Another year, another devastating hurricane… As everyone is aware, last October, Hurricane Sandy moved slowly up the Eastern Seaboard of the United States wreaking havoc on everything in its path. Superstorm Sandy, as the hurricane became known, was over 1,100 miles wide and caused damage from Florida to Maine and as far west as the Appalachians and western Michigan. Having combined elements of a tropical cyclone and a winter storm, Sandy was estimated to have caused over $75B in damage and was responsible for over 70 deaths in the United States.

Some of the hardest hit areas were Southern New York and New Jersey. With our own hurricane memories still fresh in our minds (as many of us remember, Hurricane Lee pounded our area in 2011), GTP employees and members of our community hurried to action. Only days after the storm ripped through parts of New York and New Jersey, the call for donations—including clothing, warm blankets, non-perishable food items, cleaning supplies, etc.—went out via print, radio and word of mouth. Along with a local radio stations and Churches, GTP served as a community drop off point for donations. For over a week, at our main gate, several large boxes were filled with bottled water, clothes and more, emptied and filled again. After only a few days, clothing donations alone filled 33 pallets of cardboard bins! Initially the plan was to take all the donations to a small town in Brooklyn called Gerritsen Beach. However, with the volume of donations, a second location was added in New Jersey near the town of Monroe. On November 9th, 2012, both shipments left the GTP warehouse for their destinations along with six GTP employees.

A trucking company was contracted to transport a 53’ trailer full of cleaning supplies, clothing, bottled water, food and more to New Jersey. GTP employees took a 26’ U-Haul, filled with similar supplies, to Gerritsen Beach. When our employees arrived in the small Brooklyn town, they realized a wide range of emotions. Everyone was saddened by the devastation they encountered. The streets were lined by cars that had been “totaled” by insurance companies. Piles of garbage bags, ruined furniture, broken and soaked drywall, and destroyed appliances were in front of almost every house. Residents told stories of “walls of water” that knocked in front doors and swept away everything in sight. Every house in town had flooding in their basement and most had first floor water damage. When our employees were there, over a week later, power had yet to be restored and as we all remember, a winter storm was heading in soon.
The other side of the emotional spectrum was also seen by the GTP group. A great sense of pride and hopefulness was experienced as it became clear that hundreds of volunteers had all shown up to help. Members of the Athens and Danville fire departments were on hand unloading and sorting donations. One volunteer the group met had shown up to make breakfast at the relief center the day after the storm and still hadn’t left over a week and a half later! Many of the people of Gerritsen Beach expressed their gratitude for the donations and the time our team spent at the relief center. While it was clear that the community of Gerritsen Beach had a long road to recovery, it was also clear they were surrounded by people that care, including members of a community in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

This is just another in the long line of examples of the employees of GTP coming together to help those in need. GTP employees and the people of our community had nothing to gain by making donations to people they didn’t even know. We just knew that people were in need and we had to help. This act of kindness offers continuing proof that Towanda, PA and the surrounding communities are a great place to live and work.