



Photo provided by Ted Wendel

Dr. Harry Owens, a family practice physician who has a specialty in emergency medicine and is a Project HOPE volunteer, reassures a young patient who came in for a checkup for school in Rosenberg, Texas. Owens offered to do a medical checkup on her pet unicorn, too.

Project HOPE helps cover health care gaps

By **CATHY KUEHNER**
The Winchester Star

MILLWOOD — Hurricane Harvey may have dissipated, but serious health needs remain acute as communities grapple for a sense of normalcy.

Project HOPE volunteers, in-

cluding physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, pharmacists and mental health professionals, have now treated hundreds of people in clinics in Houston, Katy, Tomball and Rosenberg, Texas.

Another HOPE team went to

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Florida after Hurricane Irma to address health needs ranging from behavioral disorders to medical conditions, including dementia and skin infections, which can be common after massive flooding. The Florida team is also helping people manage chronic diseases exacerbated by the loss of medications because of the monster storm.

Project HOPE is a nonprofit global health development and humanitarian organization headquartered in Millwood. It sent a team of health care professionals to southeast Texas after the record-breaking hurricane left 54 counties officially declared disaster areas.

Harvey first made landfall Aug. 25 as a Category 4 storm. It stalled over south Texas before slowly moving east into the Gulf of Mexico and making landfall again near Cameron, La., on Aug. 30. The top rainfall to-

tal was 51.88 inches near Highlands, Texas.

Now, many first responders, residents, teachers and schoolchildren have received crucial tetanus immunizations, treatment for both acute and chronic illnesses, and mental health services.

"We've seen a range of unique medical conditions and needs related to the hurricane, and we're helping people manage diabetes, hypertension and other chronic illnesses that have flared up because their medicines were lost during the storm," Dr. Carolyn Apple, an emergency and internal medicine specialist, said in a Project HOPE news release.

Psychosocial support will continue to be needed as people try to cope with the trauma of living through such a frightening natural disaster and finding their homes and schools destroyed.

Project HOPE has also distributed hundreds of hygiene kits to help

people protect themselves against poor sanitation conditions caused by widespread flooding.

In Florida, Project HOPE's disaster response team, which includes a geriatric specialist, is addressing the health needs of some of Hurricane Irma's most vulnerable victims: the elderly community in Lee County.

Two weeks after Harvey, Category 4 Irma made landfall in the Florida Keys. It will go down as one of the Atlantic's strongest hurricanes on record, with peak winds of 185 mph lasting 37 hours.

The Hurricane Harvey death toll stands at 82 as of Thursday; 26 deaths are attributed to Hurricane Irma.



Learn more at projecthope.org and follow the nonprofit organization on Twitter, @projecthopeorg.

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Courtesy photo

Dr. Kevin Blanton, a Project HOPE volunteer, speaks with a guest at a Lee County, Fla., shelter for the elderly and people with special needs.