



On Father's Day, Sunday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, I awoke to the news that our precious community had been devastated by torrential rains and severe flooding during the night. The morning was eerily silent as photographs showing the extent of the destruction inundated my Facebook feed. Photographs and video showed water, boulders, and mud crashing through people's homes. The water rushing down Agate Street could rival any local waterfall. Water destroyed roads and bridges, totally engulfed homes, and removed any possible access. I also learned of the tragedy that had befallen the Markham family. Not only had their son been fatally injured, but they had lost their home that early morning as well.

I cannot begin to understand the devastating losses many in our community experienced that day and in the days following the flood. In the randomness of this event, my family and I emerged with very little damage. I do know grief, however. Whether you knew Thatcher, or you lost your home, or your most precious possessions, you are experiencing grief. Allow yourself that, but also know that your community is standing by your side, ready to support you.

By about 1:00 p.m. on that Sunday afternoon, I began to hear chain saws in the distance as well as the sound of heavy machinery operating. That small sound of that first chain saw was my first indication that our community had risen to the "call for action". It exploded throughout the following week with a volunteer effort that transcended belief. I witnessed volunteers of all ages digging out basements full of dirt, mud, and rocks; carefully washing and cleaning precious belongings of residents; and cooking and providing food for the multitudes of volunteers. Donations poured into Houghton County exceeding all expectations. That "can do" spirit of the Copper Country has been evident all around us for the past ten days. With that spirit comes hope. Hope, that as a community we will not let those who have been impacted by this storm down. Hope, that there are others in this community who will relieve exhausted volunteers and carry on the mission. Hope that once again in the not too distant future, we will recover from this disaster.

As chairperson of the Portage Health Foundation Board of Directors, I want to personally thank those who have donated to the Flood Relief Fund. Your donations are already at work and will continue to be used solely for those who have been affected by this disaster. I also want to thank the volunteers for their time and hard work, and also to those who have donated items to the victims and to the volunteers.

The Portage Health Foundation is working with our community partners and is committed to helping those who have been impacted by this devastating event. We know that this will take time, but we are dedicated to those who are in need, and we will stay the course.

I have never been more proud of my community. I have never been more proud to call the Copper Country home. We, are Copper Country Strong!

Bernadette Yeoman-Ouellette  
Chair Portage Health Foundation Board of Trustees