

Snow Contractors Are Undercover Heroes



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I'm writing this as Hurricane Irma batters Florida, and Houston is still assessing the damage and work ahead to normalize lives and livelihoods following the largest rain event in U.S. history. As troubling as it is to watch the devastation roll in and the misery of the aftermath, there are stories of redemption and heroism that contrast the dire surroundings.



In Houston, many residents with their own means took to the streets to save their neighbors. There were surgeons and other medical professionals who canoed their way into flooded neighborhoods to mend critical patients. People on jet skis and flat-bottomed fishing boats helped emergency responders answer calls from sick, elderly and incapacitated to clear nursing homes and other facilities. When their boat bottomed-out, they waded through waist-high water amid debris and disease to follow calls for help in the distance. Dogooders from Dallas and other surrounding cities came to Houston to help. Bakery owners who were trapped in their shop during the flooding fired up the ovens to help feed people pouring into area shelters. The Cajun Navy, a collection of hunters and sportsmen, deployed as many resources as they could muster to help rescue people and deliver food, water and supplies to people in need. A man in Florida gave the last generator to a woman who needed to keep her father's oxygen supply running.

People from around Texas, Florida, and throughout the South sacrificed their own time, money, equipment and well-being because they couldn't just sit around and watch tragedies unfold. These stories have made the suffering a bit more bearable, and I get emotional every time I hear another person say, "I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't rescued me."

Snow plow operators are accustomed to this gratitude often felt from helping customers dig out of a storm or random motorists that need pulled from a ditch. We help elderly maintain their independence. We help business stay open, and collectively, we allow society to continue to function safely at

its all-too-hecktic and demanding pace. There should be mountains of gratification in doing that. Sure, it's a job, but it's a rewarding one, and not many people can say that.

Toledo Lawns, based in Toledo, Ohio, took its people and equipment on the road to help the East Coast, which was in a state of emergency after Winter Storm Jonas in 2016. They plowed their way across toll roads and abandoned interstates from Ohio to Maryland when state crews couldn't clear the way fast enough. They helped plow the road to recovery.

But you don't need to seek out a disaster zone to make a difference. Bob Grover of Pacific Landscape Management says "I just want to be a hero," referring to the clients he helps on a daily basis.

We are all poised to help make life more tolerable for people during the course of our business. We might not have the lifestyle and resources necessary to make a difference in Houston or Florida, but we all can make a difference in our communities.

To that end, we proudly support Project Evergreen's Snowcare for Troops, which has served more than 5,000 military families who have service men and women deployed overseas, and it provides services for wounded and disabled veterans as well. This program is always looking for contractors who are willing to add an extra stop along their route.

Something interesting happens when you volunteer: You feel guilty because you are so gratified by your contribution. If you've never experienced it, I can tell you it is an unparalleled feeling of humility, pride and achievement. Google "Snowcare for Troops" to sign up in your area, and look for other ways to give back to your community. We can be heroes, and it's OK to feel like one, too.