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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Clevelanders on humanitarian, civic mission to Puerto Rico April 15-19**

CLEVELAND -- Cleveland Leadership Center and The City Club of Cleveland are taking a group of 28 Clevelanders to Puerto Rico April 15-19, 2018, where they will assist with hurricane relief efforts, meet with top government and community leaders, and attend baseball games between the Cleveland Indians and Minnesota Twins.

Participants will:

* **Engage in service projects** to help the island recover from hurricanes Irma and Maria in late 2017. The entire island was declared a Federal Disaster Zone. Projects include:
	+ Reforestation of the [Northeast Ecological Corridor Nature Reserve](http://www.corredorecologicodelnoreste.org/), a diverse ecosystem in Luquillo and habitat for more than 50 rare species. The group will plant cobana negra trees to reforest the area with native species.
	+ Work with local community members to restore facilities of a recycling microenterprise at the [Corporacion Proyecto Enlace del Caño Martín Peña](http://www.martinpena.org/). The Enlace Project is an environmental and social justice initiative that brings together public, private and community organizations to help eight communities overcome poverty.
* **Meet with leaders** who will share insights on topics such as economic development, transforming communities, and the current state of recovery, including:
	+ Dr. Nelson I. Colon, President and CEO of the [Puerto Rico Community Foundation](https://www.fcpr.org/).
	+ Charlotte Gossett Navarro, Senior Director of Puerto Rico Operations, [Hispanic Federation](http://hispanicfederation.org/).
	+ A meeting at the [FEMA Joint Field Office](https://www.facebook.com/FEMA/posts/10155308524434965) in Guaynabo, where hundreds of staff from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other agencies work together to support recovery efforts.
* **Tour** the [San Juan National Historic Site](https://www.nps.gov/saju/index.htm) in San Juan.
* **Attend baseball games** between the Cleveland Indians and the Minnesota Twins on April 17 and 18 in [Hiram Bithorn Stadium](http://sanjuanciudadpatria.com/servicios/recreacion-y-deportes/estadio-hiram-bithorn/) in San Juan.

Many of the participants chose to embark on the mission because of close personal or professional ties to Puerto Rico. Among them:

* Linda Kane is an Executive in Residence at the Monte Ahuja School of Business at [Cleveland State University](http://www.csuohio.edu/), where many students she works with are from Puerto Rico. She saw how deeply the hurricanes affected them, and saw the mission as a way to better understand what they and their families are going through and strengthen relationships on campus. She is a retired Senior Vice President of Forest City Enterprises Inc. and was part of CLC’s Leadership Cleveland Class of 2012.
* Maritza Rodriguez is President of the [Cleveland Public Library](https://cpl.org/) Board of Trustees. She will extend her visit after the mission leaves to meet with the head of [Reforma](http://www.reforma.org/): The National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking in Puerto Rico. She knew of the mission from Felton Thomas, Director of Cleveland Public Library (Leadership Cleveland Class of 2010), who had heard from the President-elect of the American Library Association that libraries in Puerto Rico had been devastated by the hurricanes.
* Michael Jeans is traveling with his wife, Areli, who was born and partially raised in Puerto Rico, and their two teen-agers. The teens will be meeting the island of their heritage for the first time during this humanitarian visit. He is President &CEO of [Growth Opportunity Partners](http://www.growthopps.org) and a member of the Leadership Cleveland Class of 2016.
* Rear Adm. Michael N. Parks, Regional Executive for the [American Red Cross Northeast Ohio Region](http://www.redcross.org/local/ohio/northeast/about/locations/greater-cleveland) (Leadership Cleveland Class of 2017), saw the trip as an opportunity to see first-hand the role of the Red Cross in disaster relief and better understand how communities deal with crisis.

Cleveland Indians CEO and owner Paul Dolan (LC Class of 2001) and his wife, Karen, plan to join the group during a service project and the FEMA visit.

The mission is a natural extension of Leadership Cleveland and other CLC programs which catalyze leaders to drive community change, said Marianne Crosley, the Cleveland Leadership Center’s President and CEO. “CLC inspires and connects leaders so they can make an impact, and those on this mission will gain an appreciation for the rich Puerto Rican culture, learn more about how they can support the recovery, and see how they can work inclusively with our Puerto Rican community in Cleveland,” Crosley said.

“We want to take advantage of every opportunity to strengthen our community, to strengthen relationships, and to help people more deeply understand the important issues,” said Dan Moulthrop, CEO of The City Club and a member of the Leadership Cleveland Class of 2004. “There are thousands of Americans from Puerto Rico who are living here in Cleveland, and this is an opportunity for all of us to get to know our neighbors.”

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**About the Cleveland Leadership Center**

The Cleveland Leadership Center’s mission is to build a continuum of civic leaders committed to our community’s excellence by serving as a catalyst for civic engagement. It offers transformative experiences through ongoing courses, community events and customized programs that connect, challenge and inspire individuals to make a positive community impact. [www.cleveleads.org](http://www.cleveleads.org)

**About The City Club of Cleveland**

The mission of The City Club of Cleveland is to create conversations of consequence that help democracy thrive.
Its vision is of strong, informed individuals and communities that prize freedom of speech and civil, civic dialogue. [www.cityclub.org](http://www.cityclub.org)