

B'NAI B'RITH TODAY

B'nai B'rith's Worldwide Disaster Relief

By Katherine Dolgenos

In just the past year, B'nai B'rith has been aiding disaster recovery efforts throughout the United States and all over the world. This year's aid upholds a practice that started 154 years ago. "B'nai B'rith includes disaster and emergency relief as one of its main pillars because the organization was founded 175 years ago to aid human kind," said Rebecca Saltzman, B'nai B'rith International senior vice president and chair of the Disaster and Emergency Relief Committee. "Our commitment stemmed from our founders' desire to assist widows and their children. Victims of the Baltimore flood in 1868 were the first recipients of B'nai B'rith's disaster relief funds. Since our founding, we have continued to assist communities in need."

B'nai B'rith opened the Fund after the attack on the Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha Congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in October 2018, and allocated the funds raised to support projects for community healing and recovery.

In May, the B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) held its annual B'nai B'rith Managers and Service Coordinators Training meeting in Puerto Rico, which is still recovering from damage caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017. In choosing to hold the meeting there, the CSS team contributed to the island's short-term recovery, by volunteering for a day with local nonprofits, and with its long-term economic recovery by bringing business to the island.

During the day of service, which the B'nai B'rith International Disaster Relief



B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services staff and senior residences personnel who traveled to Puerto Rico for the 2019 Managers and Service Coordinators Training meeting in May joined forces for a day of service at an ecological farm outside of San Juan.

Fund sponsored, 33 B'nai B'rith volunteers planted seedlings, mulched and watered the land on a farm outside San Juan called Siembre Tres Vidas. Our volunteers worked with the World Central Kitchen, a charity run by Washington, D.C.-based celebrity chef José Andrés.

Since 1865, when it raised funds in pre-state Israel to help victims of a cholera epidemic, B'nai B'rith has continued to help

needy communities. "We are not just a senior housing provider," said Janel Doughten, associate director of CSS and an organizer of the service trip and conference in Puerto Rico. "We are B'nai B'rith International, with this whole community service part of us, and it brings something extra, and it's very special." You can listen to an episode of the B'nai B'rith podcast focused on the CSS conference and service in Puerto Rico here.