

# Kennebunkport community helps ‘stuff the trailer’ for victims of Hurricane Ian

Stefan Kuenzel, who owns businesses in Maine and Fort Myers Beach, organized a drive to fill a 24-foot cargo trailer with donations, which he will drive to Florida.

Portland Press Herald, October 3, 2022  
BY [BONNIE WASHUK](#) STAFF WRITER



Stefan Kuenzel carries cases of bottled water donated by Dawn Legay, center, to a staging area before filling a 24-foot cargo trailer that he will drive to Florida for victims of Hurricane Ian. Kuenzel lives in Kennebunkport and Fort Myers and has kayak excursion business in both locations. *Ben McCanna/Staff Photographer*

KENNEBUNKPORT — Homemade signs with Florida palm trees exclaiming “Stuff the Trailer” stood at the end of Stefan and Darcy Kuenzel’s driveway Sunday.

Throughout the afternoon, donations of food and supplies were loaded into a large commercial-sized trailer, bound for Hurricane Ian victims in Florida.

Stefan Kuenzel owns a kayak business in Maine and in the heavily damaged island town of Fort Myers Beach. His business, like most properties there, was destroyed.



Lexi Kuenzel of Kennebunkport takes a step back after taping a hand-drawn sign to post on Sunday. Her father, Stefan Kuenzel, organized a donation drive for victims of Hurricane Ian. *Ben McCanna/Staff Photographer*

Many people lost everything.

“All the buildings are gone,” Kuenzel said, holding a photo of a pile of rubble that used to be his office. “It was moved across the street. The water was over the top of the building. It just floated over there.”

Boats and kayaks were tossed like discarded toys in a landfill. In the marina, docks are now just sticks and utility poles are down and twisted.

But with the bridge from the mainland to the island still intact, emergency responders are able to get there, and Kuenzel hopes he can too.



Josh Kuenzel, 14, of Kennebunkport organizes food donations into boxes on Sunday. His father, Stefan Kuenzel, organized a donation drive for victims of Hurricane Ian. *Ben McCanna/Staff Photographer*

With no business to run, “there’s nothing to do,” he said. “So I might as well help out.”

Two days ago, he announced on Facebook that he's driving his big trailer to Fort Myers and looking for donated supplies.

"I think it's wonderful to see the community coming together to help those in need from the hurricane damage," said Rachel Orciani of Kennebunk, who dropped off two grocery bags with food and personal items. "It's devastating."

Daniel Heidenstrom of Sanford dropped off bottled water and spaghetti.

"We came here to help them," Heidenstrom said. Keunzel "is going to go down and make spaghetti for the first responders."



Ann Moore of Kennebunkport hands a package of donated toilet paper to Josh Kuenzel while his father, Stefan Kuenzel, looks on. *Ben McCanna/Staff Photographer*

Mindy Miller Muse of Kennebunkport and Meghan Candee of Kennebunk also dropped off donations.

“A lot of the things going on in Fort Myers is horrific,” Candee said. “The videos I’ve seen, it doesn’t look like something that would be in our country.”

Kuenzel’s son Josh, 14, was among those helping load supplies on the trailer.

Kuenzel said he wasn’t in Fort Myers when the hurricane hit, but that he has heard heartbreaking stories from friends who know of families that lost loved ones.

“It’s bad, way worse than other hurricanes,” he said. “The storm surge just wiped everything out. The 20-foot storm surge with waves on top of that. The way this storm went, it kept going most of the day.”



Daniel Heidenstrom of Sanford adds his donations of food to a box bound for victims of Hurricane Ian while Anna Dixon of Kennebunk looks on. *Ben McCanna/Staff Photographer*

Some people who live in Fort Myers Beach have no place to go and are in shelters.

“My neighbor had her house knocked off the foundation, a total loss,” Kuenzel said.

Items on the trailer include food, water, clothes, blankets and toys for the kids stuck in shelters, to give them something to do. Other needed supplies include batteries for flashlights, phone chargers and gas cans.

A new generator, donated by a local hardware store, is also on the truck.

Since the hurricane has cleared Kuenzel’s property – except for national news trucks – that’s where he plans to set up his trailer to cook meals and hand out supplies. Updates on “Stuff the trailer” will be posted on his business Facebook page, [facebook.com/KayakExcursions](https://www.facebook.com/KayakExcursions).

Kuenzel’s not sure how long he’ll stay, saying it depends on what he can do, and isn’t sure what the future holds for his business. Tourists will have no reason to go there until the area is restored, he said.

“It’s like traveling into a war zone.”