



This charming residence in Seaside, Florida, presented the team at E. F. San Juan with a welcome challenge thanks to its many curved walls and custom details.

Photo by STM Photography

RESILIENT. RELENTLESS. REBUILDING.

Family Business Keeps Calm and Carries On
after Hurricane Michael

By JORDAN STAGGS

Never give in—never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.

—Winston Churchill

“We have all learned what we think of most in life when everything is in peril, and it is not the things that can be repaired or replaced,” says Edward San Juan, president of E. F. San Juan Custom Moulding & Millwork based in the rural community of Youngstown, Florida.

A third-generation craftsman of high-quality custom wood mouldings, columns, stair parts, interior doors, hurricane-rated exterior doors, and other related architectural millwork, San Juan was one of the hundreds of thousands whose lives were impacted by the Category 4 Hurricane Michael on October 10, 2018. The storm destroyed his company’s main

production facility, but that didn’t stop San Juan and his team—including his father, Ed, his brother-in-law, Buddy, his wife, Mary Kathryn, and their son, Eddie—from getting back to work the week after the storm hit. This work included helping E. F. San Juan’s employees and neighbors, as well as continuing efforts to help those in the community rebuild alongside them.

“We have met neighbors we never knew,” says San Juan. “We have hugged, loved, and cared for each other like never before. Our area is hurting in many ways, but we will recover, and we will be better than ever. Let’s continue to love and support one another and let’s be thankful for what we have today.”

La maison

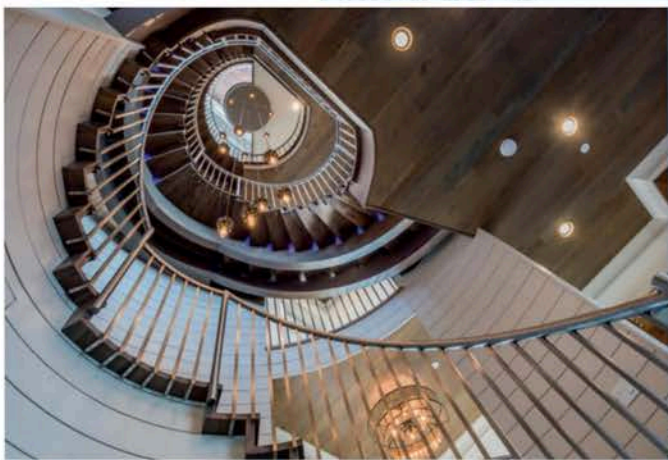
Hurricane Michael made landfall along the coast in Mexico Beach, decimating the town and neighboring Tyndall Air Force Base, Panama City, and Lynn Haven. Just north from there, Youngstown and its neighboring communities including Fountain, Blountstown, Wewahitchka, Sunny Hills, Alford, Chipley, Marianna, and many others have a hard road to recovery ahead due to being more difficult to reach and, being lesser known than the coastal towns, might not be on the radar of as many people and organizations providing relief. Nevertheless, the locals are grateful to have survived, and most seem to be hopeful for the future.

"There is much to do, and our recovery will require a long-term commitment to rebuilding the area we love and call home," San Juan shared just a week after the storm. "As difficult as it is to view the damage incurred, we have been heartened by the rapid response of many outsiders who are working tirelessly to reestablish our infrastructure." Still, he admits, about two-thirds of the residents in his neighborhood have not returned.

"It's an uplifting gift to see how people have responded. We decided to do Christmas bonuses early this year, with additional contributions from various vendors and individuals."

San Juan expressed his gratitude for the Bay County government and relief organizations' quick response to the community's needs and for helping to expedite the process of getting Youngstown back on its feet. "I've never been in that spot before—directly affected by a disaster such as this," he says. "Today, we feel completely different about it because we've seen and experienced it firsthand. It's an uplifting gift to see how people have responded. We decided to do Christmas bonuses early this year, with additional contributions from various vendors and individuals." Those donations from outside the company were a welcome respite for E. F. San Juan's sixty-five employees (they employed eighty before the hurricane), and San Juan expressed his great thanks to all who have given back to the community in many ways.

Businesses such as Northwest Florida's The St. Joe Community Foundation, Disney, Alys Beach, Visit Florida, the Seaside Institute, and many others have made generous donations toward relief, while



This rustic yet modern home in the coastal community of WaterColor off Scenic Highway 30-A features custom millwork by E. F. San Juan on all doors, windows, interior and exterior details, and the stunning staircase (left) created by Arcways.

Photos by Kurt Lischka





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“Funny enough, it was an opportunity to slow down a little bit, think about what we needed to do, and make improvements and changes to our facilities and our processes, procedures, and technology,” he says. “When I graduated from college, my dad and I started the business over from zero, and as the company grew, we mostly dealt with the growing pains by working more. I’d always think, ‘If things slow down, I’d like to improve this or that.’ This gave us the chance to make those improvements and come back better than before.”

The Chapel at Seaside, one of the New Urbanist town’s most iconic structures, features E. F. San Juan custom millwork beams, bell tower, and other details.

Photos by Brenna Kneiss

E. F. San Juan’s offices received a new roof and drywall, new paint, and new carpet, and the hardwood flooring was equalized and refinished after the storm. The company was back up and running just a couple of weeks after Hurricane Michael struck, and San Juan and his team have worked tirelessly since then to get back to full capacity. With loyal vendors such as Weather Shield, Loewen Windows, Marvin Windows and Doors, and many more still providing quality products, and a bevy of talented architecture firms as well as individual clients employing E.F. San Juan’s services, the family business is poised to start 2019 with a fresh outlook and lots of gratitude.

“I think everyone on our team will feel the effects of the hurricane for years to come,” says San Juan, “but everybody is glad to be working, and we’re looking forward to a new year.”

A long road to recovery lies ahead for the area affected by Michael, but in the storm’s wake, a united community rises with a clear vision of a much brighter future. ■

Visit EFSanJuan.com to learn more.



Ed San Juan with his son and partner, Edward San Juan

Photo by Gerald F. Burwell