Proceeds from Hurricane Sandy benefit concert in Highland Park to help Keyport/Union Beach relief efforts

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100 percent of money and supplies to go directly to victims throughout New Jersey

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Highland Park, NJ (Nov. 5) – Several places of worship are organizing a benefit concert to raise money and collect supplies for the victims of Hurricane Sandy, which tore through parts of the East Coast leaving death, destruction and displaced people in its path.

Leaders at The Reformed Church of Highland Park are leading the effort for the Nov. 11 concert, which will be from 3-5 p.m. at Bartle School, 435 Mansfield St. in Highland Park.

Confirmed artists include jazz musician John Bianculli and bluegrass group Sailors in Rags. Organizers are working to add more artists to the line-up. 100 percent of all money and supplies will go to hurricane victims, organizers said.

Reformed Church of Highland Park Pastor Seth Kaper-Dale is working with leaders at Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple, a synagogue in New Brunswick, and is planning to reach out the Peace Island Institute, a Muslim organization.

“Anytime there’s a disaster, it should be a time when all people come to help. We’re calling on partners to help - people who care about peace and justice,” Kaper-Dale said.

The money and supplies collected will go to help the people in the Keyport/Union Beach area. There are 400 people staying at Keyport Central School, mostly from Union Beach.

“We’re living right near the major epicenter of the catastrophe, so we turned our efforts to thinking about the neighboring towns. Keyport is 27 minutes from here. There are people literally with only the clothes on their backs. It’s our moral responsibility. We’re trying to mobilize things that we know will be helpful.”

Kaper-Dale said another reason he’s focusing on the Keyport area is because the pastor of the Reformed Church of Keyport, Dawn Seaman, studied at the Reformed Church of Highland Park.

But Jenni Chapman, who’s helping to organize, said they’re hoping to collect enough
money and supplies to help more than the Keyport area.

“We’re going to start there and branch out,” said Chapman, owner of Highland Park businesses Over the Moon Toys and Through the Moongate.

Chapman said they are working in tandem with the Red Cross.

“The Red Cross is a worthy organization, but they have a lot of protocol. The smaller efforts get the money and supplies to people quickly. If someone says they have 20 people who need diapers, we can get the diapers to them that night,” she said.

Chapman said the Keyport area was hit really hard.

“It looks awful,” she said, adding the people who will be helped by the benefit are residents who live in the Monmouth County town year round. “These aren’t people with summer homes in Keyport.”

Kaper-Dale said he’s reached out to the Reform Church of America to see if they can help with the disaster.

“I said ‘If you have work groups, you can stay here. We will host you.’ They said ‘Yes, we have people and can send people,’” said Kaper-Dale, adding the director of mission relief with the Reform Church of America is planning to visit the Keyport/Union Beach area. “We hope to supplement the disaster relief.”

Kaper-Dale also added that five people living “in sanctuary” at the Reformed Church of Highland Park because of immigration issues are helping to run the relief effort operation.

“They’re front and center making the whole thing work,” he said.

The list of needed supplies include: non-perishable food, water, blankets, toiletries, first-aid kit medical supplies, batteries, flashlights, heavy duty garbage bags, male/female socks, men's and women's underwear, prune juice, magnifying glasses, deodorant, disposable (non-latex) gloves, wash clothes and wipes, can openers and money.

Starting Sunday, Nov. 4, there will be a van driving to Keyport and other affected shore towns. The van will travel to the affected areas so people can distribute supplies on Sundays and Wednesdays. Please call the Reformed Church of Highland Park at (732) 249-7349 for more information about travel times.

Main Street Highland Park is a non-profit community development organization that manages the downtown Business District for the benefit of the merchants, business owners and residents of Highland Park, as a place to live, work and do business. MSHP is an officially designated program of Main Street New Jersey, a program of the NJ Department of Community Affairs.