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the

Bulletin

Picking up the Pieces: MCC Employees Reunite Family, Rekindle Hope at Hurricane Evacuee Center

When Mesa Community College employees Vamika Beale and Darlene Newman first walked into the evacuee center at Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Wednesday September 7th, they were overwhelmed. As part of a select group of MCC students and employees, Vamika and Darlene tried to take in all the unfamiliar people, activities and apparent chaos that surrounded them.

“When we first came in, we had no idea what was going on, or where anything was. But after a short tour and some initial familiarization, things made perfect sense,” said Darlene. “We realized we had just stepped into a very unique community, where hygiene was top priority, families slept near each other, and stations were set-up to meet every physical and emotional need.”

Vamika and Darlene joined other volunteers at the coliseum working to assess and meet the needs of the evacuees. Their specific job...transportation. They worked as a team to find and transport evacuees to a safe home, or in some poignant cases, reunite families divided by the tragedy.

One such incident involved a mother separated from her “special needs” son and his caregiver. She had grabbed her daughter, and the caregiver took the 13-year-old son when the disaster struck. Like all mothers she was anxious about his health and safety after five days of separation. Darlene and Vamika coordinated his transfer from Lafayette to Phoenix to join his mom and sister, as well as ensuring proper medical attention and housing would be available to the family.

“To work with a family from beginning to end was very fulfilling,” said Vamika. “We didn’t want to leave them until we had exhausted all means of either finalizing their request or redirecting them to another area where they could be assisted.”

For Darlene and Vamika to have success with the evacuees they had to be professional and empathetic, really willing to hear the evacuee’s whole story.

“Most people wanted to be able to express themselves to someone, to share their story and make that human connection. Sometimes they would be too overwhelmed emotionally and would tell us they needed a break, they couldn’t handle things right then,” said Darlene. “Then when they were ready to talk again, we would be there. For a moment we became family,

willing to do whatever we could to help them through this difficult time.”

Despite their efforts, all situations were not pleasant. Vamika recalls a gentleman they were assisting to locate family and shelter. After many calls and research, they finally found a sister and talked to her on the phone. Unfortunately, the sister was already housing nine other family members and couldn’t take her brother.

“It was heartbreaking to share with an individual that after all they had been through they would not be able to find shelter from a family member or friend,” said Vamika. “This was definitely a low point, but we were still responsible to provide whatever support and hope we could and continue to work with them until shelter was secured.

Despite the frustrations and setbacks, both Darlene and Vamika have never felt more rewarded from a volunteer experience.

“The courage and resilience of the people was amazing,” said Darlene. “We had one older man singing and celebrating, grateful to be alive and ready to start over in Arizona.”

As the evacuees come and go, Darlene and Vamika will remember the time they gave and the faces of individuals that for a few moments they called family.



MCC employees Vamika Beale and Darlene Newman have never felt more rewarded from a volunteer experience. Both assisted Katrina victims at Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

MCC Reaches Out To Hurricane Evacuees

Mesa Community College's administration and employees are reaching out to evacuees of hurricane Katrina on a local level by donating resources and time, opening its doors to displaced students through MCC courses, and volunteering at the Salvation Army.

MCC student scholarships for evacuees:

MCC is welcoming evacuees and students displaced by the hurricane. Judy Taussig, acting dean of student affairs, will personally assist victims through the process to ensure timely enrollment and deferment of payment until funds are secured. Although state statutes require tuition to be paid, every effort is being made to utilize scholarships for each individual seeking admission (see below for information on how to donate). Our Office of Career and Planning Placement will help them to find jobs if needed.

Erick is the first evacuee to officially enroll at MCC. Erick was enrolled at a community college in New Orleans when the hurricane hit. Although separated from relatives, he was able to reach his immediate family members by cell phone. He is still very concerned about extended family he has been unable to contact. He is an electronics major and has been able to register part-time at MCC. His educational expenses will be covered through a scholarship, but he is seeking an entry-level electronics job to cover other expenses. As of September 13, the college has been notified that enrollment paperwork for three additional students is pending.

Currently enrolled students have also been affected. Billy, a full-time student and starter on MCC's Football team, is from New Orleans and is seeking assistance as his family's home and ability to support him were destroyed by the hurricane.

Donations of funds through Mesa Community College or the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation:

Scholarship to aid evacuees – The college is accepting funds for scholarships to aid victims wishing to enroll at MCC. Gifts can be made in cash or by check, credit card (American Express, Visa, or Mastercard), or MCCCCD employee payroll deductions. Contact Deb DeVore in the MCC Development Office at 480-461-7356 or deb.devore@mccmail.maricopa.edu to designate your gift to a victim attending MCC. If you would like to donate to the general fund to assist victims attending any Maricopa Community College, contact the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation at 480-731-8400 or alma.padilla@domail.maricopa.edu.

Katrina Relief Fund – Drop boxes for cash or checks made out to the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army are available in the following offices:

- **Southern and Dobson campus:**

Administration on the 3rd floor of the Elsner Library, Development Office, Kirk Student Center
Office of Service Learning, Kirk Student Center

- **Red Mountain campus:**

Administration on the 2nd floor of the Mesquite Building
Contributions made to the Katrina Relief Fund and Scholarships may be tax-deductible.

Donation of funds through other organizations:

Red Cross

- www.redcross.org
- 1-800- HELP NOW which is 1-800-435-7669
- American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, DC, 20013

Salvation Army

- www.salvationarmy.org
- 1-800-SAL-ARMY which is 1-800-725-2769
- Salvation Army, PO Box 4857, Jackson, MS, 39296-4857

The Humane Society of the United States

- <http://www.hsus.org/> 1-800-HUMANE-1 which is
- 1-800-486-2631 (9 a.m. – 9 p.m. EST)
- The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037

Volunteers:

Initial volunteer efforts were organized on a college level, with vans transporting employees twice a day from the college to volunteer sites which included the Salvation Army and the refugee center at Veterans Memorial Coliseum. The College is no longer organizing volunteers. Individuals who still wish to volunteer can contact St. Vincent DePaul at 602-261-6886 and go to volunteer services.

Governor Napolitano visits MCC

Last week's East Valley Policy Forum at MCC provided Governor Janet Napolitano and her staff an opportunity to share with audience members how the struggles of Hurricane Katrina evacuees drove home the importance of education in people's lives.

Becky Hill, Napolitano's education advisor, called schools "a beacon of hope" for the evacuees she met who were anxious to start a new life in Arizona.

"What school means to them is an opportunity to move forward," Hill said. "It's a place of optimism where kids think about the next day and the next school year and high school and college."

The governor spoke to a crowd that included East Valley mayors, educators, students and citizens. She said that the past week taught her that our state government is capable of moving fast when it needs to respond to emergencies.

"We did it for Katrina," Napolitano said, "so let's do it for all Arizonans now."

Napolitano and her staff discussed issues such as aging, economic development, education, health and social services, youth leadership, and transportation.

The challenges of a growing state are many, but the governor's advisors gave examples of how education is part of the solution. MCC's Center for Service Learning was highlighted, as was the participation of MCCCDC in forums for the governor's initiative, Aging 2020.

During the question and answer period, State Representative John McComish asked the governor whether community colleges should consider four-year degree programs.

"I think we need to look at the four-year option for community colleges in a very targeted way with respect to every college and every program," Napolitano said. "It may be that one or two of our community colleges need to be transformed into true four-year universities ... or give certain colleges the option of offering some four-year programs."

Napolitano said she expected the P-20 Council, co-chaired by MCCCDC Chancellor Rufus Glasper, to provide further input on this issue.

The Chancellor ended the program by presenting a photo of students in the Achieving a College Education (ACE) program to Napolitano to thank her for her support, calling her a true "education champion."

This event was sponsored by: Mesa Community College, the East Valley Chambers of Commerce Alliance, Maricopa Community Colleges, the East Valley Partnership and the Mesa Association of Hispanic Citizens.



Raúl Cárdenas named Acting Provost for MCC Downtown

Dr. Raúl Cárdenas has been appointed as the Acting Provost for the Mesa Community College (MCC) Downtown Campus. Dr. Cárdenas has been with the Maricopa County Community College District for a number of years. He is the founding president of South Mountain Community College (1978) and in 1992 he became president of Paradise Valley Community College. Dr. Cárdenas was also appointed to serve as chancellor for the 1999-2000 academic year and served as

Vice Chancellor of Community and Student Affairs before retiring in 2002. Dr. Cárdenas is participating in the active retiree program and has been assigned to help build the infrastructure of the MCC Downtown Campus.

"I'm looking forward to working with the staff in establishing a good, quality downtown campus," said Cárdenas.



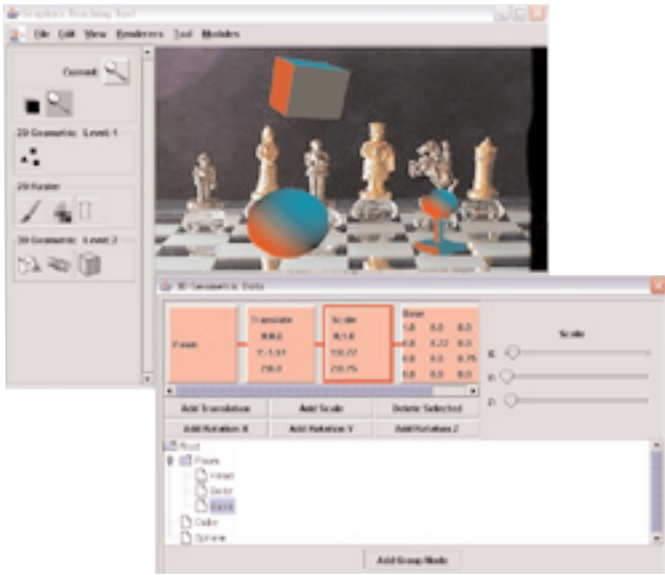
Dr. Cárdenas earned a bachelor's degree in political science and history from St. Mary's University, San Antonio; a master's degree in educational administration from the University of Texas at El Paso; and a doctorate degree in educational administration and student personnel from the University of Arizona.

Dr. Cárdenas is actively involved in national educational activities. He is founding member and former president of the National Community College Hispanic Council, and is a charter member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (and served as board chair for three years). In addition, he has been a member of the board of directors of the American Association of Community Colleges, of the American Council on Education, and the College Board. Also, he serves as a member of the coordinating council for the Kellogg Foundation's Hispanic Border Leadership Institute in Arizona. Dr. Cárdenas is currently serving on the City of Mesa's Economic Development Committee

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MCC and Brown University receive NSF Grant



Hundreds of years ago, the invention of the printing press made textual literacy skills a necessity. In today's world, new technologies with computer-based graphics are changing what it means to be literate, making visual literacy a key skill in virtually every field, from business presentations to medical diagnosis.

In an effort to bring a pioneering digital visual literacy (DVL) program to community college students, the National Science Foundation has awarded a three-year, \$600,000 Advanced Technology Education Grant to Mesa Community College and Brown University. The grant will allow educators to create and test DVL modules for use in basic computer literacy courses.

The module content is based on research and teaching by Anne Morgan Spalter and Andries van Dam of Brown University's Computer Science Department. The project also makes use of an educational software environment called the Graphics Teaching Tool, created by Brown faculty to help instructors bring DVL concepts to life.

Pinny Sheoran, director of MCC's Business and Industry Institute, will collaborate with Brown University researchers to connect specific DVL concepts to job functions. Corporate relationships developed by BII will help the team identify DVL skills that employers are seeking.

"I am thrilled to have a partnership with MCC," Andries said. "Dr. Sheoran has already helped to create several new curricular thrusts at MCC and we look forward to working with her and her team at MCC."

Initial courses using DVL modules are scheduled for Spring 2006 at MCC, other Maricopa County Community Colleges, and selected venues educating American Indian and Hispanic students.

MCC's Michelle Amete competes in Pan Am Games

Mesa Community College's national champion weight thrower, Michelle Amete, recently returned from competing in the Pan Am Games. The Pan Am Games are held every two years and feature 600 up-and-coming young athletes aged 19-and-under from 45 countries in the Western Hemisphere.

While naturally disappointed in not winning a medal at the Pan Am Junior Track & Field Games last month in Windsor, Canada, Michelle felt that the opportunity to represent the United States at an international event was a fantastic experience and a fitting culmination of a year's work as a collegiate weight thrower in which she broke numerous school and national records.

Michelle was the Arizona state champion in the shot put and discus when she attended Queen Creek High School. She enrolled at MCC a year ago largely for the opportunity to be coached by Selmer Olson who has been producing national weight champions and All-Americans for the past 33 years.

Since arriving at Mesa, Michelle has improved her distances in all three of her events. Selmer says "Michelle is one of the best female athletes ever to attend Mesa Community College." He sees a bright future for her in both collegiate and international competition.



MCC student Michelle Amete is a national champion weight thrower.

Accomplishments

- Broke the MCC school indoor weight thrown mark on two occasions
- Established a new junior college national record in the hammer throw with a toss of 189 feet
- Scored 25 of her team's 47 points in three events at the NJCAA Championships