

UT Volunteers Received TMC Volunteer Awards

People who work as volunteers for the UT Health Science Center at Houston may perform individually through one of the health science center institutions or as part of a large group effort. No matter how they volunteer, the university and the Texas Medical Center are grateful for their efforts. This year, the TMC Volunteer Service Advisory Council honored three areas of UT volunteerism at the 2006 Award Recipients at their annual banquet.

UT Volunteers, Hurricane Katrina Response

Early on the morning of Friday, Sept. 2, 2005, a call from Mayor Bill White to Michael McKinney, M.D., senior executive vice president and chief operating officer of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, brought an immediate response that involved the enormous resources of the university. The Hurricane Katrina evacuee clinic at the Reliant Astrodome complex was already at capacity, and the university was asked to set up a second medical facility at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

By that evening, the clinic run by McKinney was open and the university's health-care providers and UT Volunteers organizations sprang into service. The number of volunteers who came to help with the UT effort was truly stunning. Volunteer physicians, emergency medical technicians, nurses, dentists, public health professionals, mental health professionals, administrative staff and community volunteers came from across the Texas Medical Center and Houston and from around the country. In just over two weeks, the university's downtown clinic had about

11,000 patient encounters, helped by more than 3,000 volunteers.

UT Volunteers also coordinated two back-to-back drives to collect food and clothing for those in need. Soon after, with the threat of Hurricane Rita, a "Rita Rations" university drive brought in goods donated to the Houston Food Bank. The TMC Volunteer Award for the Hurricane Katrina effort was accepted by Lou Ann McKinney, representing Tender Loving Care volunteers; Elda Ramirez, assistant professor of nursing in the School of Nursing's Department of Acute and Continuing Care and organizer of the volunteer nursing response; and Blake McKinney (no relation to Michael or Lou Ann), representing Medical School student volunteers.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Center on Aging

Ruth Anderson, who serves as a long-term care ombudsman in the Center on Aging's program, was described as always going beyond the call of duty of visiting her assigned nursing homes for a couple of hours every week to advocate for the rights of the residents. She becomes the pillar of strength and compassion whenever and wherever she is needed. In the last two-and-a-half years, Anderson has put in more than 1,300 hours with the program.

During the Katrina evacuation, she not only volunteered many long hours at George R. Brown Convention Center, but also advocated for the rights of the elderly who were displaced due to Katrina.

She wears unusual hats while visiting nursing homes. These hats were made by

her friends from around the world and become conversation pieces even among the Alzheimer's patients. She now has 60-plus hats that she uses to help engage clients in conversation.

The University of Texas Harris County Psychiatric Center

The men of VFW Post 5619 took on an unusual volunteer activity three years ago, when, under the direction of Senior Vice Commander Bob Rone, they began a stuffed animal collection drive for children and adolescents being treated at the UT Harris County Psychiatric Center (HCPC).

VFW Post 5619 joins forces with four high school Junior ROTC programs to col-

lect as many as 2,000 stuffed animals a year. JROTC participants from Sharpstown, Milby and Bellaire High Schools in the Houston Independent School District and Stafford High School in the Stafford Municipal School District coordinate stuffed animal drives at their schools and sometimes in their neighborhood, or other areas. They have collected stuffed bears, tigers, elephants ... almost every kind of stuffed animal you can imagine.

HCPC Volunteer Coordinator Carol Rone says that the center staff members look forward to working with the caring individuals of the VFW and JROTC each year on this project. ★



L to R: Lou Ann McKinney, UT Volunteers, Tender Loving Care; Blake McKinney, medical student, UT Medical School; Elda Ramirez, faculty, UT School of Nursing, receive the award. Photo by Pamela Lewis.

Volunteers Pour Enthusiasm into United To Serve

By Ina Fried, Public Affairs

"When it rains, it pours" — the slogan of a well-known brand of salt a number of years ago — could have been the slogan for volunteers from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and the UT M. D. Anderson Cancer Center April 29, when they poured time, effort and enthusiasm into helping others through the third annual United To Serve.

A heavy thunderstorm and some flooded streets didn't stop about 100 volunteers from converging for the kickoff breakfast at the UT Dental Branch at Houston and then heading off to a volunteer site.

Describing the dark, dreary, wet day, Dental Branch Dean Catherine Flaitz, D.D.S., said, "That's when sometimes people need people the most. That's when sometimes people feel a little bit down. It's the perfect opportunity to lift the spirits of others. ... That's what you'll

be doing today. It'll be that warm smile, that gentle touch, and just listening to a story and helping someone cut out or draw something that makes them feel special."

As if the rain weren't enough to overcome, some students had to take time out from studying for final exams, too. "We had to use time management, but it's for a worthy cause," said Kenya Bell, a junior at the UT School of Nursing at Houston, who volunteered at Memorial Hermann Hospital-Texas Medical Center.

This Year's United To Serve Volunteer Sites

- Ben Taub Hospital
- Bering Omega House
- John P. McGovern Museum of Health and Medical Science
- Memorial Hermann Hospital-Texas Medical Center
- Ronald McDonald House
- St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital
- The Methodist Hospital
- Texas Children's Hospital
- The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research (TIIRR)
- Kickoff event

Demori Driver, a student at the UT School of Public Health, went to Bering Omega House. "I think when you're a student, sometimes it's hard to fit in volunteer work, so it's nice to have a day

dedicated to everyone coming out, working with fellow students on something you usually don't have time to do during the school year," she said.

Speakers at the kickoff included L. Maximilian Buja, M.D., executive vice president for Academic Affairs, whose office

helped coordinate the day; Jeremy Chance, D.D.S., who originated United To Serve when he was a senior at the Dental Branch; and Stephen Kry, a student at the UT Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston and president of Student InterCouncil, who chaired United To Serve this year.

After the event, which is observed by campuses throughout the UT System, Kry thanked members of the planning committee. "Everyone put a lot of hours into United To Serve, and I think we can definitely say it was worth it! Thank you all so much for making this event a wonderful success!" he said. "Most importantly, thanks to everyone's hard work, we were able to organize hundreds of hours of volunteer help to assist people who really needed it. We did make a difference and I hope everyone will continue to do so in the future!" ★

Classified Staff Members 'Free' Themselves during UCSC Workshop



Maria Hernandez, School of Nursing, gets excited about the idea of "freeing" herself.



Leslie Philip-Veals, Medical School; Erika Baber, Dental Branch; Randy Baber, Dental Branch; Shinjung Kang, Dental Branch; Sandra Miller, Dental Branch; and Cecelia Lim, Procurement, share a table during the event.

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Jimenez and Prater's co-workers saw her potential, listened to her goals and encouraged her to grow in that direction.

"You all have a great deal to teach leaders about leadership," Maher told the crowd. "As some of you discover what you want to do in life, the health science center should be part of helping you get there." Maher said one of her goals is to make the health science center an environment that is more conducive to growth.

Denise Carpenter, senior trainer in Human Resources, recipient of the President's Award for Mentoring by a classified staff member earlier this year, reminded attendees that it is not only important to chart their paths, but also to bring others along the way with them. Carpenter stressed the classified staff members' responsibility to mentor. "Mentoring is something we all need to do as professionals. It's your life. You need to be bold with it."

Staff also were encouraged to "free" themselves by health science center administrators, including C. Gwin Morris, Ph.D., vice president for Public Affairs, and Michael McKinney, M.D., senior executive vice president and chief operating officer.

"I want everyone to know that I am not confused. I know who does the work around here and we appreciate it," McKinney said. McKinney complimented and recognized the classified staff for the prominent role they played in Hurricane Katrina and other community relief efforts in 2005.

This year's workshop chair was Debbie Hernandez. Steering committee members were Lisa Byrd, Stephanie Carter, W. Dennie Clemons, Kathy Crowley, Kimberly Holmes, Pamela Martin, Brian Schnupp, LaKeitha Spates and Connie Tapper.

The lunch was made special with faculty and A&P staff hosting tables to talk with classified staff about a variety of topics. ★