Play Ball Puerto Rico

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When Hurricane Maria pounded Puerto Rico in 2017 causing 90 billion dollars worth of damage, who would have thought baseball would play a part in the recovery.

That’s exactly what’s happening thanks to an idea that originated here in Kentucky. Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

“Play Ball Puerto Rico” is a program not only putting teams back on the field with donated baseball equipment but also using WKU’s 100 dollar solution model to rebuild the devastated island.

“That night was very scary.”

Vanessa Lopez grew up in Puerto Rico. She remembers when Hurricane Maria hit her hometown.

“My dad called me to let me know we’re prepared.”

Lopez’s parents were safe but the island was devastated.

Lopez and her husband own and operate the San Juan Smokehouse in Bowling Green. “Everything that has to do with Puerto Rican dishes, I’m the one who’se kind of preparing them and making them.”

They jumped at the chance to host a fundraiser for Play Ball Puerto Rico, an idea dreamed up by WKU Scholar in Residence Bernie Strenecky’s 14-year-old grandson.

“ He came up with the concept that if we are going to help Puerto Rico, the way to do it is through youth.”

The dinner and silent auction was a huge success and donations came pouring in.

“Before we knew it the whole back of our restaurant was just full with baseball equipment that we were holding for Mr. Strenecky.”

When delivering the equipment to the teams, Strenecky took it a step further by giving them 100 dollars to invest back into the community. “Same thing that the students at WKU do but here we are now with a very practical application for it.”

Instilling a message during the critical teenage years that will hopefully result in a lifetime of service.

“Through baseball we’re developing community citizens who know and understand their responsibility to their community.”

Helping Puerto Rico get back to normal one team at a time.

“Those of us that don’t live on the island are still looking and wanting the island to recover and this was a great initiative. “

Louisville Slugger, Dick’s Sporting Goods and Wilson Sporting Goods are among the businesses that have supported this effort. The teams in Puerto Rico are using the 100 dollar solution to plant trees in a forest that was destroyed by Hurricane Maria.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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