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Custom Builder Helps Atlanta Families Recover After Flood

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By [Stephani L. Miller](#)

As the floodwaters that saturated much of the Southeastern United States late in September receded around the hardest-hit area, Atlanta, spec home builder and renovator Anthony Pourhassan, co-owner and principal of [Highlight Homes](#), and superintendent Chris Gilliam visited affected neighborhoods offering the company's construction services free of charge to residents whose homes had been damaged. Highlight Homes' switched to renovation and restoration a few years ago when the new construction market dried up, so it's ready and able to get to work replacing water-damaged interiors.

Unfortunately, media warnings of predatory contractors meant they got a cold reception. But Pourhassan truly wanted to help, so after consulting the company's public relations agent, he started to get the word out by more reliable means: church announcements, community notices, and press releases. These efforts earned him the trust of a handful of homeowners and Highlight Homes has suspended work on its paying projects for a few weeks to help them recover from the flooding. The company is focusing on homeowners who either don't have flood insurance or who have been turned down for FEMA assistance. Between broadcasting the volunteer offer and getting the first calls from homeowners, Pourhassan busied himself by appealing to all of the company's suppliers for help, and they responded with donations of materials and installer labor. "I've gotten donations of appliances, [drywall], carpeting, wood flooring and trim, doors," says Pourhassan.

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"With our suppliers helping with donations of materials and labor, we're able to do more than we initially thought we could," he adds. Stock Building Materials, Bob Bailey's Appliances, Structured Drywall Inc., and Cabinet Wholesalers Inc., are just a few of the suppliers contributing materials and labor to Highlight Homes' volunteer post-flood restoration projects.

"Some homes only got four or five inches of water, but some got six feet of water," says Pourhassan. Nearly a foot of rain fell around Atlanta on September 21 alone, and according to current insurance estimates, about 20,000 homes in metro-area counties have been damaged; 5,000 of those may have to be condemned.

Many homes will require a significant amount of restoration and replacement work, Pourhassan notes. Highlight Homes' volunteer crew of 12 will tear out damaged drywall, carpeting and flooring, electrical and plumbing systems, trimwork, doors, and other materials and replace them with new. Pourhassan expects each project to require between 24 and 40 hours of work.

"I feel it's better for me to do this than to give money to an organization like the Red Cross," Pourhassan says. "I know where my contribution is going. And I know if I were in their situation, I'd want someone to be able to help me."

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