

DAILY NEWS

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Matthew 'Medical Matt' Kraushar comes to the rescue of stranded Red Hook residents after Hurricane Sandy paralyzes Brooklyn neighborhood

Kraushar, 26, organized army of 60 volunteers, saved 80-year-old man having heart attack and rushed oxygen tank to woman

BY [HEIDI EVANS](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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Matt Kraushar checks in with 89-year-old Frances D'Angelo at her Red Hook apartment Thursday.

Matthew Kraushar is a guy you can count on in a crisis.

While Red Hook was drowning, and thousands of public housing tenants and other residents had no heat or hot water, no electricity and no help, the self-effacing medical student came to his adopted neighborhood's rescue.

Kraushar, 26, organized an army of 60 volunteers who went door-to-door, checking every household in the isolated Brooklyn neighborhood. They climbed NYCHA's dark, urine-stench-filled stairwells, rescued an 80-year-old man having a heart attack and rushed a full oxygen tank to a woman who couldn't last the week without it.

While NYCHA officials were nowhere to be seen for two weeks after the storm, Kraushar created medical "charts" his soldiers brought along, documenting the medications and immediate needs of 300 tenants along with contact information for followup.

"Medical Matt" — as the community nicknamed him — and his troops made sure the stranded and the frail had batteries for their asthma nebulizers, the diabetics had their sugar checked and ice delivered to keep their insulin fresh, and that everyone had enough medicine to get through.

In the end, every person in distress in Red Hook was visited at least twice.



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Medical student Matt Matthew Kraushar posing for a portrait in Red Hook Brooklyn. Matthew was instrumental after Hurricane Sandy and made house calls and saved several lives. Photo taken in Red Hook Brooklyn on November 15, 2012.

"He took the mantle of responsibility for the well-being of Red Hook's residents, especially the ones who were homebound, as his own," said Dr. Rebecca Rosenberg, an NYU pediatrician who volunteered in Kraushar's instant army. "He had this compelling urge to save everyone."

Kraushar, an avid mountain climber with a Lincolnesque beard, moved to Red Hook in June, drawn to its salt-of-the-earth people, the budding artist scene and the area's proximity to the water. When Hurricane Sandy hit on Oct. 29 and flooded his four-story walkup on Van Brunt St., he dug in instead of fleeing to the comfort of his parents' home in North Jersey.

He and his buddy Mike Wathen, an EMT who was visiting from California, began to knock on doors. "This is the first time I've ever had so much on my plate," said the soft-spoken Kraushar, who took two weeks off from his MD/Ph.D. studies at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Rutgers and Princeton to help. "What made it so frantic was the speed and volume of getting to so many people. So much had to be done in the moment."

One of the most dramatic encounters was checking on an 80-year-old man on Lorraine St. after his son ran into Kraushar outside and told him his dad wasn't looking so great.

"When we opened the door a huge wall of steam came out of the apartment, because he had been boiling water to keep warm. The entire place was like a greenhouse, with water dripping on him from the ceiling as he sat in the kitchen to stay warm.

"When we asked him to take his jacket off to take his blood pressure, he started to have chest pain and shortness of breath," said Kraushar, who was accompanied by a doctor and an EMT.



JULIA XANTHOS/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Medical student Matt Matthew Kraushar (left), and 89 year old patient Frances D'Angelo meet together for a check in. Matthew was told Frances needed medical care after Hurricane Sandy and made house calls and saved several lives. Photo taken in Red Hook Brooklyn on November 15, 2012.

"He was having a heart attack. We just happened to be there at the right time and called an ambulance."

On Thursday, Kraushar checked in on 89-year-old Frances D'Angelo, the very first person he visited after the storm. D'Angelo, who grew up in the formerly Italian enclave, has emphysema and heart issues and takes nine medications. Never married, she lives alone.

"God bless him," D'Angelo said, her eyes lighting up at the sight of the 6-foot-2 fellow who wore jeans and had a stethoscope dangling from his neck. "He gave me a lot of courage, made sure I was breathing right. I wanted to give him breakfast this morning."

"You're in good shape," the doctor-to-be said reassuringly, holding her hand. "I'm trying to take care of you and you're trying to take care of me."

Words like "hero" and "savior" have been thrown around, which only makes the serious Kraushar blush. He credited the assorted community itself — including volunteers from the Red Hook Initiative, Occupy Sandy, and resident Kirby Demarais, the lady who owns the Jalopy Theater who got them a generator, an aide to Christine Quinn who found him an office and a medical team, including NYU-Bellevue emergency-room resident docs Salil Bhandari and Elizabeth Moye.

"If no one tells this story, this will happen again. These people will be stranded," said Kraushar. "The city must now pick up when the volunteers left off. I'm just a guy who lives down the street."

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