

Dear Texas Educator:

Texas ASCD is looking forward to the 2008 annual conference, and we know many of you are preparing for this event as well. Yet, understandably, we have received phone calls and e-mails with concerns about Galveston Island's condition after Hurricane Ike. To ease everyone's concerns, despite much reassurance from the hotel staff and convention services that our selected hotels and the island would be business as usual by the time of our conference, the conference coordinator and I visited Galveston on Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup>. We came back with a positive report about the hotels, the island, travel to the island, and the recovery progress.

### **The Island, Travel and Entertainment**

The causeway was not congested as we entered into Galveston. Most of the debris on the main roads throughout Galveston has been cleaned up. There were people fishing and walking their dogs on the sea wall as usual. Many of the restaurants along the seawall have reopened or will be open in the next week.

The area that received most of the damage was the section of homes on the far ends of the island. These homes and businesses were not behind the seawall, and the homes were not built to withstand hurricanes. The downtown area/strand was also hit hard by the water. This area will not be open during the conference, but hopes to reopen soon.

### **Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa and Convention Center**

Moody Gardens Hotel experienced little damage. The convention center had some water damage, but the soiled carpet was removed and will be replaced with new carpeting in time for the conference date. The only other part of the Moody Gardens grounds that received damage was the IMAX theatre, and the Rain Forrest Pyramid. Neither of these attractions will be open in time for our conference; however the other amusements will be open.

Moody Gardens has been housing media and construction workers since before the storm hit. The hotel has running water and electricity, and the hotel staff is supplying and using bottled water for drinking and cooking. Hotel phone lines are experiencing some problems, but they should be working by the end of the week.

### **Overflow Hotels**

The Hilton Galveston and the Holiday Inn Resort on the Beach, also received minimal damage. They both have running water and power. They are also experiencing problems with their phone lines and are expecting AT&T to replace equipment this week. If you have been trying to call to make reservations, please try again at the end of the week.

### **Environmental and Health**

We know many of you are concerned about the health issues in Galveston since there were reports on the news about snakes and rats. We did not encounter any during our visit, and none of the residents with whom we spoke, and who are currently back and living on the island, have seen snakes or rats. The environmental company, Center Point Energy Environmental, has inspected Moody Gardens and found the hotel to be safe, free of any mold or hazardous chemicals from the tidal surge.

### **Back to Business**

The island has started to get back to normal business. Galveston ISD is expected to reopen schools starting this week. Moody Gardens will be hosting four meetings and conventions before we arrive on October 19<sup>th</sup>.

IT IS NOW OUR TURN as Texas citizens and educators to help. Galveston is going to need assistance with rebuilding. By our having our annual conference in Galveston, revenue will be realized by Galvestonians to use towards their rebuilding. They are excited that we are still planning on having the conference on the island, and they want to encourage as many educators as possible to come and help their community.

We hope this letter reaffirms your decision to join us in Galveston on October 19-21, 2008.

Sincerely,

Yolanda M. Rey, Ph.D.

Executive Director

**Overflow Hotels:**Hilton Galveston Island Hotel

call reservations at 877-425-4753

(ask for the Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, or TASCED, room rates)

Holiday Inn Galveston on the Beach

call reservations at 800-465-4329

(ask for the Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development room rates - deadline is October 1st for \$149 rate)

**Restaurants:**

The following restaurants are open on Galveston Island:

Gaidos

Landrys

Chilis

IHOP

Saltgrass

Fishtales

The Spot

More restaurants are opening daily, as the recovery begins.

**Transportation:**

All the shuttles are operational and the car rentals are fully functional.

Galveston Limousine Service is running shuttles from the Houston Hobby Airport to Galveston for \$45 one way or \$80 roundtrip. You will need to call for reservations, 1-800-640-4826.

There will be a shuttle that will run in the morning and evening between the overflow hotels and Moody Gardens. A schedule will be given to you upon arrival.