

# UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON: **CONTRIBUTIONS TO KATRINA EFFORT**

*By Aimee L'Heureux*

The University of Houston (UH) helped the evacuees displaced by Hurricane Katrina in many ways. All four UH System institutions accepted and enrolled students from many Gulf coast universities including Xavier, Tulane, Loyola, and the University of New Orleans. At least one hundred staff members and between twenty to thirty student volunteers worked with these students. In addition, the UH System established the Katrina Student Assistance Fund to help cover the cost of books, school supplies, computer equipment, clothing, and other needs for displaced students. The fund provided financial assistance to UHS students from affected areas whose families suffered from the hurricane.

## **UH COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY**

Dr. Staley Woo and Dr. Lloyd Pate, both clinical faculty from the UH College of Optometry (UHCO), coordinated one of the larger Katrina support efforts. Dr. Woo, who works in the Low Vision Clinic, headed the optometry services provided at the George R. Brown; and Dr. Pate, who works in the Casa De Amigos Clinic, which is a UHCO City of Houston Partnership, ran the Reliant Park clinic. They transported equipment, helped to

secure donations and volunteers, and treated patients. Working with the University of Houston College of Optometry students, and alongside volunteers and ophthalmology residents from Baylor, they treated over 2,800 patients, six percent of whom had glaucoma, and thirty percent who were diagnosed with eye disease.

They obtained frames, blank lenses, and an edger to make glasses on site. More than 1,500 glasses were prescribed and dispensed. They obtained contacts, pharmaceuticals, and additional instrumentation needed to keep things flowing smoothly. When the temporary shelters closed, Woo and Pate continued services at the University Eye Institute at no charge. The UH University Eye Institute clinic sat 1,236 patients, 75 requiring medical exams, and 118 with an ophthalmic procedure; 1,064 glasses were dispensed, and 138 pairs of contacts.

Dr. Woo and Dr. Pate received the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge Award, which was established as a way to say “thank you” to citizens or organizations whose projects reflected the American spirit of volunteerism and community service.



*Dr. Stanley Woo and Dr. Lloyd Pate, UH College of Optometry faculty, provided optometry services at the George R. Brown Convention Center and Reliant Park. They, along with UH College of Optometry students, volunteers, and ophthalmology residents from Baylor, treated over 2,800 patients.*

All photos by Tom Shea, courtesy of University of Houston.

## Various UH departments and programs expanded their services to the community as part of their educational process including:

- The C. T. Bauer College of Business and the Honors College established the Water Fund to purchase enough beverages to fill several eighteen-wheeler trucks.
- UH Career Services created a web page where corporate, business, and governmental agencies posted temporary and part-time jobs for displaced workers.
- The M. D. Anderson Library and the Houston Alumni Organization were collection points of a drive to collect new and used books, new stuffed animals, playing cards, and dominoes for children and adults.
- The Metropolitan Volunteer Program (MVP) collected food, clothing, toys, and supplies for evacuees.
- The Muslim Student Association sold blue and white support ribbons for a \$1 donation. All proceeds were donated to the American Red Cross.
- Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management student organizations collected canned vegetables, cereals, canned juices, and bottled water.
- The Department of Clinical Sciences and Administration's registered pharmacists faculty volunteered their services to local pharmacies and hospitals in the city. Fourth-year pharmacy students volunteered to provide services at the Astrodome.
- The College of Pharmacy Office of Student Affairs assisted displaced first and fourth-year pharmacy students of Xavier University with admissions, transfer, and placement issues.
- KUHT-TV, Houston PBS accepted clothing, diapers, and baby formula.
- The Graduate School of Social Work assisted with childcare and with direct mental health crisis intervention.
- The Counseling and Testing Center and the Psychological Research and Services Center helped individuals suffering from anxiety, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and depression.
- The Moores School of Music accepted donations for the Red Cross at several concerts.
- The UH Law Center, through a special section of the People's Law School, assisted with legal questions, and helped with FEMA paperwork by utilizing law student volunteers.
- The Houston Speech and Hearing Clinic in the Department of Communication Disorders helped survivors replace their lost or damaged hearing aids and provided speech therapy for those whose therapy had been interrupted.
- Cougar PEP and UH Wellness sponsored a month-long food drive accepting canned goods at multiple locations on campus.
- UH Air Force ROTC cadets were the first to respond to volunteer for Texas Southern University's point of distribution (POD) site and were the first to open the UH POD site after Hurricane Ike. 🏹



*Dr. Lloyd Pate and a UH College of Optometry student Joshua Morrison set up an eye exam chart at the George R. Brown Convention Center.*