



# Fearless.

BY J.D. EGGLESTON

## Storm Chasers Bill and Danielle Ford Charge into Chaos

This wasn't the first time Bill and Danielle Ford had ventured into a storm. They've faced devastation, flooding and terrifyingly dangerous weather events so many times they've almost lost count.

"We actually took a trailer full of supplies down," Bill Ford said. "We snuck in behind the hurricane and ended up in Aransas Pass where there was great need and a lot of destruction. There were a lot of families there that had absolutely nothing left. We got there at the right time."

"Sneaking in" behind a monster hurricane like Harvey is not for the faint of heart. What kind of people do that? Clearly the Fords have uncommon courage and powerful motivation.

You see, Bill and Danielle Ford

are storm chasers, but not your typical adrenaline junkies. They don't follow and report from a distance on extreme weather occurrences. They lead a team committed to the task they pursue in every storm. It's called "W.A.R." – Warn, Assist, Restore. Their team, named Storm Warriors, is based here, in Parker County.

Clearly, to be a Storm Warrior, one must have one essential characteristic — a warrior's heart.

Despite years of experience, training and venturing into violent weather systems and their aftermaths, the Storm Warriors charged into Hurricane Harvey and were exposed to more human loss, extreme and sudden need, desperation, hunger, and chaos than in any of their prior storm chasing missions.

The tremendous response was greater than any Bill and Danielle had ever seen, after any other storm — and it was all by the people, businesses and churches of Parker County.

On Aug. 23, 2017, Tropical Storm Harvey began to strengthen in the Caribbean, making its way into the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico with a direct target of the Texas coastline. Harvey was projected to make landfall a couple of days later as a Category 4 Hurricane with sustained winds of 130 miles per hour. As the world watched the pending storm and thousands evacuated their homes and businesses, Parker County citizens, churches and the Storm Warriors were already gearing up to respond. The Storm Warriors were about to embark on their most



Damage in Glen Heights

ambitious mission yet — leading a regional response from North Texas to the pending devastation on the Texas Coast. Their plan was to slip in behind the hurricane and head to the Gulf Region from the west.

Their goal? To rescue and provide critical supplies to as many families as they could reach and serve.

Prior to leaving on their first trip, the Storm Warriors reached out to some families and a few churches asking for help with supplies to take with them.

What happened next was an overwhelming demonstration of generosity. As the first container of water, food, diapers, shampoo, toothbrushes, pet food, and other needed items was delivered to the families in Aransas Pass, huge quantities of other supplies continued to be dropped off at local churches and businesses in Parker County. As the Storm Warrior team began to make its way back to pick up the next container of supplies, Bill received a call from Kim Brewer of New River Fellowship about the amount of supplies that had now filled the entire foyer of the church. This was only the beginning as families all over Parker County

began to reach out with gifts of love and hope to the thousands who had lost everything due to the devastation in the Gulf Region and the massive flooding around Houston.

As gifts continued to pour into the drop-off locations, the Storm Warriors began to set up receiving locations and distribution partners where the supplies were needed the most. Because this was Bill Ford's fourth hurricane, he believed the best way to respond and get urgently needed supplies to families in need would be through the churches based in the most affected areas. As Bill reached out to existing partners to help, numerous area ministers and churches began to call the Storm Warriors asking for help. "This is the way the Church is supposed to work," Bill said as churches and businesses in Parker County continued to respond and help meet the needs left by Harvey's devastation.

But as with all wide-spread efforts to respond quickly to overwhelming circumstances, the question of leadership and coordination began to grow. Without being asked, paid, or authorized, the Storm Warriors assumed that leadership role. Dozens

of churches and thousands of people, even major metropolitan radio stations, began to call on the Storm Warriors for information, guidance and planning. It was a role the Storm Warriors were well-prepared to fill.

As thousands of pounds and pallets of new gifts and supplies were stacking up at area churches, new drop-off locations were established at Jerry's Chevrolet, Funky Munky Shaved Ice, Anytime Fitness, Zanetti Trailers, and Jimmy John's. The challenge facing the Storm Warriors became figuring out how the overwhelming quantity of donations would be organized and transported to the families who were waiting for help. Bill and Danielle knew that hurricane victims were literally living hour-by-hour now, and that these supplies were essential for them to survive the first few days following the storm. Then, if they survived, they would begin to pick up the pieces of their lives. As Ford was standing outside of New River Fellowship formulating a plan to load and deliver what were now clearly two semi-trucks full of supplies, Lyndsey Montgomery introduced herself and said she had already arranged to get

trucks, trailers and drivers ready to load and deliver to wherever they would be directed. With the generosity of Parker County's community of ranch and horse owners and trainers, Cutters with Compassion, and Triple C Transit LLC, a delivery plan was put into full motion.

But, it didn't stop there.

"Many other businesses pitched in with equipment and resources and hundreds of volunteers were mobilized to help sort, stack, wrap and load what turned out to be seven full semi-truckloads for distribution to locations in South Texas," Bill said.

Robbie Ballard of 1845 Trucking of Parker County, along with his brother Randy and the Storm Warriors team, delivered a much-welcomed 22 pallets of ice to the hot and tired families in Rockport, who were lined up in their cars and trucks to receive this precious gift.

Bill and Danielle Ford both said that there are so many to thank for the support and the generosity, because so many came together to help fill in the gap with whatever was needed.

Trinity Bible Church, New River Fellowship, The Church at the Crossing, and Tabernacle of Praise were all drop-off locations. Families from Dallas and as far away as Scottsdale, Ariz., drove their donations to Parker County to help in the relief efforts. Businesses such as Silver Star Wrecker and CAB Logistics provided equipment, trucks, and delivery expertise to the relief effort.

"The response was overwhelming in the sense of watching the lines of cars bringing each gift and donation as a gift of love to be delivered to families they may never meet," Danielle said. "That's what love does."

The Storm Warriors team is on a mission to bring a message of hope to families who are affected by storms. They are equipped to help warn communities in advance of storms coming into their areas, and then to respond as a search-and-rescue team to help families out of the rubble and into the care they need.

The "Warrior's Heart" of the Storm Warriors is their passion and desire to help families in the process



of restoration.

According to Bill, families who have been devastated by catastrophic events such as Harvey need hope to pick up the pieces and rebuild their lives. "This help comes in many ways," he said, "such as a hug, listening to their stories, crying together, praying together, giving them food and water and other basic necessities that allow them to carry on from day to day."

The Storm Warriors have previously charged into the devastated communities of Canton, Emory and Granbury, Texas; Moore and Elk City, Okla.; Mayflower, Ark.; Hattiesburg, Miss.; and many others. Their response is carefully planned, yet always the same: first, get people

to safety and then to help them get back on their feet by giving them hope. "For many of the families who we meet in disasters," says Bill, "their storms have really just begun. There will be many obstacles each day as they begin to rebuild their lives, and many of the trials can be overwhelming."

When the Red Cross, FEMA, and the media leave each disaster, families are often left on their own to try and rebuild, not only their homes and communities, but also their lives.

The Storm Warriors continue to help the families in South Texas, leading teams to help rebuild homes with their message of hope to each family they meet. 🍎

You can help Storm Warriors in the continued efforts to help families affected by Hurricane Harvey as well as their efforts to respond to the next disaster by partnering, volunteering and giving to their non-profit "The Warrior's Heart," found on their website [www.stormwarriors.tv](http://www.stormwarriors.tv). You can follow them on Facebook at StormWarriorsTV.

You can also keep an eye out for their pending television show that will follow the real-life adventures of Bill and Danielle and their two children, Cori and Noah, and other Storm Warriors, Michael Casey and Mike Pendergast, as they follow the most violent weather events on earth and seek to warn, assist and restore communities in the path of nature's fury. Each episode will feature the thrill of the hunt, the human triumph, and the tragedy that accompany a killer tornado. They will also offer important survival tips on how to protect families and communities. That's what a Storm Warrior does when he or she has a Warrior's Heart.