

# HURRICANE HARVEY RESPONSE



On Friday, August 25, Texans began to feel the first drops of rain from Hurricane Harvey. By August 30, tens of thousands of those Texans had lived through the most harrowing days of their lives, and their lives were forever changed.

Hurricane Harvey made landfall as a Category 4 storm at Rockport, Texas. It then traveled inland and stalled over southern Texas, dumping more than 60 inches of rain in parts of the Houston metro area over the course of 5 days. Heart to Heart International had been watching the storm's forecast and knew people in the path of this storm were going to need help immediately. By the time Harvey made landfall, HHI already had a team in Texas, assessing the greatest needs and areas where HHI could be of the most help.

Sue Mangicaro, Executive Director, Global Response for Heart to Heart International, was one of those HHI team members. "Major trees are just uprooted," Mangicaro said. "Entire structures are down. We saw a high school with the roof blown off."

The team started seeing patients and delivering aid from the Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) before the torrential rains had slowed, and by August 28, the MMU was in Victoria, Texas, a city about 2 hours southwest of Houston. With most area hospitals closed, or not fully functioning, the Mobile Medical Unit served a critical need in helping get the community hygiene supplies and medical aid. On the very first day, HHI was able to deliver supplies to more than 600 people. On August 30, while HHI was still operating with no power, more than 2500 cars came to the MMU to pick up food, water and hygiene kits.

Meanwhile, HHI shipped 3000 blanket kits from Lenexa to Save the Children in Texas.

On August 31, 30 teachers from O'Connor Elementary showed up at a HHI clinic to receive tetanus

vaccinations. Vickie Dunseth, the school's principal, brought the teachers to the clinic. "I decided to bring them all here for shots just as a safety precaution," Dunseth said. "They are cleaning up at their houses and on campus. We want to get the students back as quickly as possible so they can get two hot meals a day," she added.

Kathryn McDonough came to the HHI clinic because she couldn't find another place to receive medical care for her four children between the ages of three and 11. "One has a cough. Two have sore throats. I tried calling our clinic but they are closed today. I think this is great," McDonough said.

HHI spent one day performing outreach in Seadrift, a small town on the coast, approximately 45 miles south of Victoria. The town was without power, water and gas. Residents had run out of medications and many elderly residents were trapped in their homes with no food and no way to leave. HHI treated 10 patients in a clinic at city hall and traveled to the homes of five home-bound residents.

"This is why we're here, to bridge the gap and help those who fall between the cracks," Sue Mangicaro said.

HHI staff and volunteers saw 253 patients and administered 326 tetanus vaccines over the nine days the MMU was stationed in Victoria. Toward the end of the nine days, Hurricane Irma had started churning in the Atlantic, and plans were being made to drive the MMU to Florida to respond to victims there. With the prospect of the MMU leaving, HHI started eyeing different ways to help the people in Texas who were still in need. "Yeah, this is not a one week relief effort by any far stretch of the imagination," said Mangicaro.

Rotating teams of medical volunteers started working to bolster the capabilities of three different clinics (Christ Clinic, Casa el Buen Samaritano, and Tomagua Healthcare Ministries) as their patient load increased in some

cases by double after the flooding.

They also found local community members who have already stepped up to serve their community, and have been helping them in their efforts by providing patient care and flu and tetanus vaccines. HHI also started working with Wichita-based Clinic in a Can, a medical relief organization

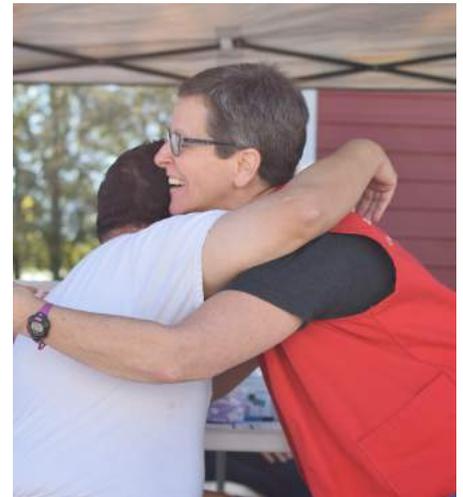
*"Ongoing health concerns aren't washed away by a hurricane's tide surge. Residents still have the same medical needs they did before, but now many clinics and doctors are out of commission. And this is the reason Heart to Heart International sticks around after the initial disaster. Access to medical care for chronic conditions, in addition to disaster-related health problems, is crucial for the continuing health of a community,"*

Dr. Rick Randolph, Chief Medical Officer,  
Heart to Heart International

specializing in self-contained medical clinics built inside shipping containers. By September 3, HHI was using a Clinic in a Can in Tomball and another in Katy.

In some cases, after a disaster of this magnitude, many people have survived the initial trauma, but are then left stranded, often without homes, and without any way of receiving treatment for pre-existing medical conditions or conditions exacerbated by the stress and physical realities of living through a hurricane.

One weekend in mid-October, HHI partnered with community efforts in Galveston County and Northeast Houston. Almost two months later, many families were still living in their flood-damaged homes. HHI saw 350 patients during that one weekend, with issues ranging from upper respiratory issues caused by living in mold-infested homes to cuts and sores on feet and



legs caused from living in homes with standing water. Heart to Heart International provided medical relief including tetanus and flu vaccines, and blood pressure and glucose screenings.

"In addition to the immediate health conditions precipitated by a flood such as, moldy homes, infection, and fungus, the disruption of normal healthy habits exacerbates otherwise manageable health issues. Chronic diabetes afflicts many here in Houston and the flooding adversely impacts management as well as access to necessary treatments," Joel Bruerd said. Bruerd has been in the Houston area with Heart to Heart International since September 26.

Through collaboration and partnerships with AmeriCare and Project Hope, HHI began the shift from working with clinics toward developing long-term community health programs. "Many of the medical things I see are people separated from their medications because of the hurricane -

folks with diabetes or high blood pressure that is out of control - and others who are just out of touch with consistent medical care," Dr. Bob Gwinn, HHI medical volunteer said. "... Without care they would go on like they have - being miserable and sick. We offer a chance to break that cycle."

Heart to Heart International is passionate about creating sustainable and accessible health systems and helping those who need it most, and Houston residents are no exception.

"There are very few problems that are unique to disasters," Dr. Rick Randolph, Chief Medical Officer, said. "... But most of the patients that we see are those whose support system had been removed by the floods. These are those who have been forced from their homes, living with relatives or living in shelters."

Sometimes patient care is not solely medical, but also being there as one person caring for the life of another

person. At an event with the East Houston Civic Club, a volunteer doctor treated a woman, who then returned the next day. She wasn't in need of more treatment, but she had received her FEMA denial letter, and wanted a shoulder to cry on.

Heart to Heart International's response to Hurricane Harvey has not concluded. Volunteers and staff are still in Texas, and supplies are still being sent. In addition to treating patients and providing vaccinations, dedicated HHI team members are helping organizations develop systems to improve health care, and access to it, for all members of those hardest-hit and most in-need communities.

This is all done with a top goal of HHI's in mind: helping communities move from the point of survival to the path of sustainability, and in the end, creating a better future for all.

# RESPONSE BY THE NUMBERS

Heart to Heart International spent more than three months responding to the needs of Hurricane Harvey victims in communities around Houston, TX.

## PATIENTS SEEN



# 2,500

More than 2,500 patients seen by HHI medical volunteers since August.

## VACCINES ADMINISTERED



# 3,000

More than 3,000 tetanus vaccines were administered by HHI medical volunteers since August.

# 2,600

More than 2,600 flu vaccines were given by HHI medical volunteers since August.



## SHIPMENTS OF AID



# \$950,000

HHI sent more than \$950,000 of hygiene kits, comfort kits, medicines, medical supplies and water to the Harvey relief.

