

Teen sells T-shirts to help Riverhead flood victims

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The day after the big storm in March that left a dozen houses on Riverhead's Horton Avenue under several feet of water, Drew Achilich, 16, went swimming down the street.

"I got into my wet suit and took a dip," he said. "I could touch the foundations of the houses that were under water."

A week later, though, he got stuck in a car on the street. That's when he looked around and really got a sense of the misery of the families who had to leave their homes and find shelter elsewhere.

That's also when he decided to do something about it.

The [Baiting Hollow](#) teen created and has been selling T-shirts emblazoned on the front with "Horton Avenue" to raise funds. At first, he sold them at Riverhead High, where he is a sophomore. Now some are for sale through local stores, where he and other Riverhead students may be working.

The money raised will go to the First Baptist Church of Riverhead, which is collecting funds to help the Horton Avenue families whose homes and possessions were destroyed. Achilich, who is selling T-shirts at \$10 a piece, so far has raised more than \$1,000.

While officials at almost every level of government have said something should be done to help people in the area, Achilich's gesture is among the more concrete efforts so far, although local churches and others have helped, too.

"There has been talk of relocating them, but that's it, just talk," said Riverhead High School



Principal David Zimble, adding of Achilich, "I'm very proud of him."

When Achilich first saw the mess on Horton Avenue, it was a flooded street with a dozen homes; outdoor fuel oil tanks were bobbing in the water and cars were up to their hoods in oily-smelling water.

Now, weeks later, many of the families have started to repair the damage to their homes, although some of the houses still have 3 to 4 feet of water in the basements and mold is growing inside some of the walls.

This is not the first time Achilich has helped others.

After [Hurricane Katrina](#) struck [New Orleans](#), he and the others in his church youth group, the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in [Rocky Point](#), went to [Louisiana](#) for a week to help in the cleanup.

"I hung Sheetrock and scraped mold off walls," he said. "This [Horton Avenue] reminds me of that."

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