

Lights! Camera! Action!

Student films based on Hurricane Katrina Relief Premiere at UT Medical School

By Meredith Raine, Public Affairs

On a Monday in late September, a handful of medical students gathered around a pizza and plotted strategies for capturing on film one of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston's proudest moments.

The students, enrolled in the first filmmaking class of the John P. McGovern, M.D. Center for Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit, planned to interview faculty members who were integral to the Hurricane Katrina relief effort at the George R. Brown Convention Center and the Astrodome.

Through polished interviews, crafty camera work and a lengthy editing process, they documented the stories of UT physicians who set up medical facilities for thousands of sick and injured evacuees from Louisiana and Mississippi.

Five months later, the students presented their final products — four short films called "Taking Care of Katrina's Evacuees" — at the Medical School. They also created and produced a separate short film on Professor of Medicine Herbert Fred, M.D.

Thomas Cole, Ph.D., the Beth and Toby Grossman Professor and director of the McGovern Center for Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit, said he and Bill Howze, Ph.D., of Baylor College of Medicine developed "The Joys and Sorrows of Medicine: An Introduction to Filmmaking" to help medical students hone skills in observing, listening and constructing a coherent narrative.

These skills are essential for filmmakers, as well as physicians, Cole said, and teaching students early in their medical training to develop a keen eye for filmmaking could ultimately



Front row (L-R): Student filmmakers Laura Morgan, Sean Southerland, Martha Rac, Ken Estrera, Andrew Hall; back row (L-R): Tom Cole, Ph.D., McGovern Center for Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit; student filmmakers Chuck Hebenstreit, Jose Perez, Zach Wright and Rhet Langley. Back, far right, Herbert Fred, M.D., professor of medicine, the subject of one film not devoted to Katrina relief efforts. Medical School photo

mately make them more effective clinicians.

Cole originally intended for his students to interview seasoned faculty members about the highs and lows that have shaped their careers as physicians. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Cole said, it became clear that the focus of the students' filmmaking projects needed to shift.

"This was such a historic event and a proud moment for the university," Cole said. "There were such vivid and important stories that illustrate what it really means to take care of patients. The students felt it was important to document that."

The four Katrina films feature Carlos Moreno, M.D., holder of the Frank C. Webber, M.D., chair in Family Medicine and chairman of Family and Community Medicine; Margaret McNeese, M.D., profes-

sor of pediatrics and associate dean of Student Affairs at the UT Medical School; Larry Gilstrap III, M.D., the Emma Sue Hightower Professor and chairman of the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences; and Michael McKinney, M.D., senior executive vice president and chief operating officer of the UT Health Science Center.

The fifth film documents the remarkable career of Fred, an educator, clinician and author who advocates the importance of bedside manner.

During the filmmaking class, first- and second-year students learned to operate the camera, use natural lighting and gather background images that help show the story of the faculty member they are interviewing.

"The first key skill is very careful attention to detail," Cole said. "We also emphasized

interviewing techniques and the importance of asking open-ended questions and engaging in genuine conversation. These are important skills for filmmakers, and they are equally important for physicians."

Kenneth Estrera, 25, a first-year medical student, said the class was a creative outlet that helped him fine-tune his observation skills — at least when it comes to films and television. "When I watch movies from now on, I'll look at them in a different way. I can recognize the tiny transitions and the way things have been edited."

Estrera worked with fellow student Marisa Jennings on a film featuring Moreno. He said it was interesting to learn about Moreno's firsthand account of setting up the medical clinic at the George R. Brown Convention Center and caring for patients with chronic illnesses who had been without medication for days after the hurricane.

"Everyone was there just to help other people, and that's why most doctors go into medicine," Estrera said. "There was no insurance or other stuff to get in the way. It was just doctors taking care of people."

Cole said he designed the class to help medical students develop a keen eye for detail, an ear for listening and an art for capturing people's stories, but he hopes the students come away with much more.

"I hope they come away with a sense of excitement and inspiration about what it really means to care for people," he said.

The class is expected to present the films again at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and at a Texas Medical Association meeting in May. Dates are pending. ★

Give of Your Talent and Time through United To Serve

Join others in volunteer activities to promote health or to benefit patients and their families during United To Serve, Saturday, April 29.

UT Health Science Center at Houston and UT M. D. Anderson Cancer Center faculty, staff, students, residents, fellows and their friends will work on two-hour projects at health-related facilities. In addition to projects ranging serving brunch to arts and crafts, this year, for the first time, special entertainment talents are sought — singers, musicians, puppeteers, clowns, etc.

Check-in begins at 9 a.m. at the UT

Dental Branch. A volunteer kickoff — featuring breakfast fare and fellowship — will be followed by volunteer projects, 10 a.m.-noon.

Each volunteer may choose one of the following venues:

- 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

- Texas Children's Hospital
- The Methodist Hospital
- The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research (TIIR)

The project at the health museum is part of Healthy Little Texans Day and offers opportunities for volunteering later in the day, as well as in the morning.

Volunteers who prefer an early time slot are needed to help with check-in and the breakfast.

Complimentary parking will be available at the Mental Sciences Institute lot across the street from the Dental Branch. For details and

registration see http://www.uthouston.edu/community/united_to_serve/. Check the Web and *News on the Go* for any venue additions.

Last year about 200 faculty, staff and students volunteered throughout the Texas Medical Center and with UT House Medics, which again will be part of the overall day of service. First envisioned by the UT System Student Advisory Council and coordinated through the Chancellor's office, United To Serve was created to increase awareness and participation in volunteering throughout the 15 component institutions of the UT System. ★

HSC Unveils New Mobile Clinic to Serve Lower Rio Grande Valley Patients

By Melanie Hillis, Public Affairs

After 11 years, 60,000 miles and 30,000 patient visits, the Mobile Health Clinic operated by the UT Health Science Center is yielding the road to a new, more advanced vehicle. The next-generation traveling medical van debuted March 2 in the Texas Medical Center.

UT's Mobile Health Clinic or Clinica de Salud Movil was unveiled at the Fannin Plaza entrance to the UT Medical School, before heading to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where it will deliver free health care services to the impoverished working families of Hidalgo and Cameron counties.

On hand for the unveiling were L. Maximilian Buja, M.D., executive vice president for Academic Affairs, and Michael D. McKinney, M.D., UT Health Science Center senior executive vice president and chief operating officer, as well as physicians, staff and supporters of the Border Region outreach initiative.

"With the medical van, we're reaching those who don't have access to health care and health education," said Kathleen Becan-

McBride, Ed.D., coordinator of the university's Texas-Mexico Border Health Projects. "Without the Mobile Health Clinic, thousands would be without basic health care that keeps kids in school and allows adults to work."

Many families in the Valley live without access to medical care and without resources to pay for care, especially residents of colonias (from the Spanish word for neighborhoods) — rural communities in unincorporated areas that typically do not have electricity, running water, safe and sanitary housing or paved roads, much less medical care. Approximately 400,000 Texans live in colonias.

The \$238,000 van — purchased with state funds and private gifts from Mobile Medical Vehicles Inc. — offers three examining rooms and an education room stocked with medical and nutritional information.

The vehicle is easily recognizable, with its vibrantly detailed, orange-colored exterior designed and applied by Associated Graphics Inc.

It also is equipped with the latest laboratory equipment and technology, including telemedicine capability. "These patients can be checked by UT physicians who are hundreds of miles away and get prescriptions," said Elma Requenez, a registered nurse and eight-year Mobile Health Clinic veteran.



The Mobile Health Clinic has provided free health care in the Lower Rio Grande Valley since 1989. The new 37-foot RV is the third UT-operated van to venture out daily across 60-100 miles of dirt roads to provide medical check-ups, immunizations and nutritional information.

"This is important for the area because diabetes is rampant, they need the medical attention and also the educational resources on how to eat healthier," said Requenez. "These are working people without medical resources and education."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost one in six Americans is uninsured. In Texas, the uninsured ratio is one in four. Based on a State Comptroller analysis of federal data, the cities of Laredo, Brownsville and El Paso have the highest rates of residents lacking health insurance — one in three.

After its stop in Houston, the new Mobile Health Clinic met the public March 8 at La Feria Family Learning Center in the Lower Rio Grande Valley before going into daily operation. ★