



| United Steelworkers District 4 | December 2017 | Issue 3 |

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USW District 4 Women of Steel 2017 Leadership Course Encourages Activism

Women of Steel from throughout the District 4 came together in Albany, N.Y., from Oct. 3 to 6, 2017, for the 2017 Women of Steel Leadership Course.

District 4 Women of Steel Coordinator, Tammie Botelho, and facilitators, Lisa Husami, Cindy Marlow and Brigitte Womer, agreed that this year's dynamic group of sisters bonded as a group almost instantly, creating an ideal environment for learning and sharing.

The Women of Steel Leadership Course is offered yearly by the district and designed to provide information about how our union works, the importance of activism in our union and communities and the role of local union women's committees.

"The training was relevant, motivating and wonderfully facilitated," said Amanda Irons from USW Local 2001.

The course serves as a means to introduce women to various areas within the union, committees required by the USW Constitution that they may want to become active in and helps them to develop the leadership skills that will contribute to their success.

The course also encourages sisters to join or form women's committees in their locals. These committees offer women the vehicle to develop the kinds of mentorship, sisterhood and support groups that help them build confidence, self-esteem and activist skills to fully contribute to the work of the union.

"The course was informative and empowering," said USW Local 593 member Kelsey Loveland.

The structure of the program encourages Women of Steel who are strong core leaders and activists already to reach back, bring forward and mentor new activists and leaders.

After the Rapid Response portion of the course, the Women of Steel collected \$380 in an impromptu bucket drop to aide our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico Still Devastated after Hurricane María

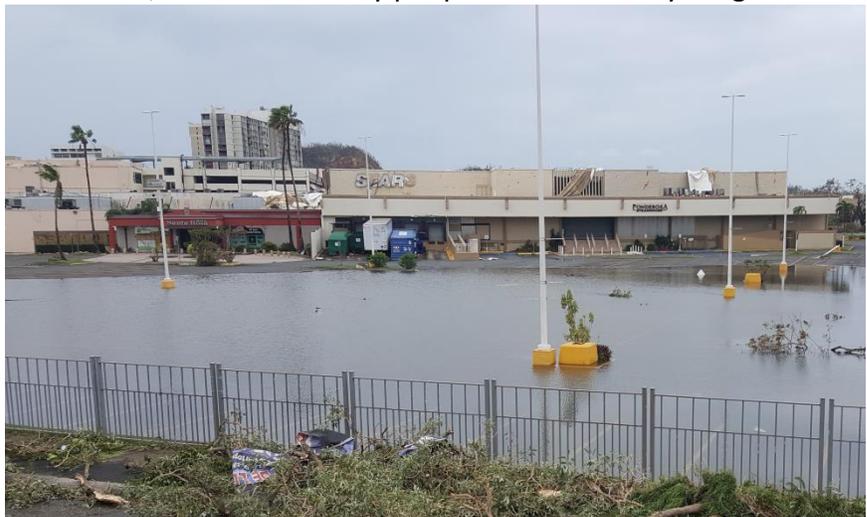
from Nancy Arizmendi, USW District 4, Puerto Rico

On September 20, 2017, hurricane María hit Puerto Rico with howling winds of 175 mph, thunders and heavy rain flooding the island. Our small, sunny island nicknamed "the island of enchantment" would soon become "the island of devastation."

Like the rest of the island's habitants, I spent all day trying to keep the rising water from flooding my home. I could see the force of the wind pushing the glass doors in my living room to the point where I was afraid they'd be blown away. Water was coming down the walls, and I lost track of how many towels I used to dry it. It was a very scary day for everyone in the island, but little did I know that another nightmare was approaching.

María had left us without power, water or communication lines. When I finally ventured out of my apartment, I saw the real devastation. Electrical utility poles were strewn on the streets and sidewalks, blocking access to many roads, and some fell on the roofs of houses. Most of the trees were blown away; traffic lights weren't working. Worst of all, there were many people who lost everything to the storm, including their homes, searching for shelter. The parking lot of a big shopping mall near the USW District 4 office was now a huge swimming pool.

I went to nine gas stations, but none of them had gas. I asked the owners why, and they said they were either sold out or that their gas pumps were not operable without diesel. When I finally found one that had both diesel and gas, I had to wait in line for eight hours to fill my tank. Every time I had to buy anything, the same long lines waited.



The parking lot of a shopping mall looks like a giant swimming pool.

I spent six to eight hours in line under a blazing sun to buy bottled water, and when it was finally time to go into the store, there was no water left. So I returned the next day, hoping this time the store has enough water to sell. The other option is to find someplace else and start over again.

Almost every day, I ended up tired, frustrated and without the items I needed. People are homeless, need medical care or life sustaining medication. Many have lost jobs, and it's never a sure bet that the working ATMs will have cash available by the time we make it to the front of the line. Without electricity, people need cash to buy essentials. Many are still unable to communicate. About 3.5 million Puerto Ricans are suffering, and while it is important to send donations, we need to make sure rescue and recovery efforts on the island continue.

To donate or find out more about USW efforts to help hurricane victims, visit <http://www.usw.org/relief>.

UNITED STEELWORKERS

Action OSH & USW Tony Mazzocchi Center Making a Difference in Houston

Four years ago, in response to Hurricane Sandy, the USW, the Tony Mazzocchi Center (TMC) and the Labor Institute partnered up with worker centers to provide Health and Safety training to workers responding to the disaster-affected areas in the Tri-State area.

The results of that engagement are that thousands of workers gained access to life-saving training to protect their lives and health in the workplace. The effort of providing training continues today, however, the need is so great that some of those trainers decided to join the USW and form a unionized, worker-owned health and safety co-op, named Action OSH.

After Hurricane Harvey in October, two members of Action OSH, Fredy Llanos and William Bonilla, were deployed in Houston to provide training and share knowledge with the community about their experiences in the aftermath of Sandy. They helped build power by reaching out to workers and providing health and safety training.

In Houston, as part of the TMC SERTS (Specialized Emergency Response Team), Llanos and Bonilla facilitated train-the-trainer workshops around mold awareness, conducted other short trainings and shared life-saving information and equipment with hundreds of workers during health and safety talks and by distributing PPE and informational packets about hazards in disaster-affected areas.

Community members, day laborers and our partners on the ground were thankful, appreciative and moved by the fact that USW, SERTS and Action OSH mobilized to lend a hand to communities that have been devastated.

For the members of Action OSH, it was a moving experience as well, as they felt proud to represent our union and to give back to communities that are now starting the task of rebuilding post-disaster – a long and difficult process that may have long-term consequences on workers' lives if it is done in an unsafe manner.

The members of Action Osh are also proud to provide tools to the local communities so that they can be better prepared for future disasters and more resilient. Action OSH provided training in English and Spanish to an array of community members and workers.

The trainers worked closely with grassroots organizations that advocate for worker protections and rights in the Houston area, which included Fe y Justicia and Workers Defense Project. The organizations played a key role in connecting the SERTS to workers, provided space and support throughout the deployment to maximize the impact of the USW initiative.

By reaching out to partners like Fe y Justicia and Workers Defense Project, the USW is building important long-term community ties. By supporting worker-owned co-ops, the USW is helping empower workers to truly take ownership of their trade.

By responding effectively and in a timely manner to natural disasters, the USW, its members and partners are helping communities become more resilient, united and much better prepared for future disasters that they might face.

Learn more about the USW Tony Mazzocchi Center at <http://www.uswtmc.org/>.