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State Medical Team Responded To Ike

By DAVID OWENS
Courant Staff Writer
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A day after Hurricane Ike ripped into Texas, a disaster response team from Connecticut arrived on Galveston Island to begin providing medical care to survivors and rescuers.

"Right after the storm hit, we were here," said Michael Purcaro of Vernon, the team's administrative officer. A team from Rhode Island is working with the Connecticut group.

The doctors, nurses, medics and others have been at work since Sunday, treating about 200 patients a day. Patients have been coming in with injuries ranging from bumps and bruises to serious burns, Purcaro said.

The team of volunteers, called the Connecticut Disaster Medical Assistance Team, is working in the emergency department of a hospital that, like much of region, is without power. The team — part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services — gets power from generators and potable water from tankers driven in and from bottled water.

"We are providing the only urgent care medical service on the island right now," Purcaro said.

More seriously injured people are being transferred to other hospitals.

"We have helicopters coming and going every 30 to 40 minutes," Purcaro said.

Team members work 12- to 15-hour shifts, then take a break in tents just across the road from the hospital. The conditions, because of the devastation, are primitive. There is no running water and the bathroom is a bucket inside a tent. Team members eat MREs, or "meals ready to eat," the same rations issued to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Team members have no complaints, Purcaro said. "We volunteer to be here and to go to places like Galveston Island," Purcaro said. "It's an honor for us to be here."

Purcaro said team members expect to head home today.

For photos of the medical team and the hurricane devastation they witnessed, visit <http://purcaro.smugmug.com/share/JwD10HQQGo6YY>

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CONNECTICUT

With Registration Drive Visits Hartford Public HIGH SCHOOLS

Not white eligible voters. Only 33 percent of eligible young Latino voters voted, according to the center.

In all, 21 people registered to vote Thursday — the vast majority of the academy's 400 students won't be 18 by the election — but all of them got a multifaceted lesson on voting.

Urania Petit, a member of ACORN, asked the students how many let their parents pick out their clothes. That drew laughter. How many of you would go to a restaurant and let your parents order for you? she asked. More laughter.

"Why in the world would you let them elect who you want to represent you?" she asked.

Although the assembly was non-partisan, Charles Ross, ACORN's quality control manager, conducted a voice vote on the students' presidential preferences. John McCain drew a handful of cheers. Obama drew a roar.

Students had varied reasons for their choice. Brian Barracks, 18, said that based on the two candidates' tax plans, Obama would be more mindful of the underclass and McCain would be more focused on the wealthy. He also liked that Obama did not grow up wealthy.

Obama's biography also appealed to Jenny Campo, 15. "He chased his dream, he got what he wanted, now he's working for it," she said.

Campo, a junior who wants to be a police officer, said she's especially concerned about taxes and oil prices; her parents don't have much money and should get a tax cut, she said.

"I wish I was old enough to vote," she said during the assembly. "I'd vote like a thousand times for Barack."

Because she's too young to vote for herself, Xiomara Colon, 16, has been trying to influence her relatives' votes.

The high school senior is particularly concerned about the war in Iraq. Colon has several relatives in the Army and Navy and worries that many young people join the military because it's their only way to pay for college or earn money. She thinks the president should make sure that young people have other options to serve the country besides going to war.

Colon is not sure whom her father plans to vote for. Her mother typically doesn't vote — she tends to be too busy working to pay attention to the elections, Colon said. But this year she hopes they will vote on her behalf.

"I hope that they choose the right president," she said.

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State Team Joined Ike Response

Gave Medical Care Since Day After

By DAVID OWENS
COURANT STAFF WRITER

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