



Courtesy Photo

Nursing students from the University of Texas Medical Branch school of nursing were recruited to assist in assessing the interests and attributes of the parishioners of the new parish formed in Galveston after Hurricane Ike.



Kay Sandor
Guest Column

Nursing students assist parish

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This is a post-Ike story of recovery and healing.

When Hurricane Ike hit the Gulf Coast on Sept. 13, 2008, the direct hit on Galveston Island and Bolivar Peninsula resulted in a storm surge and flooding that was similar to the 1900 Storm.

One of the major disruptions was to the faith community of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

Four churches in Galveston and Bolivar were so severely flooded and damaged, they were unable to be restored and reopened.

In the year after Ike, the faithful gathered in the remaining churches, Sacred Heart, St. Patrick and Holy Rosary on Galveston Island and a public school building on Bolivar Peninsula.

The feelings of loss were huge as the faithful struggled to cope with the restoration of their own homes, businesses and former way of life.

As with many natural disasters, everyone quickly learned nothing would be the same and “change” was the operative word in the process of recovery.

One major change initiated by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston was organizing the former individual parishes into one main parish.

On Aug. 15, 2009, Holy Family Parish became the new parish for all Galveston and Bolivar Peninsula Catholics who previously were served by Holy Rosary, Mary Star of the Sea, Our Mother of Mercy, Reina de La Paz, Sacred Heart, St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, St. Patrick, St. Peter the Apostle and St. Theresa of Lisieux parishes and mission churches.

This major reorganization was a challenge that required a leap of faith for all involved. The Rev. John Bok, of St. Patrick parish, was charged with the leadership of creating a new parish from all the former parishes and missions.

One way to begin to unite the parishes was to gather key leaders from the former stewardship positions and develop ways to blend the talents of many into one.

After several organizational meetings, it was decided to assess the interests and attributes of the parishioners of the new parish.

Nursing students from the University of Texas Medical Branch school of nursing were recruited to assist.

The medical branch senior nursing students who participated in the Holy Family Stewardship Survey were Debra Morris, Yanling Feng, Oluwaseun Adegboye, Chelsea Baker, Junghee Kang, Morgan Mathews, Edith Nganga and Festus Irabor.

These nursing students were enrolled in a Community Health Nursing course and conducting a community assessment of Galveston-Bolivar and the Holy Family Parish as part of their course assignment.

Their community assessment revealed parishioners were still struggling from the impact of Ike 18 months later.

With the support of their faculty, course coordinator Corinne Oppermann and me (both members of Holy Family), the nursing students took the lead in distributing and collecting the surveys at every mass during one weekend in May.

Other School of Nursing faculty members assisting with the survey process were assistant professors Tina Cuellar and Bonnie Webster and associate professor Yolanda Davila.

Parish Health Ministry co-chairwomen Bonnie Webster and I are analyzing the data.

Once the data is compiled, new stewardship groups will organize and again meet the needs of the new Holy Family Parish.

Everyone is buoyed by the enthusiasm of the response to the survey and see this as yet another sign of recovery and healing from the destruction caused by Ike.

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