



## Media Inquiries:

**Sonya Cole-Hamilton**

*Chief Communications Officer*

(972) 218-1433 office • (972) 358-7227 cell

[SonyaHamilton@LancasterISD.org](mailto:SonyaHamilton@LancasterISD.org)

[www.LancasterISD.org](http://www.LancasterISD.org)

Connect with us:



Like. Follow. See.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, August 31, 2017

### **Lancaster ISD Houston Elementary School Students Launch Donation Effort to Help Hurricane Harvey Residents**

**Lancaster, TX/Lancaster ISD** – As the students and staff of Houston Elementary School in Lancaster, Texas learned about the catastrophic impact of Hurricane Harvey on the residents in the Houston, Texas, they felt an instant connection and decided to unite with the Red Cross to launch a campus-wide donation collection effort Tuesday.

“It’s appropriate because of the namesake. If anyone was going to lead the charge, it should be the school with the same name.” Lancaster ISD Houston Elementary Principal Tatanisha Stevenson-Sparks said about the premise around the project. “When you hear or see the name Houston mentioned in the media, it digs at your heart strings because that is also our moniker.”

The idea developed after 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and teachers spoke about the devastation. Soon the effort was in motion and the quest to collect essential items such as bottled water, deodorant, diapers, sanitary napkins/ tampons, tissue (rolls), soap, towels (hand and body), petroleum jelly, toothpaste, toothbrushes and socks began.

In less than five days, the students, staff, parents and community members were well on their way to transforming a conference room into a hurricane relief supply room.

Fourth grade students Maria Rodriguez and Destiny Alonso were a part of the group that started the project.

“We are helping people who need help,” the two shared.

Seeing her students working to serve others has Mrs. Sparks feeling encouraged.

“It feels empowering. I’ve been feeling helpless about my own friends and family who have been affected. And, being a part of a campus that wants to help, gives me great pride and assurances that all is going to be fine,” she said. “It shows that students are really trying to live by our campus motto to, ‘Honor, Exceed and Serve.’”

She also shared that this effort caused the students to ask more questions and teachers are challenging them to think globally and care about communities outside of Lancaster, TX. There are even students willing to spend their own money to serve those in need.





Fifth grader Daniel Brent was so excited to participate in this project that he asked his mother to take a picture after shopping so his teachers can see what he purchased with this own money to support the hurricane effort.

“I spent \$32,” he said. “I have family in Houston so I wanted to help.”

Houston Elementary teacher Esperanza Raymond and campus administrative assistant Denise Valdez are helping manage the effort.

“I would love to go to Houston and provide my assistance, but it’s impossible with my work, school and family schedules,” Valdez said. “So, I thought collecting items would be a great way to help the people who are going through this tragedy.”

Serving others is something that is common to Raymond, who is also a military veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force for 13 years.

“Seeing the students engaging in ‘service before self’ opportunities outside of the military and at such a young age gives me a sense of security about my future,” Raymond said. “We will have a future filled with compassionate leaders.”

In Lancaster ISD, service learning is a part of the educational culture.

“I hope students learn that we are all in this together and that one good gesture can make a great impact on someone in need,” Mrs. Sparks said.

The onsite donation effort will continue through Friday and will be transported to the American Red Cross Donation site.

*The Lancaster Independent School District serves more than 7,000 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students in 11 schools. Our vision is that all students achieve self-sustaining success and leave a lasting legacy. And our mission, in collaboration with parents and communities, is to ignite learning that translates into sustainable success for all students in an ever-changing society.*