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NEWS RELEASE

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Operation: Helping Ours Neighbors' Schools
Maintenance Crews Hit the Road to Assist Bay County Schools

Escambia County School District schools continue with efforts to raise funds for *Operation: Helping Our Neighbors' Schools*. On Monday, fifteen members of the ECSD Maintenance team traveled east to assist in supportive roles. An offer to help with the recovery of the damaged schools was extended by ECSD following the storms, but the districts affected were still assessing their immediate needs. Last week, they were ready and asked for assistance from the ECSD's Maintenance Department.

"Last week, we were contacted by Bay County's School District and they needed help with installing two miles of new fencing and help with getting lighting, inside and out, ready so they can reopen schools," said Jim Higgins, Assistant Director of ECSD's Maintenance Department.

"Monday morning, before dawn, 15 members of our staff drove out with a variety of vehicles and equipment. They will camp out in the gym at Mowat Middle School and do all they can to help during the day," said Higgins. "They will stay through Friday."

This deployment is phase two of *Operation: Help Our Neighbors' Schools* announced earlier by Escambia County's School Superintendent Malcolm Thomas.

"Hurricane Ivan taught us what it takes to recover as a school district from severe storm damage; which is why we feel we can help," said Superintendent Thomas. "We began by asking our schools to conduct fund raisers to contribute to our Escambia County Public Schools Foundation for *Operation: Help Our Neighbors' Schools*. All of those funds will go to the education foundations in Bay and Gulf County, so they can focus on their needs."

"Our Maintenance Department has been on stand-by, ready to assist, but waiting for Bay and Gulf Counties to assess their damage, create a plan of action, and order supplies. What they need now is manpower," said Superintendent Thomas. "We are more than happy to assist our neighbors this way as well."

Crews took along scissor lifts, bucket trucks, a back hoe, a dump truck and fuel. The fifteen employees will work in three teams and focus on the schools' primary needs, lighting and security. The schools will have to be open extra hours to support a split session and accommodate students from two schools in one, making exterior lighting even more important for student and staff safety.

"Helping them install two miles of fencing will help them keep their campus secure and will hopefully help their students and their families feel safe," added Higgins.

The fifteen crew members includes three team supervisors: Vince Childers, Tommy Silvers and Ken Barth. The crews are experienced with electrical work, lightning and fence installation.

"Our planning goal was to be sure our crews will be able to work and live independently, to be self-sufficient. They took along food, water, camping gear and even a refrigerator truck. They will be there all week," Higgins said. "Later this week we will also determine if we need to get ready to send a second set of workers next week."

Video of the caravan's departure will be posted on Facebook on the page Escambia Schools Public Relations. It was taken by Maintenance Department staff member Mitch Mosley. In the video fifteen members of the Maintenance Department staff of the Escambia County School District leave the J.E. Hall Center to head east early Monday morning on Oct. 29, 2018, to assist Bay County schools recover from the damage caused by Hurricane Michael.

Media queries about Escambia County School District topics should be directed to Kim Stefansson, at [850-469-6219](tel:850-469-6219) or kstefansson@escambia.k12.fl.us. Like ECSD on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ecsdfl. Go to the Escambia Schools Public Relations page on www.facebook.com/ecsd.public to see pictures of recent events. Visit ECSD's web page at www.escambiaschools.org