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Nagin gives his team Shankar stress relief

by Richard A. Webster
06/04/2007

When stress threatens, sometimes the best reaction is the simplest — take a deep breath.

That's the mantra of the International Association of Human Values, which Mayor C. Ray Nagin invited to New Orleans shortly after Hurricane Katrina.

After the group's founder, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, visited New Orleans in April, Nagin developed a working partnership with IAHV.

"We will begin to work closely with his holiness (Shankar) and his organizations to identify the specific set of needs for the New Orleans communities," Nagin said. "For the past 19 months, our adults and youth have endured stress and overwhelming challenges associated with the rebuilding our great city and we are open to review the proposals of his holiness Shankar's for the achievement of harmony, stress management and clarity of mind."

The New York-based nonprofit teaches a breathing technique designed to "release stress from the mind and body."

"This is completely transformational," said Gabriella Savelli, an IAHV trauma relief specialist. "And it's something usually people haven't seen before because it's not something we learn in the workplace or at school."

IAHV has conducted breathing seminars for City Hall employees, schools such as Ben Franklin High School and Xavier University, and private companies such as Whitney National Bank and Whole Foods. They have also instructed inmates at Orleans Parish Prison.

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Instructor Dinesh Ghodke, standing, leads Alex Marculescu, left, and Emily Gollmyer in breathing techniques as part of the International Association of Human Values stress management. (Photo by Frank Aymami)

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"The members of the justice system here in New Orleans said that if this will help people be a better person and stop the cycle of recidivism, they were willing to try it," Savelli said.

For more information, contact IAHV at 994-4990 or visit www.iahvneworleans.org.

Gulf Coast to receive

\$195M in new grants

Primary care clinics in New Orleans are poised to receive much-needed financial relief.

U.S. Department of Health and Hospitals Secretary Mike Leavitt said March 24 an additional \$195 million in health care grants is bound for Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Of the total, about \$100 million is dedicated to public and nonprofit clinics in New Orleans providing primary care to low-income and uninsured residents.

An estimated \$60 million will be directed toward acute care hospitals, skilled nursing and inpatient psychiatric facilities and community mental health centers.

The remaining \$35 million will be used to recruit and retain health care workers.

The Louisiana Health Care Redesign Collaborative reports about 50 percent of physicians who worked in the New Orleans region before Hurricane Katrina have left.

HHS has now provided more than \$2.5 billion to the Gulf Coast region to help rebuild the health care system with \$1.4 billion going to Louisiana, \$838 million to Mississippi and \$356 million to Alabama.

Lacombe hospital adds

120 acute care beds

MedCath Corp. has announced a 120-bed acute care expansion at its Lacombe hospital. Construction this summer will include a 109,000-square-foot, four-story patient tower with 120 private rooms.

The hospital, which opened in February 2003, will be renamed the Louisiana Medical Center and Heart Hospital. The expanded hospital will have 178 private rooms, more than tripling bed capacity.

Total cost of the project is expected to be \$33 million. MedCath anticipates net revenues for Louisiana Medical Center and Heart Hospital will be between \$110 million and \$120 million in fiscal 2010.

Film shows Ochsner

struggles during Katrina

Louisiana Public Broadcasting will air never-before-seen footage of a hospital experiencing the wrath of Katrina in a documentary about Ochsner Health System.

"Surviving the Storm" will air at 8 p.m. Thursday on LPB, 8 p.m. Saturday and midnight Sunday on WLAE-TV.

The one-hour program narrated by actor John Goodman reveals how Ochsner Hospital remained open during the storm and continued to see patients despite the flooding and devastation. The documentary includes footage shot by Ochsner videographer Jackson Ellison.

"This story shows how Ochsner spent years preparing for this catastrophic event by soliciting advice from hospitals in Houston and Pensacola who had previously suffered serious damage from hurricanes," said Beth Courtney, president and CEO of LPB.

The story shows how the staff struggled to keep the only operational pharmacy in the city open for the first three days after Katrina so patients with chronic illnesses such as asthma and diabetes could continue to receive medication.

“One of the most important lessons from Katrina was having an effective disaster plan,” said Warner Thomas, president of Ochsner Health System. “We sent half our staff out of town before the storm so they could return and relieve essential personnel right after the storm.

“I hope the lessons we learned, which are highlighted in this documentary, will help other hospitals and healthcare facilities better prepare for a disaster of any kind.”•

— Compiled by Richard A. Webster

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