

SIRVA Story:

Finding Shelter After a Natural Disaster



Often, we step in to provide assistance well beyond our clients' relocation needs. Such was the case when Christine Lanken, Director of Global Account Management, received a call from a worried client in the APAC region. Employees in their Texas office had just been devastated by Hurricane Harvey. Almost 60 of them had been displaced when 50 counties were flooded and they needed help. These employees had never relocated through SIRVA, but the client hoped our network of temporary housing resources would be a viable resource. Christine, on vacation at the time, dropped everything to find a solution.

The first order of business was to make sure that every employee was safe. More than 30,000 Texans had been forced from their homes due to the disaster and, because SIRVA operations teams were already engaged in addressing the many assignees included in this number, Christine decided to handle this particular client's employees personally. She started calling each, reaching one as he had just turned the corner of his street in a row boat to find that the water had risen above the top of his garage door. After narrowing down the number to almost 30 employees that would need housing, she worked with a vendor within our network to begin securing leases.

There were some significant challenges along the way:

- Many of the businesses she needed to reach were either closed, damaged or understaffed.
- Cell signal was limited so the ability to reach employees and vendors was intermittent.
- As thousands scrambled to secure temporary housing, inventory was disappearing quickly.
- The scope of need kept shifting as the number of employees seeking Christine's help grew.
- A dozen families needed properties that would allow pets – or to find temporary shelters.
- As properties experienced an influx of 1-month lease requests (also the amount of client-approved time) they began raising minimum lease terms to avoid simultaneous turnover.

Working with a temporary living partner in our network, Christine secured as many 3-month leases as she could to ensure that every employee's family would have a place to stay. Knowing that some families would leave before the leases were up, she planned to find ways to sublease them. They found properties that would take pets when possible and reputable animal shelters in cases where they wouldn't. To save valuable time that the employees needed, Christine also worked with members of our expense management team to set up a creative, direct billing solution so SIRVA could begin paying deposits and rent and the client could reimburse us directly. With the help of our corporate housing vendor, bags of groceries were even delivered to the families that had been displaced so they would have enough to eat for a few days while they considered their options.

Though Christine lost 3 vacation days, she gained a great deal of appreciation from many people in need. "This was never a question about profit," she said. "SIRVA didn't make a cent during this situation. At that point it was about doing the right thing. It was about helping people who needed it."

Every relocation is unique so, every day, SIRVA employees around the world go above and beyond to provide innovative, caring, and customized solutions to our clients and their employees. [Visit Sirva.com to read more SIRVA Stories](http://www.sirva.com) or contact us to learn how our global expertise can do the same for you.

The Face Behind the Story:

Christine Lanken, Director, Global Account Management



Christine has enjoyed more than 25 years in both real estate and relocation industries. As a Director of Global Account Management her goal is to facilitate program objectives, ensuring that all of the right SIRVA resources are aligned to achieve optimum results. Through open communication, consistent updates, and robust program reporting, she keeps her clients apprised of program progress, team successes and potential issues.

When she's not busy helping SIRVA clients, her hobbies include upcycling old wooden furniture, listening to music and spending time with her husband and three rescue dogs. In addition to being certified in basic animal rescue handling and skills, she's actively involved in animal rescue and volunteering at local shelters. Her involvement during adoption events and in driving a leg of an all-volunteer rescue transport, is part of an effort that saves well over 600 dogs per year from high kill/over populated shelters in the southern region of the United States.

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