

# People in Detroit are building solar panels to help Puerto Rico

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Rev. Faith Fowler poses for a photo at a business she created to help people with developmental disabilities in Detroit, Michigan, earn money to help pay for their needs, August 16, 2016. Photo from Ryan Garza/Detroit Free Press/TNS

DETROIT, Michigan — Men and women who used to be homeless will work to help people in Puerto Rico. A strong hurricane hit Puerto Rico. Many people lost power.

People in Detroit want to give power back to people in Puerto Rico. They will build solar panels. The solar panels will be sent to Puerto Rico.

Solar panels get power from the sun. The panels can be used to charge cellphones and computers. They can run lights or small refrigerators. They are made so they can be moved around.

## No Electricity

Faith Fowler runs Cass Community Social Services. It is the group that will send the solar panels. She said that parts to build 15 panels were on their way. They will be put together soon.

Fowler is hoping to help after Hurricane Maria. The storm hit on September 20. It knocked down electrical poles and power lines. For most people, it is still hard to get food, clean water, electricity, gas and cellphone service.

Many people live in Puerto Rico. It is an island that is part of the United States.

## **Bringing Power To The People**

Some people need refrigerators to keep medicine cold, Fowler said.

People might go six months without electricity. "It just frightens me," she said.

Fowler said the group will work to build the panels. Then they will take them to Puerto Rico.

They will be sent to people like Carlos Melendez's father. He lives in Puerto Rico. He is 87 years old. His leg is injured.

Melendez helps at Cass Community Social Services. So does his wife, Bonnie. He will go to Puerto Rico with Fowler to take the panels.

## **People Are Hard To Reach**

Fowler said it is hard to make plans. Reaching people in Puerto Rico by telephone is very difficult. It has been hard to make calls since the storm.

Having trouble talking has Bonnie Melendez worried. She wonders how her father-in-law, Benigno Melendez, is doing. They worry about his leg getting worse.

Bonnie's husband is trying to get his father out of Puerto Rico, she said. "He would like to go in and bring his dad out," she said. There is no gas for cars, though. Roads also have been blocked or ruined.

They bought a plane ticket for Benigno to fly to Michigan. It might not be easy, though. Bonnie has not been able to tell Beningo about the plane ticket. They do not know if he can get to the airport, she said.