

## Clemons Takes UCSC Reins, Expects High Staff Participation

By Erika E. Durham, Public Affairs

If classified staff members want to feel a part of the process, they need to be a part of the process. If they want to be informed on the issues, they need to stay informed on the issues. And if they want to be involved in the university, they need to get involved in the university.

That's just the way Wanda "Dennie" Clemons, new chair of the University Classified Staff Council (UCSC) feels about it. It's all about taking responsibility for oneself, she said. "Change begins with me," Clemons said. "That is the attitude that each of us must have." Clemons succeeded former chair Ronda Lowe Sept. 1 and will serve a one-year term.

As UCSC chair, Clemons' primary responsibility will be to lead the group, which is responsible for advising the president and executive council on matters of importance to classified staff.

"Being elected chair of the University Classified Staff Council is an honor, Clemons said. "I truly appreciate all of those who have faith in my abilities and elected me as their leader. During my year as chair I would like to encourage everyone to step up to the plate by helping to make this university a better place to work. Getting organized and striving

to enjoy working at our university will not only make you feel great but you may actually help someone else feel it, too."

"Join some of the volunteer opportunities and put the fun back into your work-day lives," Clemons added. "The leaders of this university have taken a sincere interest how employees, students and faculty feel about being here. They've taken the first step of good intentions. Now each of us can do our part to join in their efforts. Become passionate about everything you do and get acquainted with those who work around you. Remember when life gives you lemons, make lemonade. Personally ... I prefer cherry lemonade."

Clemons, a speech recognition technician



Dennie Clemons

in Telecommunications, who has served the university for 18 years, said she has a true passion for the interests of classified staff and knows that change and improvement will only come from people who are motivated and willing to mobilize themselves.

But she admits that it is not always apathy that causes people to stay on the sidelines. "Sometimes it is the time as well," she said. "It is important to realize that supervisors and management have a large role to play. They should be encouraged to allow their employees the time to participate in events or projects. And they, too, should get involved."

Clemons has been involved in the UCSC for three years and heads up the UT House Medics home revitalization program with her sister, Krysti Suarez. In addition, she serves, or has served, in more than 10 university service events or programs

while at UT. Clemons, along with Suarez, also recently won the first UT Health Science Center Volunteer of the Year award.

Outgoing chair Ronda Lowe shared words of encouragement to the classified staff as she stepped down. "Being the chair of the council has been a wonderful experience. I know now that classified employees can, and do, have a voice in making the university a better place to work," Lowe said.

"The council has a big responsibility representing the more than 2,500 classified employees here at the university. Over the years the council has addressed many issues and seen positive changes. I will continue encouraging classified staff to participate in any university events that seek to enhance the work environment at the university."

With Lowe and Clemons both pushing involvement from classified employees, the masses will definitely get the message. Clemons said she plans to make sure of it.

Clemons is a single parent of three children, Myndie, Matthew, Chelsea, and two grandchildren, Serena and Jay.

For more information on the UCSC visit the Web site at [http://www.uth.tmc.edu/ut\\_general/special\\_interest/committees/ucsc/index.htm](http://www.uth.tmc.edu/ut_general/special_interest/committees/ucsc/index.htm). ★

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## Rita Readiness at the HSC Involved Hundreds of Steps

*Editor's Note: On the heels of providing 18 days of care for thousands of Hurricane Katrina survivors at the George R. Brown Convention Center and Reliant Park complex, the UT Health Science Center had to gear back up to prepare for the possibility of a direct hit by Hurricane Rita, which, as of Sept. 20, was projected to possibly hit the Galveston/Houston area with the force of up to a Category 5 storm.*

There were hundreds of individual and group actions to be taken: decision-making meetings, e-mail alerts and Web site postings, securing of departmental teams of information technology, environmental health and safety, facilities, auxiliary enterprises and animal care specialists mobilized to get the university through the storm and back in business afterwards.

Following is a timeline (not all-inclusive) highlighting the work involved.

### SUNDAY, SEPT. 18

**Tropical storm is named Rita.**

### MONDAY, SEPT. 19

**Rita kept on churning.**

#### Animal care

- All animal care personnel were alerted by supervisors and managers to begin

their personal home preparations for an approaching hurricane; as essential personnel they were to be available to assist in the preparations of the university for the hurricane, care for the animals during the event, and help in the recovery from the event — even if the HSC is closed.

- Current emergency preparedness procedures and resulting duties were sent to all key personnel.
- Supervisors and managers assessed areas for preparedness.
- All animal care personnel reviewed and updated the contact list.
- Initial planning for the relocation of animals on lower floors to upper floors.
- Obtained all additional supplies and equipment needed for maintaining and caring for animals — fans, spot coolers, large water containers, extra food and bedding, etc.
- Animal cage cleaning schedule modified to achieve clean cages for all animals just prior to the hurricane — a loss of electricity would disable the cage wash facilities so everything needed to be as clean as possible prior to the storm.

#### Auxiliary Enterprises

- Pre-Rita preparation began in the morning at the UT Professional Building and

Garage by communicating with tenants via memos and personal visits to all suites in the building.

### TUESDAY, SEPT. 20

**Rita rapidly intensified as it moved through the Florida Straits, reaching Category 2 intensity as the center passed about 50 miles south of Key West.**

**8 a.m. Leadership Forum** — Impromptu safety discussion led by Robert "Safety Bob" Emery, Dr.P.H., executive director, Environmental Health & Safety.

#### Public Affairs

- **10 a.m. Media Relations Team** prepared a one-page "Fact Sheet for Media on Preparedness for Hurricane Rita."
- **Communications Team**

**12:52 p.m.** E-mail message to Vice Presidents and Deans from Emery, on the scope of their roles following the activation of the Level Four Emergency Situation Response Plan (see <http://www.uth.tmc.edu/safety/firesafety/ESRP%20Rev.%2011-04.doc>).

**1:46 p.m.** E-mail message on Preparing for Rita from Emery pushed out to faculty, staff, fellows, residents and students focusing on actions to be taken following the activation of the Level Four HSC

ESRP and individual departmental emergency plans.

**4:16 p.m.** — E-mail information on Getting Ready for Rita pushed out in Issue 449 of *News on the Go*.

#### Animal care

- Supplies assembled in safe locations in each of the buildings housing animals during the hurricane
- Animal relocation began at Dental Branch (animals from the Mental Sciences Institute and UT M. D. Anderson Cancer Center and SPH).

#### Facilities

- Team leaders met and discussed Hurricane Rita issues and were asked to determine volunteer personnel for ride-out team.
- Building teams were asked to check emergency equipment and stock.

### WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 21

**After entering the Gulf of Mexico, Rita intensified at an astounding rate, from Category 2 to Category 5 in about 24 hours, with winds reaching 165 m.p.h. by the afternoon. Voluntary evacuation declared for Galveston and Brazoria Counties. Voluntary evacuation began for Houston in the evening.**

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### Health Science Center Events Rescheduled

Because of the projected arrival of Hurricane Rita and the subsequent Houston evacuation, two important UT Health Science Center events were rescheduled:

- The 13th Annual UT Health Science Center Scholarship Golf Classic is now set for **Monday, Oct. 31**, at the Timber Creek Golf Course. Tee time is 9 a.m.
- The 2005 Faculty Honors Convocation will take place, 5 p.m., **Tuesday, Nov. 1**, at the Texas Medical Center Hornberger Conference Center. Parking is complimentary and a reception will follow the convocation ceremony. All faculty and A&P staff are invited to celebrate the many outstanding achievements of the UT Health Science Center's faculty. For more details, visit <http://www.uthouston.edu/community/convocation/index.htm>



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