

Port After Storm

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When Ferrouillet's father learned OWC was waiving tuition for college students from Katrina affected areas, the criminal justice major said, "My dad thought I should go to school instead of lose a whole semester. The people here have been fine especially letting us start a little late."

While he's since learned the family's two-story Ninth Ward house "is pretty messed up," Ferrouillet said it was "watching the levee break twice and seeing all the dead bodies in the water" that convinced him to stay at least until Southern University is open again.

Another evacuee, Buddy Holloway, knows there is nothing left of his apartment by the Imperial Palace Casino or his father's house in Biloxi where he attended Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College before the hurricane mangled the college along with everything else, according to Holloway.

"My father says the house was flooded and washed away. Nothing's left except for the basement where all the junk was," said Holloway, who is now a music major at OWC. He evacuated to his grandfather Paul Greene's house, which is near the college, two days before the storm roared in. "My life's really been changed by this thing," said Holloway. "Everything's gone over there. O-W's been really great with so many people helping us."

Carolina Gallup, a clothes designer whose home in the New Orleans' Lakeview section was submerged when the 17th Avenue Canal levee broke, found safety in a friend's condominium in Destin and enrolled in OWC's medical coder program. "I really thank the college for doing this because I need to keep my mind going," said Gallup, who lost all her "clothes, designs and everything except one sewing machine" when the flood waters swept through.

Ironically, Gallup was able to save an issue of the Times-Picayune newspaper which featured a story and photos of her clothes in a front page article two days before Katrina hit. "Who knows, maybe I'll be able to design clothes for some people here," said Gallup, who may even find some work helping OWC Arts Center costumer Armand Coutu with college productions.

Then there was Brittany Berryman, a freshman at Delgado Community College, whose family escaped to an aunt's home in Santa Rosa Beach, after her New Orleans neighborhood flooded. "Everything is so sad watching it on TV," said Berryman, who also got a job at a store in Destin Commons. "Everyone's gone, so I doubt if we'll go back." In the meantime, Berryman has been encouraged to try out for the college dance team, the Raider Rhythms.

One of those "Team O-W" front-line staff who helped evacuees is Betsy Hanson, an advisor in Student Services. Hanson and other advisors worked individually with more than 30 displaced students, noting that she "will never forget the quietly haunting looks on the faces of the student evacuees who came to our office to begin rebuilding their lives."

"I definitely saw the whole range of emotions. They had been uprooted so suddenly and the towns devastated, but I think they wanted some sense of normalcy in their lives and getting back into class might help them deal with what happened," said Hanson. "They seemed to be very appreciative of what the college did for them. They've come back by the office and told us about the good experience here."

Barbara Jones, director of the OWC Chautauqua Center, was an integral part of reaching out to hurricane victims who found themselves in Walton County. In addition to enrolling several student evacuees, OWC staff worked with the Chautauqua Cyber Club and Brighthouse Cable Network, to provide an eight computer communications center at the Red Cross Katrina Shelter in DeFuniak Springs. The communications center supported the Red Cross, FEMA, and evacuees from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Over 1,700 were registered and hundreds were able to find family, friends, and view their neighborhoods using the computers. A FEMA Field Supervisor said this was the best communication operation he had ever seen in a small town dealing with disaster relief.

"Team O-W really came through to help these evacuees in shelters at Crestview and DeFuniak Springs and get the students back in class," said Richburg of the 40 students who enrolled from community colleges like Pearl River (MS) and Delgado Community College in downtown New Orleans to the University of New Orleans, Loyola, Dillard University and even Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

"These were extraordinary times because of the catastrophic damage these people suffered," said Richburg. "It was one way our college and our community reached out to help."



Hurricane evacuees use OWC computers at the Red Cross shelter in Walton County.

Burkes Buy Books for Evacuees

When they learned OWC had opened its doors tuition-free for evacuee students Lt. Gen. (ret.) Kelly and Denny Burke responded to a request from the OWC Foundation and made a personal pledge to cover all textbooks and supplies the students needed to return to class at their new college.

"We knew this was something that we could do right here and right now to help these students," said Kelly Burke, sponsors of the college's largest scholarship endowment. The Burkes have a daughter who lives in nearby Lafayette, LA "so this really hit close to home."

Burke is no stranger when it comes to dealing with hurricanes. During his Air Force career he flew reconnaissance aircraft into typhoons as commander of a weather squadron in the Pacific.

"The college is very grateful to Kelly and Denny Burke for helping us assist the evacuee students," said Jim Chitwood, OWC Foundation Executive Director. He noted that foundation board member Al Donaldson chipped in \$500 for the books needed by the 40 students enrolled at OWC. Additional gifts were received from Dr. and Mrs. Ned Couey and Mr. and Vern Walker.

Morell

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Bob Morell noted that his mother often commented that she had never been as happy in all of her life as she was after she moved to Niceville. She was introduced to Okaloosa-Walton College by Venita's parents, Helen and Loyal Weaver, and her life was enriched by many of the cultural offerings at O-W, including plays, concerts and visiting artists.

Endowed Teaching Chairs promote excellence in teaching, which is the most vital and fundamental activity of OWC. The chair will be established in memory of Janet Nadel Morell, and proceeds from the endowment will fund an annual award to an outstanding faculty member for teaching excellence in reading or literature. The instructor, who will be selected by Okaloosa-Walton College because of demonstrated outstanding teaching ability, will receive a \$5,000 professional or program stipend annually.

"The gift of an Endowed Teaching Chair is among the most important contributions that can be made to Okaloosa-Walton College and to the thousands who are educated at OWC," said Dr. Bob Richburg, OWC President. "We are so appreciative to the Morell family for this important and lasting recognition of their mother and for how this generous gift will benefit future generations of students at OWC."

Boettcher

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How they met was almost happenstance. "I had gone to an office to visit my friend and that's where Bruno and I first met," she said about the man from St. Bernard, TX who would be her husband for almost 40 years. "First, Bruno had to ask permission from my father because there were so many sad stories about war brides coming back to Japan. I remember Bruno told my father he would take care of me—and he did."

Before they met, Boettcher had been a guiding hand in the early development of South Walton's Gulf Pines Subdivision in 1955. He would go on to develop 10 other South Walton subdivisions after retiring from the Air Force, ending a 30-year career during which he served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

To help meet the growth demands of the area, Boettcher assisted in organizing the South Walton Utilities Company. He was a charter member of the Santa Rosa Golf and Beach Club and the Sandestin Lions Club, where he was past president, three times a 'Melvin Jones Fellowship' recipient from Lions International, and where he devoted many of his civic hours. Boettcher was also past commander of the American Legion Post 264 in Santa Rosa Beach.

Chieko Boettcher said she chose a nursing scholarship because "I know how hard nurses work in hospitals. I know the college has built a good nursing program to help the community." Her scholarship donation will be matched \$1-to-\$1 by the state.

Dr. Bob Richburg, OWC President, said the Boettcher Scholarship "came at a perfect time since the college has just expanded our registered nursing program to accommodate 18 more freshmen students each year."

"OWC is proud to be a part of this honor for Col. Boettcher," said Richburg. "The South Walton community where he played such a role in its development can take pride that Chieko Boettcher has begun a legacy for the community he cared about through our nursing program."

On-Line Giving

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"There is a cardinal rule in fund raising that says we thank a donor three times," said Chitwood. "Well, after an on-line donation is made, a personalized acknowledgement letter appears on screen that a donor can print out for record keeping purposes. The same acknowledgment is also then emailed to our donor. Naturally, there will be an even more personalized letter from the OWC President that follows each gift."

Chitwood added that on-line giving is "all about cultivating a relationship with those who choose to contribute to OWC. People can even go to the planned giving page at www.owcfoundation.org and find forms for wills, information on trusts and a calculator that lets the donor decide the amount they'd like to contribute through their estate."

www.owcfoundation.org

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