



Blind Brook High School sophomore Cameron Storch (center) presents Hagua Port Chester President Herberth Diaz (left) and Port Chester Trustee Luis Marino (right) with a check for \$3,300 at a Saturday, June 9 fundraiser for Guatemala held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church. The fundraiser, which was organized through Hagua, raised money for Guatemalan relief aid following the June 3 volcanic eruption. JAMIE KERNER | WESTMORE NEWS

## Community raises \$32,000 for Guatemalan volcano victims

BY JAMIE KERNER

After the Guatemala relief fundraiser on Saturday, June 9, at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Port Chester, Herberth Diaz felt proud of his heritage and community.

"From the bottom of my heart, being Guatemalan, I have no words to tell everybody, to express, how great it feels to be Latino," Diaz said. "Not just Latino, it feels so great to live in Port Chester."

Diaz is the president of Hagua Port Chester, a non-profit organization that was the force behind the event that united multiple communities and raised money for aid and relief in Guatemala. On June 3, Guatemala's Fuego volcano in Escuintla erupted, resulting in over 114 deaths.

According to Luis Marino, a Port Chester trustee and one of the event's organizers, more than 500 people attended the fundraiser and they raised about \$32,000.

"We work with the community," Marino said. "Everybody got together from Port Chester, no matter what nationality you are," Marino said.

Entry cost \$20 per person and granted each event-goer access to live music. Food, drinks and raffle tickets for prizes including a TV, kitchen appliances and clothing could be purchased at additional charge.

Many community members, like Blind Brook High School sophomore Cameron Storch, contributed supplemental donations in addition to paying the event's entry fee. Storch hand delivered a check for \$3,300 to Diaz and Marino at the fundraiser, an amount he raised after setting up an online donation page on GoFundMe.

Storch's involvement in a tutoring program with Port Chester Middle School students inspired him to set up the page and get involved with raising funds for the cause.

"After tutoring the kids, I've seen how close they are with these families in Guatemala. Some of them have families in Guatemala," Storch said. "I set up a GoFundMe, I shared it with my friends, my family and now its raised over \$3,000."

"What Cameron wanted to do is deliver a check from the Rye Brook community in support of the Port Chester immigrant community, saying we wanted to help in any way we could," Eric Storch, Cameron's father, said.

Rather than just sending all the money raised, Diaz and Marino plan to make a trip down to Guatemala within the next week. There, they will use the money to buy clothes, food, supplies and other necessities.

"The way we work is we go down there, physical, and help those people," Marino said. "We don't believe in just sending the money or just giving the money. That's what we do."

This cost of the trip will come out of Diaz and Marino's own pockets. "Just remember, and this is clear, we don't use any of the money we collect when we go," Marino said. "We go on our own expenses. So, I have to pay for my own flight, own hotel, and that's the best part of it."

Diaz said they are planning a second event to raise more funds for relief efforts for Guatemala. Anyone interested in donating can check out Hagua Port Chester on Facebook and reach out for more information. Checks should be made out to "Hagua Port Chester." Donations can also be made via Storch's GoFundMe page at [www.gofundme.com/port-chester-guatemalan-relief](http://www.gofundme.com/port-chester-guatemalan-relief).



King Street resident Clarissa Orellana sells food and drink tickets to event-goers in an effort to raise money for victims of the volcano in Escuintla, Guatemala. JAMIE KERNER | WESTMORE NEWS

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