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ACF Members Serve Up Comfort During Hurricane Relief Efforts

BY WE ARE CHEFS | OCTOBER 9, 2018

by [Kenya McCullum](#)



Whenever there's a hurricane, like Hurricane Florence that hit the Carolinas last month, people around the country will see news images of torrential rainfall, bumper-to-bumper traffic on the highway as people evacuate to safety, and trees fighting — and often succumbing to — rough winds. But what they usually don't see is what happens next — what Geoff Blount, [ACF Myrtle Beach](#) President, describes as “flooding of

Biblical proportions” that is caused when the waters of five rivers all converge and move in their direction.

“People saw the devastation from a hurricane,” he says. “What hit us here was not a hurricane; what hit us here was all the floods from the hurricane that was North of us.”

And people watching the national news also won’t see what Blount did to help those on the outskirts of Myrtle Beach who were in need of meals and comfort. Since the [International Culinary Institute of Myrtle Beach](#), where Blount teaches baking and pastry arts, was going to be closed, he decided to use the time — and the food delivery that the school received on the same day as the evacuation — to mobilize his students and area chefs to cook meals at ICI’s Conway campus. The meals were then distributed by the Salvation Army and the Red Cross.



International Culinary Institute of Myrtle Beach student volunteers pitching in to make 600 portions of chicken and rice

bog. Photo by Geoff Blount

As soon as he put out a call for help on Facebook, the culinary community was quick to assist. Blount received food donations from several chefs, including ACF member [Amy Sins of New Orleans](#), who is no stranger to the aftermath of hurricanes and the devastation they can cause.

“As someone who went through Katrina — eight feet of water in my house, about 12 in my garage, and a resident of the levee break on the 17th Street canal in New Orleans — I knew what was going to happen in the Carolinas if the flood water rises,” she says. “Food makes people feel better, so you always want to get a hot meal in the hands of someone in need. I’ve learned that during disaster situations, that is not easy. The logistics can be overwhelming. Everything from flooded streets, rising backwaters, relocation of shelters to the lack of running water and electricity.”





Loading meals being flown to North and South Carolina Hurricane Florence survivors. Photo by Jay Vise

In order to help make people in South Carolina feel better, Sins worked tirelessly with her network of professionals to cook 1,200 pounds of food in the [Second Harvest Kitchen](#), and arranged to have it delivered by a private plane. This contribution, which Blount and his team were able to use to make 2,000 meals, included items such as hummus, shrimp creole, grits and butter beans. In addition, he received donations from other chefs including 10,000 cookies from the DoubleTree Hotel and 800 pounds of chicken from the [ACF Triad](#) chapter. When it was all said and done, over the course of 18 days, Blount and his team produced 15,400 meals that were given to evacuees, as well as the first responders, National Guardsmen, and police officers involved in the relief efforts.

And if given the chance, Blount and Sins would do it all over again.

“Things like this let you remember that there is something about our humanity that is still good,” Blount says. “We’re not all just looking out for ourselves, we are trying to look out for each other and help each other. Sometimes I know that’s in question, when people are just mean and rude, but then something like this happens and you

see a community come together.”

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Chef Blount and everyone who assisted and or contributed seems to have this “caring” gene coupled with humility.

All of the people who stand by in waiting for the storm to pass are masters in their fields of expertise. I think it was one of Napoleons generals who said “you can’t win a war on an empty stomach” and chefs understand this fact probably better than most.

The people who regularly do the monumental tasks of cleaning up the wreckage after all of the human endeavors are completed have a special place in the hearts of many. The actions of the Myrtl Beach ACF members and their affinity for humanity and the healing effects of “breaking bread”