



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Sanders Hosts Sandy Memorial on the 3rd Anniversary of the Superstorm

JAMES SANDERS JR. October 30, 2015



In commemoration of the 3rd Anniversary of Hurricane Sandy, State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) held a day-long series of economic development and recovery workshops on Thursday at the Rockaway YMCA, that also included a boardwalk memorial march in remembrance of those who lost their lives during the superstorm.

Then-City Council Member Sanders refused to leave his district during the storm, and like many Rockaway residents sheltered in place. He recalled the brutality of the hurricane as it

battered the peninsula, flooding streets and destroying homes.

"Nature not only nurtures, but it sometimes kills," Sanders said. "The growing intensity of the wind was the first reminder, followed by the driving rain. Houses shook, trees fell and our spirits dropped. Then the power went out. Looking outside we saw rivers where there were none before. The water in my basement rose to over five feet."

Presentations at the anniversary event covered a wide range of topics including disaster preparedness, flood insurance increases, assistance for small businesses and Minority and Women-Owned Businesses (MWBE's), how to apply for Community Block Development Grants, and updates on the recovery process from Build It Back and Workforce 1.

There were also storm supply giveaways. PSEG Long Island distributed free flashlights, while the NYC Department of Environmental Protection had people sign up to receive a free home water conservation kit.

Senator Sanders led a march from the Rockaway YMCA to the boardwalk during which participants held a memorial wreath, a Rockaway welcome banner and poster-sized photos featuring highlights from the initial storm recovery process three years ago, such as one that featured then-Public Advocate Bill de Blasio bringing food to the storm ravaged area in the form of a box of "heater meals."

While at the boardwalk memorial, which took place near Beach 73rd Street, Senator Sanders called for a moment of silence for those who lost their lives during Hurricane Sandy.

"We have a beautiful day today, but it was about this time last year that storm clouds began to gather," Sanders said. "This was not just a storm, it was a killer. It took away lives. It

changed lives. We gather here to remember. We gather here to ensure that this disaster, this tragedy, is never forgotten.”

Later, Sanders and about a dozen attendees carried the memorial wreath to the ocean where he led them in prayer and called on the community to remain strong and unified to better handle future storms.

“We have to remember the horror and the damage that this storm did to our community, but we also have to look at how we overcame the storm, how we turned to each other, and not on one another,” Sanders said. “We cared for the weaker among us. We made sure our elders had food. That is one of the untold stories that we have to mark and remember, but we are not whole. We are still waging a battle here in the Rockaways. Recovery is still too tenuous. We cannot declare mission accomplished here.”

Representatives from several agencies and organizations were on hand for the event such as the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Empire State Development Division of Minority and Women's Business Development, NYC Build It Back, Workforce 1, NYS Small Business Development Center, Urban Upbound, Queens Legal Services, FEMA and St. John's Episcopal Hospital.