



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2018

PHOTO ATTACHED

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**LIBERTY BANK FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTES TO HOUSING ASSISTANCE FUND
TO BENEFIT PUERTO RICAN EVACUEES**

Middletown, CT— Following Hurricane Maria last September, thousands of Puerto Ricans evacuated the island, many of them seeking refuge in Connecticut. Those without local resources or long-term family support have been temporarily housed via FEMA and state aid. But that is quickly coming to a halt.

"With affordable housing being so difficult to find in Connecticut, there's a danger that evacuees facing the cut-off of housing assistance will fall into homelessness," said Liberty Bank Foundation Executive Director Sue Murphy. "They've already suffered the loss of one home. They shouldn't have to face that again."

The good news is, a collaborative effort by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, United Way of Connecticut 211, the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy, and the Liberty Bank Foundation is working to support the refugees in finding stable, permanent housing.

The partners have developed a statewide emergency assistance plan to provide disaster case management services and flexible assistance dollars designed to prevent hurricane refugees from entering Connecticut's homelessness response system.

"We've seen the success of shelter diversion strategies in our mainstream Coordinated Access Networks," said Lisa Tepper Bates, executive director, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. "The plan is to apply that same successful strategy to keep evacuees housed by offering supports to stabilize their situations, and where that isn't possible, enable them to secure new housing."

The partners are currently reaching out to philanthropic funders all over the state to raise the \$640,000 needed to serve the estimated 225 evacuee families that will be at risk of homelessness over the next six months.

So far, \$253,000 has been committed to this effort, with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving leading the way with a \$200,000 grant. Other funders to date include Liberty

Bank Foundation, the James H. Napier Foundation, Dime Bank, and the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut.

"Several other funders are currently considering grants at this point," said Murphy. "I think many funders have been searching for a coordinated, meaningful way to support these new neighbors of ours. This plan addresses a critical need in a comprehensive, statewide fashion that provides for their housing needs, while protecting the mainstream homelessness response system from overload."

Liberty Bank Foundation has awarded over \$11 million in grants to nonprofit organizations within Liberty Bank's market area since its inception. The foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for people of low or moderate income by investing in three areas: education to promote economic success for children and families; affordable housing; and basic human needs, such as food and shelter. Along with its grantmaking, the foundation strives to foster the convening and collaboration of nonprofits, funders, business, and government to address community issues.

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Photo Caption:

On behalf of Liberty Bank Foundation, Sue Murphy, executive director, (r) presents a \$10,000 check for the Emergency Assistance Fund for Puerto Rican evacuees to Paula Gilberto, president of the United Way of Central and Northeastern CT.