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## Flood damage frustrates family

By Austin Amoroso

Vanessa Wood said it was the worst she's seen in her eight years living at 27 Crimmins Road. Water had flooded into the garage in the past, but it never reached the first floor.

But on March 2, in the midst of the worst flooding the town has seen in years, water gushed through her kitchen, living room and bathroom, turning her first floor into a two-foot deep pond.

"It was bad," she said.

It was obviously no place for a family of four that includes a 5-year-old girl. So Wood did what most would probably do when faced with an uninhabitable home, she called the Red Cross.

The Red Cross put the family up at the Howard Johnson hotel for the weekend, but the help seemingly stopped there. After the weekend and with the water drained from the home, the Woods returned to try and make a sense of the damage.

On Friday, March 9, Wood told *The Darien Times* that while they continued to stay at Howard Johnson's "because of our 5-year-old," they've been going back to get stuff out. She said they've ripped up the carpets and had a company come in to take out the dry wall and the kitchen cabinets. During the week, Wood said a representative from the Red Cross, which stopped paying for the hotel after the weekend, came over to her house with a broom and a promise to try and get a \$100 voucher for food.

"At that point, I just sort of shook my head," Wood said. "It's just interesting to me that if a disaster hits you, you're going to get a broom from the Red Cross."

Jeanne Yusko, director for health and safety at the Darien Red Cross, said the Red Cross handles situations through immediate needs caused by a disaster, usually food and shelter. "We're still working with the family and the door obviously isn't closed on the case yet," Yusko said on Monday. "Right now we're trying to figure out the immediate concerns of the family and go from there."

Yusko also said they initially asked the family if they needed food, but the family declined, saying they had credit cards to pay for food.

"We try to be good stewards of the dollar because (the Red Cross) it's all donated money," Yusko said. "We go by national headquarters guidelines. It tells us how much we can give our clients in various categories because we want to be fair and equal to everyone."

Yusko then said that the client case worker left it with the family on Friday that she would be calling them on Tuesday and that the family was agreeable to that.

On Tuesday, Wood said she was contacted by the Red Cross, but at that point she just told them to keep the \$100 food voucher.

"It's March 13 and it happened on March 2," Wood said. "So I said to myself, 'What's the point?' I have too much to deal with to waste my time with the Red Cross."

Wood's dissent with the Red Cross was just one of many situations that fell on the wrong side of the fence for her family. On March 4, a representative from the insurance company was at her house, and when she called the company later in the week they told her she would get a \$10,000 check the following week.

"We are supposed to get a check next week, but that will be at least 10 days," Wood said on Tuesday. "They're not really responding and I'm starting to get a little angry now."

After staying at Howard Johnson's all last week, the Woods have returned home, but they're relegated to the second floor because of the condition of the first. "We just can't afford to be in a hotel for so long," Wood said.

The first floor remains in relative shambles as Wood said she's wary to even put food in the refrigerator and doesn't want to turn off the heat, in fear that it might not turn back on. "It's me and my husband ripping up carpets and working on the house, and then we don't get any help from anyone," she said.

Wood has now turned her focus to the town. She said she called Town Hall on Tuesday to try and find out why flooding is so bad and not getting any better. The response from the first selectman's office was that she is aware of the problem.

Wood's husband sent an e-mail to Town Hall with pictures of the damage in their home, as well as of the flooding on Crimmins Road. "Their response was a reply with a link to buy flood insurance," she said.

Wood also said that during storms in the past a storm drain lid would pop off and debris would float onto her property, so she would call the Department of Public Works. The department put a lid on the drain, but now Wood is wondering why something wasn't done, like dredging the river.

"We've just come to the conclusion that if something like this happens, you're not getting any help from the town of Darien," Wood said. "It seems like a lot of people (in Town Hall) have things that they need to deal with for Darien, and they probably won't."

Wood said she is getting frustrated with the situation and would like a town official to step forward and acknowledge that there is a problem in town. "But that probably won't happen," she said.

"At this point, I'm just assuming I'm going to get nowhere with anybody in town," Wood said. "But I'll be out there, and at the town meetings, trying to get something going."

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