

## Water for Puerto Rico Raises \$7,000 ... So Far!

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Fund raising efforts included the Polar Plunge and a bread baking class.

Students in Alfred University Geology Professor Michele Hluchy's Water Planet class have helped raised \$7,000 for Hluchy's Water for Puerto Rico Project, an initiative that will lead to the installation of a water well on the island. Funds raised so far bring the overall effort close to its \$10,000 goal, Hluchy said today.

The Water for Puerto Project is the latest iteration of an effort that began several years ago when Hluchy used her First Year Experience class to raise funds for the installation of a water well on Haiti, where water infrastructure had been devastated by Hurricane Matthew.

Fundraising efforts this year have focused on the water crisis in Puerto Rico that developed in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. The 2017 Category 5 hurricane hit several islands in the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico where more than 3,000 people died according to official counts.

Hluchy's Water Planet class has consistently focused students' attention on communities whose potable water systems/traditions are vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters. Her students also helped bring running water to two homes on the Navajo Reservation in the U.S.

"The projects not only raise awareness, but they also allow us to use examples in class related to the specific geologic/environmental issues in these locations," Hluchy says. "Why for instance, don't Navaho homes have wells? The water table is very deep and it is too expensive to drill wells. But in a desert climate, there is little surface water... and surface water is more prone to contamination and destruction by events like hurricanes and earthquakes."

She adds: "While Water Planet is a science class, the project also allows us to discuss social issues such as lack of resources in poor communities and also ...the fact that women and girls are often given the tasks of fetching water for the family, resulting in loss of other opportunities for women and girls if they are spending their time and effort fetching water."

This year's Puerto Rico water project has used numerous fundraising efforts to hit the \$7,000 mark Hluchy announced today: Bake sales hosted by her Water Planet students; a Caribbean dinner hosted by the Caribbean Students Association and Poder Latino; a rummage sale organized by the Environmental House (with items donated by numerous community members); individual classes taught by Alfred University faculty members Kerry Kautzman and Sarah Cote, which organized a soup lunch; a Polar Plunge at Foster Lake led by Professor Jeff Sluyter-Beltrao's classes; a bread baking class offered by Professor David Marsh.

Hluchy also notes Water for Puerto Rico benefited from assistance from the non-profit RCAP Solutions, one of whose employees lives in Alfred. In addition, Alfred University Alumna Erin Siebert '18, who is doing her Master's work at Villanova University on water issues in Puerto Rico, returned to her alma mater this fall to describe what she had seen and experienced during field work in Puerto Rico. Additional lectures delivered by guests who could share first-hand experience in Puerto Rico also visited Hluchy's Water Planet class. The Union University Church in Alfred helped – as it has in the past – by collecting donations, and Grace United Church in Wellsville has also planned an event to support the project.

All that work pays off.

“When I told my students how much we had made, they were thrilled,” Hluchy says. “I think they really got a sense of the support from the community at large.”