idea was borne from true need in the community where a higher than average percentage of the community's population live at or below the poverty level. Greenwood Area Habitat for Humanity's Executive Director Heather Chandler said, "We serve Greenwood residents who are between the 30 and 60 percent area median income for the county. When you're looking at a four-person household, that income doesn't equate to more than \$36,000 per year. This means we're dealing with people that have significant needs for adequate housing."

And the need for livable housing is tremendous. "We work with people who are living in houses with holes in the floors, mold growing up the walls, electrical issues or roofs that are falling in," said Heather. "People are trying to raise

families in these types of conditions. It's difficult to witness, but it makes our opportunity to serve them so much more meaningful," Heather added.





Heather Chandler, left, Greenwood Area Habitat for Humanity's executive director, and Matt Chapman, an Ascend Cares volunteer in Greenwood, attend the Habitat for Humanity dedication in Greenwood.

Greenwood Area Habitat for Humanity hosts dedication.

Ascend Cares completes its second Habitat for Humanity house in Greenwood.

Willie Anderson, left, is welcomed home by Ascend Cares volunteer Matt Chapman, who helped lead the efforts for the construction of the Habitat for Humanity house in Greenwood.



Ascend Cares Greenwood built its first Habitat house in 2013. The project was so successful that Ascend Cares volunteers identified a second opportunity to construct and donate a house. The project's unique location, again in the parking lot of the Greenwood facility, provided for some interesting discussion at the site and in the community.

"When we were discussing the details of the project, it was suggested that we again construct the house in our parking lot," said Matt Chapman, maintenance specialist for Ascend Performance Materials and Ascend Cares Greenwood volunteer. "While the parking lot is an interesting location, it was extremely effective with our first Habitat for Humanity house. It was a constant reminder for employees to volunteer when they came to work."

Even Heather was a little confused the first time she saw the home being physically built at the Greenwood site. "I thought, 'Wait, we're going to move a whole house?'" said Heather. "Obviously, it is very unconventional not to build on the final home site, but I knew Ascend Cares had done it before and had nothing but confidence in their unique approach."

Bringing the Site Together

As the house was being constructed, more people wanted to volunteer. "With

the house being built on the plant site, it was easier for volunteers to help," said Matt. "The co-location also provided our team members regular opportunities to volunteer. We had the opportunity to see the work and progress being done every day. It really made an impact on our volunteers."

For the second house, Matt noticed many new faces helping with the build. "Some of them were new hires and were surprised/excited to see the house being built in the parking lot," said Matt.

More than 78 volunteers helped build the house. Working afternoons and weekends, a total of 453 hours were spent on the home's construction.

Ascend Cares to the Rescue

When building a Habitat for Humanity house, Ascend Cares is helping a future homeowner, Greenwood Area Habitat for Humanity and the community.

"Ascend Cares is truly a partner in Greenwood," said Heather. "Unfortunately, Greenwood Area Habitat for Humanity's budget was cut 50 percent by the state last year, so we only had funding to complete three homes. Ascend Cares generously agreed to build our third house. Their passion for the homeowners and their commitment to the construction is incredible. Because of Ascend Cares, a third and worthy homeowner got their wish."

Through employee donations and dollar-for-dollar company matching, Ascend Cares funded the complete construction, totaling \$77,266.

A True Neighbor

The Greenwood Area Habitat for Humanity home was given to a retired police officer. "The gentleman is in his sixties and a first-time homeowner," said Heather. "He is in need of a great place to call home and can't wait to move in!"

"I've worked at companies who claimed they wanted to be good neighbors," said Matt. "Through the work of Ascend Cares, our company is making more than promises, we're keeping them."

A Single Idea Leads to a Big Impact in Decatur

Brooks Jordan, ADN shift supervisor and Ascend Cares volunteer at Decatur, saw an article in his local newspaper about The Circle Ranch, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit ranch home that provides emergency and temporary care for foster children and families. The next day Brooks showed the article to his Decatur Ascend Cares team members and suggested The Circle Ranch as the team's project for the Ascend Cares Summer of Caring.

Similar Visions for the Community

Formerly known as the Alabama Sheriff's Association Boys Ranch, the facility closed in 2010 after 44 years of serving displaced, troubled, abused and neglected youth.

"I was drawn to the newspaper article because it described a couple who were renovating The Circle Ranch," said Brooks. "They have a vision for their facility similar to our Ascend Cares' mission: 'Making a difference in people's lives and local communities.'"

Clint and Ahbra Northcutt are familiar with the foster care system. "We have five children and our two youngest are adopted," said Ahbra Northcutt, director of The Circle Ranch. "During the adoption process of our fourth child, we saw firsthand the overwhelming number of children in Morgan County that needed safe and loving homes."

But the Northcutts weren't done. They wanted to help more foster children in Decatur and felt the best way to do that was to reopen The Circle Ranch. In 2015, the Northcutts signed a contract to renovate the 40-acre facility to give foster children and families a place to stay. "Needless to say, we had a long list of work to be done," said Ahbra.





said Brooks, who also coordinated the project. “We had a total of 83 volunteers in a five-day period.”

“The amount of work we completed was incredible,” said Brooks. “Projects included house repairs, painting, tree trimming, electrical work and drywall. The work expanded across five houses on the property that range from 2,500 to 5,500 sq ft.”

Making an Impact

“The work we did made a tremendous impact,” said Brooks. “These are large projects that take a lot of time and money.”

“Ascend Cares was extremely helpful with improving the property,” said Ahbra. “The volunteers have the skills to fix leaks and electrical problems. With the work and repairs, we saved thousands of dollars and used that money for other projects at the facility.”

With each project, Clint and Ahbra get closer to completing the renovation of the facility. The first family to come to The Ranch is scheduled for September 1, 2018.

Volunteering at The Circle Ranch has not only made an impact on the community, but it has also impacted the Decatur employees. “Several people told me that they are looking forward to going back and want to know if they can bring their families to help,” said Brooks. “Our volunteering has made a positive influence on the employees – the spirit of giving back and helping others are values that they want to share with their families.”

Ascend Cares Decatur will be organizing more community projects at the facility. Soon, the group will begin work to renovate another home at The Ranch. The house will be completely remodeled and will be a home to a local foster family.

Every day Ascend Cares volunteers are inspired to make an impact in their communities. Brooks’ single idea led to big changes in the community and partnering with an organization.

“We want to do everything possible to make sure the families feel a sense of comfort when they are here. When Brooks called us with an opportunity from Ascend Cares, we were happy to receive the help and support.”

Let’s Get to Work

With the facility vacant for five years, a lot of work would have to be done to renovate the property and buildings. The property includes four residential houses, a director’s house, administration building, gym and chapel.

“Before we started our Summer of Caring project, we went to The Circle Ranch to survey the condition of the landscaping and buildings to make sure we brought the right tools,” said Brooks. “Some buildings had mold, walls were rotten, leaks in the ceiling and rat infestations.”

“Many volunteers were scheduled to work a four-hour shift, but several stayed six to eight hours with some coming back on multiple days,”

Ascend Cares Chocolate Bayou Meets Community Neighbor Kidz Harbor

Curt Thompson, learning and development leader at Ascend and the Chocolate Bayou construction team leader for Ascend Cares, was looking for the site's next volunteer project. A fellow employee suggested that Curt meet the manager of a local organization. It was a simple handshake as Curt was introduced to Sharon Beard, business manager at Kidz Harbor while she was visiting Chocolate Bayou. Established in 2003, the organization takes in and cares for hundreds of children each year who have been separated from their families due to abuse and abandonment.

We Knew in an Instant We Wanted to Help

After meeting Sharon, Curt was told about the very special children who live at Kidz Harbor. The organization takes in multiple children at a time with ages ranging from infants to teens. "All of the children here are victims of abuse or neglect," said Sharon. "Abuse can vary from physical to sexual abuse, or neglect because parents who are on drugs often have not fed or cared for their children properly."

A critical component to Kidz Harbor's ability to serve the community is the facility's size. "Since our facility is large, we can take in children of different ages, including sibling groups," said Sharon. "Because we can take three to eight children that might be siblings, we are able to keep families together, which is critical for the children."





Brian Connelly, site director at Chocolate Bayou, recognizes the volunteers who worked on the Kidz Harbor medical clinic.

Curt Thompson, left, Ascend Cares team leader for Chocolate Bayou, receives an award from Phil McDivitt, president and CEO of Ascend, and Lynn Crear, Ascend Cares board of directors member, for leading the Kidz Harbor medical clinic construction.

Ascend Cares and Kidz Harbor host ribbon-cutting at the on-site medical clinic in Liverpool, Texas.

A child at Kidz Harbor is examined in the new clinic by Steve Ricks, a nurse practitioner, in Liverpool, Texas.

Once Curt learned about Kidz Harbor and the children's circumstances, it was easy for Ascend Cares to get involved. The partnership began with donating clothing and school supplies, but Ascend Cares wanted to do more.

Curt asked Sharon how Ascend Cares could do more and he discovered a way to help that would revolutionize the organization's ability to help children.

Medical Clinic

When children suffer abuse and are removed from their homes, one of the most crucial tasks during the first 24 hours of removal is to identify any physical injuries or other forms of neglect. These exams required time to transport children to off-site medical facilities, often requiring them to miss school and adding to what is an already stressful situation. Kidz Harbor needed an on-site medical clinic.

"The ability to have a clinic on the property makes a huge difference for us because we don't have to disrupt a child's schedule to complete a medical exam," said Sharon. "Creating consistency in their routines is an important first step in establishing our relationships with them."

Ascend Cares Chocolate Bayou decided that an on-site medical clinic would be the most impactful form of assistance for the staff and children. Volunteers located an on-site, unused garage space ideal for the clinic and began construction.

Construction Plan

Ascend Cares kicked off its first "Summer of Caring" in 2017 across the company's site locations. The Summer of Caring program encourages all sites and Ascend employees to participate in local volunteer projects throughout the summer. Ascend Cares Chocolate Bayou chose the construction of Kidz Harbor's medical clinic as its flagship project. The project began in June 2017, but the unused garage required more work than initially planned. "Once the walls were removed, we realized that the space was going to need a lot more work since it had been abandoned for several years," said Curt.

The work to build the clinic was moving along swiftly as the team tore out the sheetrock and insulation while keeping the frame of the garage. But they experienced another setback—Hurricane Harvey. The hurricane made landfall on August 25, 2017, and impacted many Ascend Cares volunteers and families. Unfortunately, Kidz Harbor was affected as well. "The majority of the project was done," said Curt. "We were close to finishing. We put in the walls, completed the plumbing and electrical. Then, Harvey hit and the clinic took in two feet of water."

While Hurricane Harvey put a delay in the construction of the medical clinic, Ascend Cares Chocolate Bayou volunteers were happy to get back to work to finish the project. After the sheetrock, electrical and some of the plumbing was redone, the project was back up to speed.

A Positive Impact from Day One

More than 120 Ascend Cares volunteers worked to construct the Kidz Harbor medical clinic. In addition, the foundation purchased and installed all of the clinic's medical equipment. In all, more than \$20,000 was invested in the project.

The clinic opened on December 18, 2017, and is staffed with a nurse practitioner, allowing the organization to have a positive impact the moment a child arrives. The project was completed just in time for Christmas, which is a busy time for the facility.

"One child arrived to us with a severe case of scabies and lice due to neglect," said Sharon. "Instead of having to wait for a doctor's office or clinic to open, we took the child to our clinic where our nurse practitioner was ready and waiting. He was able to exam her and begin treating her condition right away."

"Adding a clinic to our facility had been a dream of ours for years," said Sharon. "We are so grateful that Ascend Cares made it happen. The volunteers have made the lives of these children better, and after the difficult challenges they've faced in their young lives, 'better' is a great place to start."

Summertime Means Volunteer Opportunities for Pensacola

During the summer, kids are excited because there is no school, tests, homework, etc. However, the summer can mean hunger for some kids as their breakfasts and lunches come from the school's meal program. Many children that are on a meal program at school are "food insecure" (lacking sufficient food in the home to meet basic nutritional needs), and they often go hungry on weekends and during the summer months. Ascend Cares Pensacola has been partnering with the Cantonment Improvement Committee (CIC) to help bridge the gap for the hungry children in their community for the past two summers to serve meals to the children at Carver Park.

Simple Set Up, Big Impact

Carver Park in Cantonment, Florida, is home to the Carver Center, an old, donated portable school building painted schoolhouse red and maintained by CIC to host afterschool tutoring throughout the school year. Volunteers also make use of the park's pavilion and grills to serve breakfast and lunch for the children Monday through Friday throughout the summer. "The park is maintained by the county, but CIC volunteers run everything," said Sharhonda Owens, senior quality specialist at the Pensacola site and Ascend Cares Pensacola site leader who organizes the summer activities. "We serve meals and do educational activities under the pavilion, play basketball and other games with the children in the park, and on Fridays, we have water play day."

Children that come to Carver range from newborns to 18 year olds. However, the majority of the kids are 9–10 year olds. During the summer, children either walk to Carver Park, or are dropped off hoping for a meal. The children that

come to the Carver Center also receive chilled foods that are donated from a local food bank. "Breakfast might be milk and cereal and lunch a peanut butter and jelly sandwich," said Sharhonda. "We try to give the children a hot meal for lunch several times a week."

Hot Meals

On Wednesdays and Fridays, Ascend Cares Pensacola brings or cooks hot meals for the kids. "When we are there, all of the children are fed," said Sharhonda. "Depending on the weather, we feed 40 to 50 children. We cook on the park grills or sometimes the food is catered in for the children."

"Ascend Cares has made a tremendous impact in the lives of these kids," said Mary Holley-Lewis, third grade teacher at Jim Allen Elementary, who runs the afterschool tutoring program. "The lunch served by Ascend Cares Pensacola may be the only meal the kids eat that day or the only hot meal that week."



Ascend Cares volunteers in Pensacola cook meals and bring activities for the children at the Carver Center.



"We also bring snacks that they can take home with them," said Sharhonda. "Some of our volunteer groups bring goodie bags for the kids so they will have something to eat that evening. We always bring more food than we need so that the kids get enough to eat."

As for food choices, the kids always pick fruit and salad over chicken nuggets. "Fresh fruit and salad are the first to disappear," said Sharhonda. "We've also done ice cream sundae parties with all the toppings, whipped cream and cherries. They love things like that and it makes them so happy."

"People don't realize that children rely on school for learning *and* food," said Sharhonda. "There are some kids that come to the Carver Center that have purposely failed a class during the school year to attend summer school so they can have breakfasts and lunches during the summer."

Summer Learning

Ascend Cares Pensacola not only provides food for the children, but also does learning games to keep their



minds fresh throughout the summer. "We like to interact with the children and do activities," said Sharhonda. "Our accounting group did an activity with them relating to what they do at work. The kids loved it."

"It's amazing how the volunteers interact with the kids," said Mary. "Ascend Cares doesn't just drop off food and leave. They plan activities that can educate the kids. They especially enjoy doing the crafts and games."

Back to School

While Ascend Cares Pensacola keeps the kids' stomachs full and minds active, they also have a back-to-school supplies drive. Volunteers have bought backpacks and school supplies for all of the children at the Carver Center. "The Saturday before the first day of school, we bring a backpack for each kid," said Sharhonda. "Last year, we put together 140 backpacks."

"Most of the time, when organizations donate backpacks and school supplies they only buy for the elementary kids," said Mary. "Ascend Cares Pensacola bought for elementary kids, but also for middle school and high school. They made sure that all of the kids were ready for the new school year."

"We want these kids to have what they need to start school," said Sharhonda. "It's a great feeling to know that these kids are going to school more prepared. I personally know how it feels when you don't have everything you need. You're embarrassed because you have to borrow things from someone else. That happened to me when I was little, so I understand how these kids feel."

Importance of Volunteering

"By providing backpacks and hot lunches goes beyond volunteering," said Mary. "The volunteers are nurturing these kids and building memories that they will keep forever. I hope it steers them to give back as they get older."

"With the Carver Center, we want to create a better community," said Mary. "With everything that Ascend Cares has done, we are doing just that."



Diverse Volunteer Opportunities for Ascend Cares Houston to Match the City Itself

Houston's highly-diverse population gives its citizens a firsthand view of the volunteer needs in the city. To address some of these needs, Ascend Cares Houston kicked off the first Summer of Caring in 2017 with its "Day of Caring," an entire day dedicated to volunteering.

With Houston's highly diverse population, the city faces a myriad of needs that volunteers can support. To address some of these needs, Ascend Cares Houston kicked off the first Summer of Caring in 2017 with its "Day of Caring," an entire day dedicated to volunteering.

When organizing the projects, Sheree Fields, Ascend Cares Houston site leader, solicited input from team members, considered various populations in need and offered several volunteer opportunities. Volunteers chose from projects that involved children, veterans and animals. In just one day, Ascend Cares Houston volunteered at six organizations totaling 474 hours, each one helping a different group with its own mission.

Fisher House

The Fisher House offers temporary housing to families of veterans and the military who are hospitalized. Fisher House facilities are located at military and Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers around the world.

Ascend Cares Houston visited one of three Fisher House facilities at the VA Center in Houston. The group literally

cleaned house and organized two, twenty-foot-long ocean containers filled with supplies and seasonal decorations. Volunteers organized the containers to create space for donations that were being stored in a room that could be used for young children. Once the items were moved, veterans' family members could enjoy the room.

"I appreciate a company that will devote not only an entire day to service, but also hours all year round to give back. It inspires me to be a good person and to do good every day."

— Lisa Entreklin

BARC Animal Shelter and Adoptions

BARC is the City of Houston's animal shelter and adoption facility. BARC provides shelter and veterinary care to all animals while its staff works to place them in forever homes.

Ascend Cares Houston spent the day playing with kittens and cats and giving them love and affection. Volunteers also walked and played with the shelter's large dogs to give them time outside.



Mystery Project

This year the Day of Caring had a “mystery project.” Volunteers were given a list and went shopping for a unit of deployed soldiers. Houston volunteers packed and shipped the items to the unit and donated the remaining items to Camp Hope, an organization that provides interim housing for wounded warriors, veterans and their families suffering from combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder.

“I feel very fortunate to work for a company that highlights community service as a core value of the organization.”

– Kendall Bell

Kids' Meals Houston

Kids' Meals delivers free healthy meals to the homes of preschool-aged children and provide the families with resources to help end the cycle of poverty. Many kids in Houston go hungry daily, only having the opportunity to eat what they are served at school.

Houston volunteers spent the day making sandwiches and packing lunches for children. Volunteers also unloaded a delivery truck with supplies to help out the organization.

Harris County Protective Services (CPS) for Children and Adults

CPS supports, enhances and advocates the safety and well-being of children and adults in Harris County.

Ascend Cares Houston donated 250 duffel bags to CPS. Separate tote bags were filled with personal care items and given to 43 girls.

Volunteers held a workshop with lunch that included interactive sessions to help the girls with interviewing skills, professionalism in the workplace and ways to build self-confidence.



Cossaboom Family YMCA Locker Room Project

The Cossaboom Family YMCA is an iconic landmark that has served South Houston for more than 70 years. The team cleaned, prepped and repainted a locker room to provide the guests with a nice, safe area to change and store their belongings.

“The biggest reward for me was seeing the guests' faces light up as they saw the newly-painted space for the first time— such a great experience!”

– Dan Holcomb



Senior Interaction Project

Volunteers also participated in a senior interaction project at the Cossaboom Family YMCA. Ascend Cares Houston decorated the game room with balloons and tablecloths. Volunteers sat with the senior guests to visit and then played a lively game of bingo.



Planters Project

For the third project at the Cossaboom Family YMCA, volunteers planted new shrubs and flowers at multiple building entrances. The team's work included sprucing up a flowerbed near the building's front entrance as well as a 30-foot-long bed by its side entrance. Volunteers also trimmed existing plants.



“I chose this project because of my interest in gardening. I was able to use my personal hobby to help make a community area beautiful.”

– Rod Johnson

“It was important for my kids to see firsthand that many of the things they take for granted such as having meals available any time they want is a privilege that many other kids do not have.”

– Alex Mihut on having his two children volunteer for the Day of Caring.



Ascend Cares Efforts Come Full Circle with Hurricane Harvey Efforts Across the Company

Ascend Cares was founded in 2011 following a tornado outbreak in northern Alabama that affected our team members and their families living near our Decatur facility. The pass-the-hat mentality that the foundation is now known for began from this tragedy and quickly rippled across the company. Hurricane Harvey was no different.

The hurricane made landfall on the Texas Gulf Coast on August 25, 2017, as a Category 4 hurricane. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, it brought 27 trillion gallons of rain over Texas and caused \$125 billion in damage.

An estimated 13 million people were affected by the storm, which included more than 80 employees from Chocolate Bayou and the Houston office. Many were forced to leave their homes and sustained significant damage and the loss of personal belongings.

Even as the storm hovered over Texas, Ascend Cares was ready to help

our employees and their families. Volunteers from Chocolate Bayou, Houston, Decatur, Foley, Greenwood and Pensacola supported the relief efforts. They included team members, contractors, family members and friends. More than 180 volunteers, demoed and cleaned homes, and cooked or purchased food to pack lunches and meals for the impacted employees and their families. Volunteers also donated more than \$175,000 that was matched dollar-for-dollar by Ascend.

While Hurricane Harvey devastated Texas, Ascend Cares' swift and impactful response helped employees, their families and communities get back on the path to recovery.



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ASCEND CARES

180+ VOLUNTEERS

3,300+ HOURS VOLUNTEERED

55 HOMES DEMOED & CLEANED

1,000+ MEALS SERVED

\$175,000 DONATED
BY EMPLOYEES

HURRICANE HARVEY

27 TRILLION
GALLONS OF RAIN OVER TEXAS

\$125 BILLION
IN DAMAGE

13 MILLION
AFFECTED BY THE STORM



The Ascend Cares Foundation is your foundation. Everything it has become, and all that it can be, comes from the caring and giving nature of our people.

Because of You

It's surprisingly hard to find a word that's big enough to convey our heartfelt gratitude, and so we simply say thank you.





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