



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on October 25, 2022

Published in the November 14, 2022 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 38, No. 21

Hurricane Ian Survival Stories

FORT MYERS, Fla. — It wasn't her first hurricane. But it was the most devastating. For Kynse Leigh Agles, a resident of Fort Myers, Florida, Hurricane Ian was *the one* that "wasn't supposed to come." Yet the single mom and local real-estate broker expressed only gratitude for all that has been done to help the beautiful island communities of Florida's southwest region.

"It's terrifying," said Agles, sitting at her kitchen table in her home on E. Riverside Drive, the afternoon sunlight pouring in through the window as an offering of hope. Outside was a war zone. Ian had stripped entire homes off their foundations, tossed yachts from water to land, and uprooted telephone poles and palm trees, leaving parts of Agles' neighborhood completely destroyed.

Agles and her best friend, Brienne "Bri" Casey, a local ER nurse with a home on E. Riverside Drive decimated by the Category 4 storm, told *The New American* they had survived Hurricanes Charley (Category 4; 2004), Wilma (Category 3; 2005), Irma (Category 4; 2017), and now Ian (Category 4), which made landfall in Fort Myers on the afternoon of September 29.

When asked how they were coping amid the circumstances, Agles confided, "we are blessed to be alive and we are praying for those who are still lost, as we try to rebuild and recover."

Ian's powerful, 150-plus mph winds annihilated the barrier islands and small towns on the southwest coast of Florida. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of people trapped by the rising flood waters died, and thousands of lives impacted by the storm were changed forever.

"Our little towns and barrier islands have been through so much," Agles said. "It seems like the rest of the world has already forgotten about us except for our Governor Ron DeSantis. We are blessed to be living in a very supportive community."

Supportive, close-knit, and innovative: In 2017, during Hurricane Irma, Agles was recovering from a kidney and pancreas transplant when the power went out at her home and wasn't expected to be restored for two whole weeks. Agles knew she couldn't wait that long for the lights to come back on, so she came up with a creative solution. Using humor and wit, she created a playful sign that in hot-pink, spray-painted letters read:

"Hot Single Female Seeks Sexy Lineman to Electrify Her Life."

The sign soon went viral, and national news outlets quickly picked up Agles' story. Her power was back on within 24 hours. The sign had worked!

Agles told *People* magazine, "I couldn't be without electricity because after receiving an organ transplant, you're highly susceptible to infection — and it's hard to keep your house clean without electricity!"

Today Agles has turned her kindness and creativity toward recovery efforts for families spread across her community. Through fundraising events and other community programs, she does all she can to help her friends, many of whom have lost everything, including their homes and some of their animals.

"You truly can't 'plan' for a hurricane," said Agles. "You just live one day at a time after they happen."



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on October 25, 2022

Published in the November 14, 2022 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 38, No. 21

Brianne Casey Lost Everything, Even Her Dog

Everything Brianne Casey owned was sucked up and spit out by Ian's wrath, including her beloved dog. Casey led me through the destruction and debris scattered across her property facing the Caloosahatchee River, where her home of one year was struck by a violent storm surge that swept away the dwelling's interior, wiping out walls and sending furniture and appliances flying hundreds of feet. A 42-foot yacht once anchored in the river crashed through Casey's front door and into the living room.

An ER nurse attending school to become a nurse practitioner, Casey served for two years on the front lines of the Covid crisis, and then Hurricane Ian hit. A survivor of Hurricane Andrew, Casey said her decision not to evacuate this time hinged on her work at the hospital, where she would be needed after the storm.

"It was my job to stay," she said. "I was working on Team B, the recovery team, and I was going to ride out the storm at my house while my colleagues were at the hospital. Then once the storm was over, Team A would go home and I would go in."

Yet on the morning of September 29, as the eye wall of the hurricane headed toward Fort Myers and the river started to rise, with warnings of a 10-20 foot storm surge that would quickly move up river, Casey decided to flee her home on Riverside Drive and stay with her fiancé, Andrew, in a high rise.

Traumatized by the long months of treating Covid patients in the ER, Casey was emotionally wrecked in the aftermath of Ian, which whipped Fort Myers for hours, preventing her from rescuing her pup and any personal belongings from her home.

The process of recovery has been slow for Casey. However, many generous people have pitched in to help. A friend in California set up a GoFundMe page, raising nearly \$10,000 in donations so far. To help, go to "Fundraiser for Brianne Casey by Laura Drago: Brianne Casey Hurricane Ian Relief Fund" at gofundme.com.



Ian's wrath: First-time homeowner Brianne Casey returned to her E. Riverside Drive home to find a 42-foot yacht in her living room after a violent storm surge swept up walls and floors and sent appliances flying.



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on October 25, 2022

Published in the November 14, 2022 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 38, No. 21

Charles and Nanette

Moving forward will be difficult for thousands of Floridians, including Charles Hidalgo and Nanette Nabors, whose single-story house on Poinsettia Avenue, just off First Street in downtown Fort Myers, received extensive flood damage. Like many living along the southwest coast, the married couple believed the forecasters who predicted the storm was headed north to Tampa. So by the time the waters began to rise, it was too late to evacuate.

“When deciding to stay or leave, I felt like a poker player at the table and mother nature was all in on the flop,” Hidalgo wrote in a text.

“As we escaped up a ladder into the tight attic crawl space, I grabbed a tool to punch a way out if needed. Nanette was shaking as I held her in the attic,” he continued. “We prayed. The sounds of the howling hurricane were eerily unfamiliar. The sound of debris hitting the metal roof above us made Nanette shake. I maintained a calm confidence because I knew the Lord was with us.”

Hidalgo thanks God for granting him the wisdom to make decisions in those final moments. He believes his faith saved his and his wife’s lives and his beloved home. Later, he would thank the Naples Hammerheads Rugby Club for sending volunteers to his house to move “a mountain of debris” into a pickup. “They are awesome, caring people who are driven to action, not words,” he remarked.

“I worry only about any long-term health effects from exposure to such [toxicity] with nowhere to go. Our house was not destroyed on the surface but needs a lot of mitigation and restoration to make it inhabitable again,” he said.

The water rose to several feet high in Hidalgo’s home, and the toxicity level reached a three, with the highest level, four, causing potentially lethal effects. The couple lost two cars in the disaster, and inside the house wall to floor will need to be ripped out and replaced. Hidalgo, a documentary filmmaker, has lived in Florida for decades and confessed that he “never saw a surge move that fast. That caught me by surprise.”

Randy Price Fled With Ian Just Hours Away

Randy Price may have missed official evacuation orders, but at 4:00 a.m. on September 29, he woke to the sound of his cellphone ringing. His cousin was calling to ask if he was “still there.” The night before, Price had stopped watching the news and decided to hunker down in the home he had purchased just two months ago on Lagoon Drive, which faced the Caloosahatchee River, on the corner of E. Riverside Drive where Brianne Casey lived.

In the morning were reports that the eye wall of the storm, clocking in at a few miles per hour below a Category 5 hurricane, was headed straight toward him. He told *The New American* he’d been through many storms but knew there would be nothing left after this one.

Price gathered up his two dogs, and placed his chameleon and fish on a top shelf in the garage next to his pet rabbit, which he had to leave behind because his dogs would terrorize the creatures, and quickly loaded up his Jeep, which then became stuck in the mud. Frightened and frustrated, he somehow pulled the vehicle out, hitched his camper on the back, and finally drove away.

When *The New American* caught up with Price, he was standing at the edge of his property, smiling. His face was hot in the bright sun. In his large hands, he carried scraps of trash that he tossed onto a



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on October 25, 2022

Published in the November 14, 2022 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 38, No. 21

heaping pile of waste. A few feet away a fish jumped high in the calm water of the Caloosahatchee.

Price motioned to what looked like a large slab of concrete just feet away. Next to the foundation were train tracks with huge segments of crossties missing. They were found later in the neighbors' yards.

His neighbor Charles' house was demolished, yet Charles himself was alive and well somewhere in Wisconsin.

"That was his house. His pretty cottage. It apparently got swept up and then it ended up in my house," said Price, motioning to another debris pile stacked taller than his own six-foot frame. "That's mostly his house," he said, looking at the garbage.

"My mini-home was built hurricane proof, with really thick walls, and hurricane glass in it," said Price. The home now sits on its side in the neighbor's driveway, yet remains pretty much intact. Price said he just needs help to move it upright. Next to the house is a boat, which Price said he anchored to a telephone pole and a palm tree. He laughed. "I wish I knew what happened. The telephone pole and palm tree are gone, but the boat is still there," he said.

His neighbor, Faith, thankfully was not home when a palm tree shot through her bedroom window like a harpoon. Price went looking for her when he returned to his property. "Thank God she got out," he said.

Neighbors Caring for Neighbors

Helping others get out of Ian's way, North Port resident David Haller and his fiancée, Helen, had fled to Miami to escape the storm, when Helen sensed something was not right at home and phoned the dog watcher, also named Helen, to check that she was alright. When there was no answer, Helen asked David to go back to North Port and find their friend and employee. David and his friend Todd headed home to North Port, equipped with tools including an axe and a machete, not knowing what they might need or what to expect.

A block away from Helen's house, they found the road impassable. Wearing waders and weatherproof gear, they began their trek into the waters toward Helen's home. On their way, they flagged down a neighbor with a lifted F-350 pickup, who brought them safely into the neighborhood.

Haller found Helen inside her house, screaming and frantic. "She had no phone. The power was out," said Haller. "And the water from the canal near her home had flooded the house. It went through the kitchen and was rising to the level of her bed and the couch. It went through the garage and out onto the street in front of the house."

Helen was very fortunate, as many of her neighbors were also stuck, and no one was coming out to find them. David said something in his and in his fiancée's hearts told them that he needed to go and rescue this woman. "It was one of the most moving moments in my life," he said. "To get this woman and these two dogs out of this flooded home."

Haller owns two homes in North Port that have sustained hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage. "I am just glad to be alive. I know we are going to get through this," he said.



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on October 25, 2022

Published in the November 14, 2022 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 38, No. 21



Caught by surprise: Warnings of a 10-20 foot storm surge reached Fort Myers residents just 24 hours before Ian made landfall. Many chose not to evacuate, and sadly the death toll continues to rise.

Recovery Efforts Continue

In the wake of Ian, Florida Republican Governor Ron DeSantis has remained steady and in control. He went to work immediately to repair damages in the hardest-hit areas of Florida's southeast coast, specifically the communities of Lee and Charlotte counties.

On October 5, the governor announced that 95 percent of Floridians had power and water restored and that construction on the Pine Island bridge, just west of Fort Myers, had been completed just three days after construction began. "Happy to have the state step in and help get our Pine Island residents back on their feet," said DeSantis at a press conference.

First Lady Casey DeSantis confirmed on October 11 that \$41 million had been raised through the Florida Disaster Fund, a private state fund established to assist Floridians in times of emergency and disaster.

In addition to private efforts, of course, there is the U.S. government's FEMA. In the next issue, we will take a look at these efforts in Florida, including what are the best (and worst) ways to help those in need in times of disaster and emergency.



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on October 25, 2022

Published in the November 14, 2022 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 38, No. 21

Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



[Subscribe](#)

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.