In 2017, the U.S. was ravaged by an unprecedented series of disasters: hurricanes, catastrophic flooding, and wildfires. In many areas, recovery is slow and effects are long-lasting. With a new year that began with extreme cold, mudslides, and continuing challenges in Puerto Rico, the need for recovery assistance is ongoing, even as communities begin to prepare for the 2018 hurricane season.

Among those most deeply affected are children whose lives have been disrupted, education derailed, and possessions lost. For children and families from low-income neighborhoods, who already were struggling, these losses are especially acute.

Since 2005’s Hurricane Katrina, First Book has distributed over 5 million books to families affected by disasters. We have worked with first responders — and later schools and libraries as they re-open their doors — to get the right resources in the right hands at the right time.

First Book has aggregated a coalition of partners to respond, providing books; educational resources; basic needs items like first aid kits and dental care/personal hygiene resources; and other essentials. 100% of funds donated have been used for recovery. First Book is also included by Charity Navigator among the highly-rated organizations responding to disasters.
SUPPORTING DISASTER RECOVERY ACROSS THE COUNTRY

First Book has made resources available to all FEMA-identified areas to support affected educators and children in 4,300 ZIP codes.

$925,000 RAISED TO SUPPORT DISASTER EFFORTS

800,000 BOOKS AND RESOURCES DISTRIBUTED

FLORIDA

The pallets of Disney books we received allowed us to work with families where a parent or guardian serves as an agricultural worker or migrant fisher, and where students have moved and switched schools.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Office of Community Engagement

PUERTO RICO

Given schools’ dire lack of materials before the storm, high-quality books in students’ hands are more critical now than ever. The gift of books from First Book and JetBlue will offer students an opportunity to return to reading and extend reading into their homes.

FLAMBOYÁN FOUNDATION, Puerto Rico

HOUSTON

The majority of our students live below the poverty line. It’s hard for some of them to understand why their favorite things were destroyed. So many of our students and community members already go without on a daily basis, and then this flood took what little they did have away.

EDUCATOR, Sivells Elementary School, Wharton, TX
FROM RELIEF TO RECOVERY

Recovery from the storms and disasters is ongoing as communities — and especially children — work to recover from the trauma of the disasters and displacement. This is where First Book is focused: on resources to help rebuild lives.

FIRST BOOK, AFT, & THE BARBARA BUSH HOUSTON LITERACY FOUNDATION

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation and First Book launched a targeted effort to deliver brand-new books and basic needs items, in coordination with first responders, educators, and volunteers, to areas devastated by Hurricane Harvey. In 2017, the partners delivered nearly $200,000 in books and resources to children across affected communities in Houston, including a big book truck distribution event in Houston just weeks after the storm, and an energetic local school visit by AFT President Randi Weingarten, First Book President, CEO, and Co-founder Kyle Zimmer and Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation Chairman Neil Bush. In addition, AFT and First Book worked together to bring 15,000 English, bilingual, and Spanish language books to the U.S. Virgin Islands and to support educators in Florida and Louisiana affected by storms. AFT and First Book have also begun building basic needs closets filled with essential resources to Puerto Rico’s highest-need schools, and are working to bring thousands of brand-new, diverse books to educators and children across the island impacted by Hurricane Maria.

THANK YOU TO THESE CONTRIBUTORS, AS WELL AS MANY INDIVIDUALS, FOR THEIR SUPPORT:

Albertsons Companies Foundation
American Federation of Teachers
Anonymous
Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation
Barnes & Noble
Blackboard
Candlewick Press
Citi
The Coca-Cola Company
Convergent Books
Cuentos Publishing
dd’s DISCOUNTS
Disney Publishing Worldwide
Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library
Dr. Seuss Enterprises
Ford Motor Company Fund
Give Back Brands Foundation
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
Hot Dudes Reading
IBM
JetBlue
KPMG’s Family for Literacy
The LEGO Foundation
Macmillan Publishers
March 4th, Inc.
National Grid
New York State United Teachers
Nora Roberts Foundation
Parragon Books
Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women
Pizza Hut
Penguin Random House
The Quarto Group
Tata Sons, Ltd.
Team First Book Charlotte
Townsend Press
The Walt Disney Company
Wipro Limited
zulily
First Book and KPMG partnered to launch “Reading to Rebuild,” a project that provided schools supplies and specially-curated books to more than 35 schools in Texas, Florida, and California that were affected by either hurricanes or wildfires.

First Book also partnered with Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library and Penguin Young Readers, who pledged up to 500,000 books to support hurricane-affected areas. To kick off the campaign, Dolly’s foundation donated 165,000 books and made a substantial donation to cover the shipping and handling charges that allowed the books to quickly be made available and at no cost to educators affected by the storms.

First Book worked with the LEGO Foundation to bring its Building Resilience with LEGO Bricks training to Texas educators: a two-hour workshop that trained more than 200 Pre-K and early elementary educators how to use LEGOs to build resilience and work through trauma via play therapy. First Book was selected by LEGO specifically to bring this program to communities with children still recovering from Hurricane Harvey, and all participating educators received a LEGO classroom set.

First Book, Random House Children’s Books, and Dr. Seuss Enterprises partnered to bring Dr. Seuss’s Super-Dee-Doooper Bus Tour — the first-ever interactive bus tour to Houston. The tour stop included a distribution of more than 9,000 books for teachers in classrooms impacted by Hurricane Harvey.

Months after Hurricanes Irma and María devastated Puerto Rico’s infrastructure, public schools are still reeling. Teachers are still struggling to make up lost academic time with extremely limited resources, while also attending to the critical social emotional needs of students. In partnership with JetBlue, First Book has worked with leading children’s publishers to secure Spanish language books to provide to children on the island.