



The AutoEthnographers Volunteer in Local Community for Hurricane Ian Relief

Description

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Recently, members of *The AutoEthnographer's* Board of Directors, Marlen Harrison and Edward Perrin, enjoyed an opportunity to volunteer with Miami-based [Global Empowerment Mission \(GEM\)](#) to create family necessity kits for those affected by Hurricane Ian. With *The AutoEthnographer* being a South Florida-based nonprofit, and one almost entirely volunteer-driven, founders Marlen and Ed enjoyed the opportunity to give back to the local communities deeply affected by the deadly storm.

According to [Wikipedia](#), Hurricane Ian was “a large and destructive Category 4 Atlantic hurricane, that was the deadliest hurricane to strike the state of Florida since the 1935 Labor Day hurricane. Ian caused widespread damage across western Cuba and the southeast United States, especially the states of Florida and South Carolina.”





Who is GEM?

Who is GEM? Global Empowerment Mission is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2011 as a first responder to global disasters. To date, GEM has supported missions in 40 countries, all 50 US states, and territories including the Caribbean. The organization's complete 360 degree response results in having a long-lasting institutional impact. In the following video, watch as staff and volunteers at GEM's European facility put together family necessity kits.

Consider the summary stats for GEM's Hurricane Ian relief initiatives so far:

- \$5,000,000: In aid committed
- \$1,751,383: Value of supplies delivered to date
- 77,076: Individuals served
- 346: Placed in temporary housing provided by Airbnb
- 32: Full size UC trucks delivered
- 75: Trucks committed Oct 22

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Marlen Harrison (L) and Edward Perrin (second from left) of *The AutoEthnographer*

How Did We Help?

Ed and I arrived on a warm autumn morning to the Miami, Florida GEM warehouse. After completing our volunteer forms and liability waivers, we donned bright-yellow safety vests and were introduced to our mission. Together with other volunteers, we created an assembly line of boxes and filled them with an array of dry goods. We were surrounded by rows and rows of shelves stacked up to the ceiling with pallets of food, drinks, and toiletries. Altogether, we were part of a team of volunteers that numbered around 30 that day.

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Valuable items are included in each box. Canned foods, electrolyte powders, and juice boxes are included alongside ground coffee, nutrition bars, and powdered milk. In addition, a second assembly line behind us put together Ziploc bags filled with deodorant, razors, toothbrushes, soap, sunscreen, and hygiene products.





We spent about 4 hours assisting GEM; I wish we could have stayed longer and done more. We packed 15 pallets of ready-to-be-delivered kits that can support about 700 families for 3-5 days.

As someone who has never been in a position to receive a family necessity kit, I felt intermittent waves of sadness, frustration, and despair for those who had lost so much so quickly. Thankfully, I also felt proud of the work that GEM is undertaking and happy to be part of a solution.

I'm already considering ways *The AutoEthnographer* can further assist GEM, but for now I will be happy to make a modest donation to support their good work. You can donate as well! Just follow the SUPPORT GEM button below!

[SUPPORT GEM](#)

Featured image by Marlen Harrison for [The AutoEthnographer](#)

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